

# **ROLE OF NGOs IN WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA**

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**SUBMITTED BY**

**PREETHI VISWANATH**



**CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI – 110067  
INDIA  
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जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI 110 067

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Chairperson  
Centre for the Study of Social Systems  
School of Social Sciences

20 July, 2001

**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled '*ROLE OF NGO'S IN WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA*' submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this university or any other University and is my original work.

*Preethi Viswanath*

**PREETHI VISWANATH**

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before examiners for evaluation.

**Prof. NANDU RAM**  
(Chairperson)

**Prof. ANAND KUMAR**  
(Supervisor)

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## INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century has been one of great political struggles for liberation and social revolutions and of major changes in the world order. South Asia too has been a part of this dynamic process of historical change and everywhere the forces of domination and oppression were opposed in order to create an equitable and democratic space for all. However, the wide variety and magnitude of the different social movements including the environmental movement, the women's movement and various movements for autonomy clearly indicate that inequality and oppression continue to plague human life, more especially in this region where the prospect of equal life chances remains an elusive proposition.

'South Asia is fast emerging as the poorest, the most illiterate, the most malnourished, the least gender - sensitive -- indeed, the most deprived region of the world. Yet it continues to make more investments in arms than in the education and health of its people'<sup>1</sup>.

As a region it moves into the twenty first century lagging behind not only the developed countries of the First World but also the East Asian and South

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<sup>1</sup> Mahbub ul Haq. Human Development in South Asia. 1997. Human Development Centre and Oxford University Press. Islamabad.

East Asian countries in terms of human development and especially gender equality.

That women's equality is a matter of human rights, a necessity to ensure social justice and a pre-requisite for broader equality, development and peace has been reiterated time and again. The means of transforming the phenomenon is however neither simple nor single-pronged. South Asian women occupy only 7 per cent of the parliamentary seats, 9 per cent of the Cabinets, 6 per cent of the judiciary and 9 per cent of the civil services, apart from lagging behind other countries in terms of the development indices<sup>2</sup>. After numerous international conferences like the World Conference held in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995) and agreements like United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1947) and the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW - 1979), and various other efforts, gender inequalities continue to persist world over and more obviously in the developing countries like those in South Asia. One of the important means of changing the dominant system where women remain subjugated is education.

For the last three decades much has been spoken on this theme and policies/programmes to improve the condition of girls and women's education

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<sup>2</sup> Human Development in South Asia. 2000. Karachi. Oxford University Press and Mahbub ul Haq. Human Development Centre. P.175

have been publicly stated by all the South Asian countries under consideration. It has not been possible to translate these into reality however and it has almost been unanimously agreed upon that the problem lies not majorely in the short-fall of financial resources but of human resources in terms of committed leadership and motivated staff. This has been proved by the success pockets like Sri Lanka and Maldives within the region itself and also by Kerala and Himachal Pradesh in India. Realizing the importance of advocacy as a means of social intervention, these governments have had sustained campaigns to promote a number of norms. However education was never given that kind of importance and the present situation reflects the lack of political will.

Some of the common policies/programmes that have been declared by these countries over the past few decades have been to -- set up separate women's education units or cells, provide primary schools within walking distance to increase girls' access, provide escorts for girls in case schools are at a distance from their dwellings, arrange flexible school timings and a region specific school calendar, have alternate modes of schooling, provide more women teachers in rural areas, make relevant curricula and provide incentives like free meals, bus passes and books etc<sup>3</sup>. Needless to say many or most of these have been fraught with problems of implementation.

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<sup>3</sup> Vimala Ramachandaran (ed.). 1998. Bridging the Gap between Intention and Action : Girls and Women's Education in South Asia. New Delhi. ASPBAE and UNESCO. P.15



While the rate of female literacy and educational enrolment levels have improved, it has been an agonizingly slow growth and is still far from reaching a satisfactory level by itself or in relation to other countries. What has been recognized almost in consensus is that the field requires more than one player in the form of the state and progress is more likely with the active co-ordination of the State and the non-governmental organizations, sometimes referred to as civil society organizations.

## II

Till the 60's, world over there has been total dependence on governments to fulfill the needs of the masses. In the model of development adopted by most of the post-colonial states soon after independence, the state assumed a primary, exclusive and resource-controlling role in every area of development. Despite the fact that it thus concentrated all the power in its hands, equitable growth did not really take place and it became obvious that this kind of dependence was obviously not going to yield the expected results. On the other hand the benefits of development have been usurped by an elite group so that the already existent gap between the privileged and the marginalized increased in magnitude. Governments, even though democratically elected rather than of the colonial rulers, work under many constraints and limitations and these are more acute in the case of the developing countries where resources always fall short of requirements. Another common limitation is the bureaucratic style of

functioning which actually makes it difficult for the government to reach the people as effectively as it should especially in democratic systems.

This paved the way for the entry of the private sector into the development arena. However, apart from other limitations, the centrality of profit-making in the private sector ethic made it difficult for sustained support to the seemingly bottomless pit that the development area of the region appears.

This marked the entry by around the mid-80s of the NGOs as an effective third sector. Though they have been working in all the countries over a long period time, their visibility almost instantaneously increased to prominence. By then most donors of the First World realized the failure of most existing development projects whether to provide drinking water, sanitation, education or healthcare to the common man. `What was difficult to justify, in front of the critical press and civil society in the North, