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THE QUESTION OF EQUITY IN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

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Equity is perhaps the most difficult objective to achieve within the context of a watershed programme and even more difficult to assess to what extent it has been achieved. Though this paper raises more questions than it tries to answer, it is an initial and limited attempt to focus attention on the issues related to equity which in most workshops tend to be treated last and hurriedly, left out for want of time or restricted to one marginalised group which distorts the complexity of the problem.

About two years ago, there was adequate experience in MYRADA's Watershed Projects to indicate that if the objective of equity was not sustained, the pressures eroding the management of the watershed's resources and therefore of sustained productivity tend to increase, thus diminishing returns in the long run. It was also clear that people are unable to pursue all the three objectives of productivity, sustainability and equity at the same time; they responded to productivity primarily, since the risks of increased investments were lowered and linkages increased. The objective of sustainability required a far greater level of intervention from the NGO since it concerned processes leading to institution building, which demanded considerable time and effort and cooperation from the people; consequently they tried to avoid issues related with equity which have a high potential for conflict.

Two years later, MYRADA's experience confirms these earlier findings and raises a few more questions related to equity.

1.1. A structural image of society :

In the initial stages of the project this author had a visual experience of some of the issues involved that related to equity. A meeting was called of the families living and/or farming in the Wadigera watershed of PIDOW, Gulbarga. When all the people had gathered and settled down, the picture that emerged projected the class distinctions that operated. On the floor, in front, sat those farmers who had lands in the lower reaches of the watershed which were (in this watershed) the most fertile and benefitted from protective irrigation. Behind them sat or stood those farmers with lands in the middle reaches; though the land holdings of some of these farmers were not smaller than those of the first category, the lands were not as productive; besides they were more vulnerable to drought and long dry spells as protective irrigation was not available. People who stood on the periphery were mostly tribals and those with holdings on the upper reaches. The landless hung around. There were no women present initially; but as the meeting went on, they strolled in, more as inquisitive bystanders than as participants.

The discussions were initiated and dominated by the farmers with holdings in the lower reaches who were sitting in front of the group. They also belonged to a caste higher than the others. It was evident that if the marginalised groups were to be given an opportunity to participate effectively, they would have to meet in a different situation. It was here that MYRADA's Self Help Group (SHG) concept became relevant within a watershed management context. The SHGs are small, homogenous groups which stayed together without constant outside intervention because the members had common interests, or were of the same community like tribals, had a common ancestor or had the same occupation like basket weavers or were generally of the same economic status. They were called `socially viable' groups. MYRADA's strategy was to work with each group to provide the members with opportunities for training and self improvement and to use credit as an instrument, which, in the process of managing (saving, lending and recovery) they acquired the skills and the confidence required for institution building and sustainability.

As a result of this strategy, at the end of 1993, there were 103 SHGs in the Gulbarga Project area, and 8 SHGs in the surrounding villages where people had come forward to start SHGs on their own. Of these 103 groups, 58 SHGs were composed of socially or economically marginalised groups like tribals (23 men's'

groups, 20 women's groups) and scheduled castes (15). Womens SHGs numbered 40, of which 20 were tribal groups. The landless were included in these SHGs; in Wadigera they availed of loans for business and to purchase livestock for which fodder was available due to their access to regenerated areas.

Each of these 103 SHGs had a common fund which the members managed according to rules that they had decided upon. The total common fund of these 103 SHGs amounted to Rs.2.6 million in December 1993. The total amount loaned totalled Rs.4.2 million; the overdues were only Rs.2.6 lakhs. Of these SHGs, 13 had already availed of Bank finance directly under a NABARD scheme, which allowed Banks to lend directly to SHGs; in the formulation and operationalisation of this scheme, MYRADA's experience has played a major role.

There is a great deal of evidence to show that these SHGs had provided an opportunity for the marginal groups to gain confidence in managing their affairs, to attain a higher level of self-reliance, since they no longer had to depend on money lenders (usually the larger farmers in the watershed) for consumption or other small loans. Several groups have taken up income generating and infrastructure related activities on their own. Three groups of women have undertaken the responsibility of managing a watershed; the major motivation for this was that the group common fund would benefit from the savings mobilised as a result of supervising and implementing the work themselves instead to hiring outsiders or contractors. These groups play a major role in planning, budgeting and implementing watershed treatment; they are no longer passive spectators or content to remain on the margin when issues concerning their lives are being discussed.

Tribal SHGs have taken a much greater role in watershed planning and implementation through their SHGs and have asserted their rights through lobbying for infrastructural benefits like roads connecting their Thanda's, and for bus services. They also decided to form an Apex Association of all the tribal SHGs and to put up candidates for the Gram Panchayat elections.

The landless especially those who do not provide traditional services like barbers and shopkeepers, are still largely marginalised. Efforts were made by MYRADA to persuade large absentee landlords to lease land to landless families, but these have not been successful mainly due to existing laws, which favour the tenant. The

landless however are all members of SHGs; they avail of loans for consumption and income generation. They have been confident to take loans for milch animals since they were given access to fodder from protected areas in the watershed. As areas under cash crops increased in Wadigera the need for labour also grew; and is today almost double of what it was in 1987; this has helped to provide the landless and marginal farmers with increasing labour opportunities in the watersheds; however, while they are much less dependent on larger farmers than before, they are still not in a position to bargain for higher wages, which continue to be depressed below the official rates.

The lesson that emerged from this experience was that though the watershed was one geographical entity on which all the land holdings whether public or private, large or small, were interlinked, yet it was not a community; several interests collided, relations among them were exploitative; loyalties were far stronger at the levels of the small sub-groups than at the level of the "community". Attempts to introduce treatment measures therefore were also assessed within this complex set of relationships. If equity was to be achieved, the strategy had to make adequate space in which these sub-groups could grow and to create opportunities for the members to attain the skills and confidence required to achieve "effective" participation and linkages in the wider community.

1.2. Equitable distribution of benefits - a condition for co-operation:

When the planning of watershed measures was discussed, another relevant equity-related issue arose. The subject under discussion was the need to introduce contour bunds instead of or in conjunction with boundary bunds which already existed in most cases. Contour bunding requires the cooperation of all the farmers, as they cross private farm boundaries. It was clear that people were reluctant to cooperate even though the benefits were accepted by most. There was however, one particularly vociferous group that saw no benefit from contour bunds; infact they considered them an impediment to higher productivity.

Later it turned out that even those who would benefit were reluctant to agree because if contour bunds were introduced, they would :

- loose the clear demarcation of their property which was to them of the highest priority; infact most disputes between neighbouring

farmers had arisen because one accused the other of encroaching on his lands.

- have to cooperate with their neighbours; in several cases there was already friction between them.

Those who refused to cooperate since they felt that they would be the loosers were those who owned lands at the end of the contour bunds, which they expected, would be flooded and more prone to erosion. In this case equity in terms of the demand for equal sharing of benefits (or at least the expectation of benefits) among all those who had to cooperate for the introduction of a particular conservation measure, took precedence over efficient and standardised water and soil management measures. Some of the water and soil conservation structures like contour bunds, though technically sound were not seen as value neutral but as partial to some and not to others.

The approach adopted by the project after discussion with all concerned was to focus on boundary walls and to integrate them with the contours wherever possible. The project also decided to compensate farmers in kind for conservation structures that they had constructed on their own fields instead of levelling them or replacing them with contour bunds or structures with approved (official) dimensions. Smaller bunds of pebbles were also introduced within the fields; this received a mixed response initially but is gradually being adopted.

The lesson intervenors learned was not to impose a technology which demanded a level of cooperation that people were unwilling to offer much less to sustain since they knew that the benefits would be unequal.

1.3. <u>The trickle down effect favours those comparatively better off</u> :

It was evident to people with holdings on the upper reaches that they would not benefit as much from water conservation measures as those lower down. The trickle down effect, in this case, would favour the better off sections.

The project accepted the position that the physical structure of a watershed and the location of treatment measures tend strongly to favour the lower reaches, atleast in the short run. Further conservation measures are generally introduced

first in the middle reaches where titles and use of land are clear. It is only later that the upper reaches are treated. The reasons for this delay in treating the upper reaches are many; in some cases the lands are encroached, in others they are degraded forest lands and it takes time to involve the Forest Department in any strategy towards joint forest management; in yet other cases the lands belong to the Revenue Department and there has been open access to them, efforts to restrict access can lead to local conflicts; where the lands are privately owned, the farmers on the upper reaches who usually belong to the poorer sections give priority to food crops hence efforts to grow trees or use space for conservation are not easily accepted.

The introduction of treatment measures in the middle reaches, moves comparatively faster as titles and use are usually clear. As a result, holdings in the lower reaches benefit and the impact in these areas is visible in the short term. Those with holdings in the middle reaches often state explicitly that they do not benefit as much as those lower down especially in the short term. These are major constraints in the strategy for watershed management, which do not foster equity; on the contrary they tend to increase the gap between the incomes of the upper and lower sectors of the population. This does not imply that conservation measures in the middle reaches do not have an impact in the short term; they do; but the impact is significant to farmers only if there are long dry spells during the monsoons, which may not occur every year; besides since protective irrigation from open wells is not a common feature in the middle reaches the impact on ground water recharge does not benefit these farmers unless they decide to sink open wells; they however take this initiative a few years after the treatment, and usually wait till one farmer takes the risk and succeeds.

MYRADA has lobbied effectively with the Government and Forest Department to treat the upper reaches and to evolve a management system in which the people are fully involved and from which they have clear benefits. Where the lands belong to the Revenue Department several watershed groups have taken the initiative to approach the Government and to allow them to regenerate these lands and to use the biomass. *Farmers in the middle reaches have been supported to excavate shallow open wells along nullas to provide protective irrigation. Farmers with holdings on the upper reaches however have benefitted much less from watershed treatment when compared to those lower down. A strategy has to be developed*

taking into account their needs if they are to benefit both in the short and long term. Unless this strategy evolves, their commitment to sustain conservation measures in the upper reaches will soon disappear.

1.4. Equity may require a substantial increase in investment in the upper reaches even if average costs per acre rise above official guidelines. Experience from several watershed indicated that even after treatment :

- productivity of farms in the upper reaches hardly increased, while the increase was significant (20-100%) in the lower reaches after 2 - 3 years. Farmers in the upper reaches were also reluctant to go in for hybrids.

- farmers in the upper reaches did not shift to cash crops; it was farmers in the lower and middle reaches that took this risk.

- experiments with horticulture in the upper reaches as a long term income generation source which would also provide tree cover and reduce erosion were largely unsuccessful. The main reason was lack of water for irrigation during the long dry summer and the priority that farmers in the upper reaches gave to food crops.

- even though the upper reaches are treated, soil erosion continues, though on a lesser scale; can this be compensated for?

The strong message that emerges from experience in watersheds where holdings in the upper reaches belong to marginal groups is that the project must be able and willing to invest in improving the depth and quality of soil of the upper reaches. This requires a level of investment that is higher than what is adequate for lower areas; it would also require new measures which are not accepted in the official guidelines for watershed treatment. Alongside, training of farmers in management practices which may be new to them and may require much more time and effort on their part than they are presently investing is required. Unless these decisions are taken and implemented, any significant increase in productivity in these areas will not be achieved; consequently the gap in sustainable incomes between groups farming on the upper and lower reaches will increase and equity will suffer.

1.5. Where ownership, needs and expert solutions collide, often affecting equity adversely :

Many of the measures proposed by technical "experts" for the upper reaches also did not meet with enthusiastic approval. When trees (horticulture) was a measure proposed, people did not respond positively since some of the areas under cultivation in the upper reaches were encroached, largely on degraded forest lands; people suspected that if these areas were brought under tree crops, the Forest Department would have a stronger claim to recover the lands. While the legal position would be that these lands should be handed back to the Forest Department, peoples' expectations were that political pressure would finally "regularise" their encroachments. People also hesitated to invest time and labour on treatment measures on lands over which they had no clear titles. The related issue was that these families set a priority on food crops for their sustenance and survival; could they be asked to shift to tree crops which gave returns only in the long or medium term? Given the fact that the families with holdings on the upper reaches were relatively poor and marginalised socially, could a win-win strategy be evolved which would meet the objective of the Forest Department (to green the area, not necessarily to own it) as well as the objective of the people (who were willing to experiment with tree crops provided their short term food needs and their user rights to the land were not eroded)? This strategy would support the efforts to achieve the objective of equity without compromising on the need to protect the upper reaches. ***The policies incorporated in the Joint Forestry Management strategy provide spaces for such a win-win solution to evolve but it still has to be implemented in the field outside specific project areas.***

1.6. Traditional practices could increase inequity :

Traditional practices also have to be reviewed if the basis for equity is to the strengthened. For example, the traditional practice in drought prone areas is to harvest silt, rather than to prevent erosion. The larger farmers and more powerful sections of the community usually own lands in the lower reaches where silt can be harvested. They also tend to have the resources to invest in silt harvesting measures.

The traditional measure of diversion drains to protect fields from flooding is partially motivated by the objective of harvesting silt lower down even though it deprives the upper reaches of the potential to collect water through protection

measures which encourage holding of water in situ and increased seepage. There were cases where larger farmers holding land in the lower reaches objected to conservation measures higher up since they suspected that their 'silt harvest' would decline.

1.7. Investment, being related to the size of land holdings, is unequally distributed : The larger the land holding, the greater the investment in conservation measures. This situation is aggravated when all investment is from outside with little or no contribution from the land owner, or when the entire investment is given as a grant. The practice that MYRADA has introduced where watershed groups not only plan the treatment measures but also decide on the total budget, on how much each farmer will contribute (this usually depends on the degree of investment on his lands!), on what percentage is a loan and what a grant (this decision depends on the groups assessment of the farmers ability to mobilise resources and to repay); tends to correct the pattern of unequal investment favouring the larger farmers. This strategy also results in farmers setting their own priorities among conservation measures thus making them more cost effective. The presence of self help groups managing credit also provides a readily available source of funds from where each farmer can borrow to meet his contribution.

1.8 The low priority given investment for livelihoods in watershed programmes tends to extend the potential productivity base of the landed thus increasing the gap between them and the landless/ marginal farmers. Several surveys and the landless/marginal farmers. Several surveys in MYRADA projects indicated that the landless/marginal farmers find it difficult to broaden their livelihood source base since land related investment in terms of capital skills linkages to input sources, technology and marketing tends to get high priority leaving limited resources to create potential for livelihoods in non-farm related areas. **Watershed projects therefore should make adequate provision to support off farm livelihood sources from the beginning.**

1.9. Women and Equity : This part does not distinguish between women in poor families and those belonging to the better off sections. It attempts to analyses whether the interventions made in the watershed have benefitted women or increased the level of their contribution to family prosperity without adequate compensation. It focuses more on the '***condition***' of women in their material state,

(namely, on whether they have improved their access to increased resources like credit, biomass, wages, to opportunities for income generation and transport to markets, and to better drinking water, education and health) rather than on the '***position***' of women in society (namely their relationship with men, and the removal of institutionalised forms of discrimination at the level of the family, society, political life, including laws governing property and hereditary rights).

It must be stated that the objectives of PIDOW Gulbarga Project when it began were:

- to increase productivity through management of soil and water which would in turn foster the introduction of hybrids/cash crops by reducing the risk involved in larger investments;

- to increase biomass especially fuel and fodder.

The objectives of improving the 'condition' of women and their 'position' in society were not included. Studies to assess the impact on women have to take this into account.

There is another trend which needs to be critically analysed namely to require every project to achieve equally a wide range of objectives, even if by its very structure it is more suited to achieve some objectives rather than others. What is however of importance is to ascertain whether in the process of achieving certain limited objectives, the project does have unintended results which place marginal groups in a more vulnerable position than they were previously. It is from this angle that studies on the impact of women in watershed programmes are of use. They could help to identify critical areas where further intervention is required to correct these unintended effects if any.

1.10.1. Women's Self Help Groups :

Evidence from various studies of the PIDOW experience and of from reports of outside visitors to the group meetings is adequate to confirm that the SHGs have created a social space for women over which they have control; they are able to discuss their problems, work towards solutions and meet their credit needs through these groups, thus in self confidence.

That the groups have provided social space for women where they are free to express themselves, and to discuss issues that concern them and to set up and manage a common fund as well as small income generating projects, emerges from the study "Gender in PIDOW". (1) sponsored by the Swiss Development Cooperation: (Page 14-15)

> "What has been the impact of sanghas on women's lives? The processes of being organised into sanghas is a novel experience in the lives of women. Women members have learnt to speak and realise the need to participate and create spaces for themselves. Over the years, women have learnt to bring diverse issues to the sanghas for discussion. In recent times, even Ram Janma Bhumi has figured in their discussion. There has also been a gradual shift in the nature of activities that they desire to pursue. Initially, kitchen garden, soakpit etc., used to be discussed. Now many of the sanghas have graduated into discussions about flour mills, milch animals and mini water supplies. Women have begun to take loans for work-related activities. There are a couple of sanghas which have exhibited a high degree of capacity building. One sangha, with 12 Marathi women, for example, has taken up trading activities in fertilisers, jowar and ragi by using Rs.5000 that they saved in the sangha. This was highly appreciated by the village because it came at a time when the village was going through drought conditions. The very same group now wants to take independent charge of 120 acres of the watershed. There is even a case of a woman who has taken a loan of Rs.5000 to purchase a plot of land. There are also a couple of instances of giving house loans for the homeless. The women sanghas are also seen to be involved in entrepreneurial activities like the setting up of a flour mill etc. Some of these need based activities set the women sanghas apart from those of men. ***"Yet it must be said that women are comfortable in arriving at a decision after consulting the family. On the other hand, men are quick to take spot decisions. The dynamics of decision making within a household holds the key to understanding the postures that women take in making decisions.***

The presence and success of some of the women sanghas has had a triggering effect, inculcating interest in others to come together and organise themselves. Another offshoot is the emergence of Yuvak Mandals, comprising of the youth of the villages. The Yuvak Mandals have in turn initiated moves to **organise girl children on similar lines**. Predictably, the women of the Sanghas have been quicker to get disciplined to the norms of savings and credit. Patterns in credit management have begun to emerge. Loans for consumption are taken either initially or in times of crises. By and large, loans are used for income generation and asset formation. ***Noticeable are certain patterns in income generation activities. Milch cattle, sheep rearing, kitchen garden, are one set of agro-based activities. The growing interest in animal husbandry and livestock, is in a sense, related to the results of the implementation of the watershed which has improved the fodder crop and ground water recharge. Several questions surface for introspection at this juncture. The critical issue here, however, is this: How does one involve women in the planning process, so that they can be given a chance to induct their requirements and perspectives into the project portfolios.***

A case study of Limbu Thanda and Wadigera made by the two Swiss students in 1994 confirms these findings

"People of both sexes in Limbu mentioned the creation of the SHGs as one of the best innovations brought since MYRADA's intervention."

"Women have access to sources of credit thanks to the SHGs. In most of the cases money obtained from the credit does not concern the woman alone but the whole family. Having the opportunity of getting credit directly is however a novelty for women.

This fact gives them a new status and is certainly the beginning of a long term improvement."

"Changes in the lives of women since 1988 in Wadigera

The most important changes due to the collaboration with MYRADA and concerning women's life are of practical and social nature.

Daily life (practical change)

- introduction of the "smokeless chulas" (oven) allowing an economy of fuel and time and representing an improvement in sanitary conditions as well (less smoke).

Social life

- formation of Self Help Group with all the advantages that it brought along (boldness to voice their opinions, access to credit, learning to sign their names instead of thumb impression etc.)

Even if improving the livelihood of women still represents a huge potential in Wadigera, their status and their daily life has undoubtedly changed."

1.10.2. An analysis of how the common fund is built up and managed by the SHGs confirms the findings described above. Table I gives a breakdown of the composition of the common fund of 40 womens SHGS in PIDOW Gulbarga. Of Significance is the high proportion of savings and interest earned from loans which have increased the fund of each SHG; each member therefore has a stake in the group and the group considers the common fund as its own; this attitude influences its decisions on disbursing loans since there is a risk element involved. The amount collected as "fines" also indicates that **sanctions** are effective; as a result the overdues on the principle and interest are minimal (Table 20. Table I also indicates the SHGs have incomes from other sources; they implemented soil and conservation works thus reducing costs which they saved; they have group income generating assets like bullock carts which are rented out; they also have income from the sale of fodder harvested from protected plots.

TABLE I

A statement of the common fund of Women SHGs :

COMMON FUND STATUS OF WOMEN SHGs AS ON 30.06.1994

Total Women SHGs	40
Total Members	748

COMPOSITION OF COMMON FUND :

Membership Fee	5,616.70
Share Capital	126.50
Fines	2,190.25
Donation	4,273.35
Savings	279,935.00
Members Contribution	13,400.00
Bank Interest	11,210.35
Interest on Loans	259,855.70

INCOME FROM

Soil & Water Conservation	12,749.75
Sale of Inputs	566.50
Fodder / Forestry	3,491.00
Group Income Generating Prog.	7,816.00
Other	185.00
Working Capital from MYRADA	303,871.75
TOTAL	905,287.85

Average Common Fund	Rs.1,210.00	per member
Average Savings	Rs. 374.00	per member
Average Loan	Rs.2,078.00	per member

Table 2 indicates that the average number of loans per member is three Though a large number has been taken for consumption purposes including travel and socio-religious functions, the repayment in these categories is over 95%. These "consumption" loans may not have increased incomes but there is adequate loans may not have increased incomes but here is adequate evidence to prove that they have lowered the degree of dependence on larger farmers and traditional money

lenders, and increased the confidence of women. There are also savings, since the cost of credit provided by the SHGs is lower; besides the interest remains with them. There is also evidence that women have used these loans for purposes which support their well being and that of their children and especially in the areas of health care and daily sustenance; these are areas which men tend to neglect.

TABLE 2
LOAN STATUS OF WOMEN SHGs AS ON 30.06.1994

ACTIVITIES	NO.OF LOANS	LOAN AMOUNT	PRINCIPLE RECOVERED	INTEREST RECOVERY	AMOUNT OUT-STANDING	PRIN-CIPLE OVER-DUE	INTE-REST OVER-DUE
Astra Ole	10	500.00	500.00	315.00	-	-	-
Clothing	14	32,000.00	3,200.00	401.00	28,800.00	-	-
Education	28	7,260.00	3,850.00	452,75	3,410.00	-	-
Food	652	337,546.00	225,911.85	96,522.40	111,634.15	1,094.00	3,707.50
Health	259	97,497.00	54,842.75	14,493.20	42,654.25	550.00	870.00
Loan Clearance	6	14,800.00	9,400.00	1,161.00	5,400.00	-	-
Socio-Religious	258	170,250.00	79,271.50	26,266.50	90,978.50	-	-
Travel	66	30,815.00	15,375.00	5,190.00	15,440.00	-	-
Crop	901	516,040.80	391,756.65	84,108.25	124,284.15	5,150.00	3,980.00
Fodder	1	2,000.00	2,000.00	200.00	-	-	-
Horticulture	2	7,000.00	3,000.00	640.00	4,000.00	-	-
Irrigation	1	1,000.00	-	-	1,000.00	-	-
Land Dev'pment	28	18,476.90	11,675.00	2,808.00	6,801.90	-	-
Land Purchase	4	10,700.00	4,700.00	1,930.00	6,000.00	-	-
Cow/Buffalo	81	261,650.00	106,147.00	21,373.23	155,503.00	-	-
Bullocks	12	16,000.00	7,400.00	1,435.50	8,600.00	-	-
Sheep/Goat	7	10,900.00	5,700.00	2,475.00	5,200.00	-	-
Insurance	16	4,460.00	1,560.00	106.00	2,900	-	-
Petty Business	4	7,000.00	400.00	42.00	6,600.00	-	-
H. Construction	5	5,100.00	2,665.00	712.00	2,435.00	-	-
H. Elec'fication	1	300.00	300.00	48.00	-	-	-
H. Repair	5	2,745.00	745.00	30.00	2,000.00	-	-
TOTAL	**2,361**	**1,554,040.70**	**930,399.75**	**260,809.85**	**623,640.95**	**6,794.00**	**8,557.50**

6.11 Equity in Wages :

Evidence from all sources indicates clearly that womens wages are on the average 50% less than what men earn. This difference is the result of cultural, administrative and traditional factors, some of which are described below :

- The work that men traditionally perform is considered to be "skilled" and "heavy". Even the Department of Agriculture considers womens work in Agriculture "unskilled". What is more striking and of concern is that even women consider men's' work as more skillful. The study "Gender in PIDOW" quotes a womens group as saying "our men spend a lot more time in the fields and this itself gives them greater exposure to gain skill".

Further analysis indicates a complex set of inter-acting factors which influence this disparity. Activities can be grouped into three categories according to certain features that each group has in common :

- Traditional activities like agriculture and animal husbandry which are undertaken every year and take up a comparatively longer period have an impact on life throughout the year. It is these activities with which village life is intrinsically inter-woven; religious, cultural and family practices are largely conditioned by these activities.

In these activities the roles of men and women are more clearly demarcated than in others; when labour in such activities is hired out, the roles and rewards of women tend to be conditioned by their status in traditional society; and since traditional society tends to marginalise women and give them lesser importance, atleast as far as their roles in society are concerned, their contribution to these activities is also given less value. The intervention in PIDOW did not increase these activities to any great extent, nor did it attempt to change the roles that women played in traditional activities; the introduction of threshing machines did have an unintended impact by decreasing the work load of women.

- In the second group fall activities which are traditional but are not regular and do not play a major role in the life of society and the family; examples of

such activities are water and soil conservation measures. These sporadic activities are not implemented by all the families; the degree of involvement of each family in these activities depends largely on the type and extent of land, potential for harvesting silt, the degree of initiative and hard work that the family has and the opportunities for alternative wage employment. The PIDOW Project raised the level of involvement in these activities to a very large extent. Analysis of the wage pattern during these activities indicates that women did receive a higher wage proportionate to the work they did when compared to what they received in agriculture. The distinction however, between skilled work done by men and unskilled work undertaken by women continued to operate, resulting in women receiving lower wages than men.

- In the third category of activities fall a few which are relatively recent. A good example is the forestry nursery raising programme. Decentralised nurseries run by groups of women have emerged all over the Project area. Many of these nurseries earn an income by selling saplings which they had maintained for periods of three to six months. Experience in Gulbarga indicates that in such recent activities, women play a relatively dominant role, both because these activities are suited to women and also because they are not conditioned by traditional practices. Studies indicate that in nursery raising, women's wages are comparatively higher than what men earn.

The study "Gender in PIDOW" arrives at similar conclusions. It relates the "resource involvement" of men and women with the economic compensation they receive in three areas, namely Forestry, Water and Soil Conservation and Agriculture. The study does not define the indicators it includes under "resource involvement" and what standard it has used to assess each indicator; therefore it has to be taken in a general way. The study concludes that in the activities of women related to agriculture which are considered to be unskilled, their resource involvement amounts to 60% compared to the contribution of men which is only 40%, the economic compensation of women however is only 40% of the total while that of men is 60%.

In activities related to Water and Soil Conservation where womens work is still considered unskilled while men are the "Key players", women's and men's'

contribution in terms of resource involvement is equal; the economic compensation women receive however is only 40% of the total whereas men receive 60%.

In the case of forestry there is a significant change. Women have been identified as the "key players" in this sector. The "resource involvement" of men is 30% and that of women in 70%. The economic compensation of women is 70% and that of men is 30%. This does present an equitable picture.

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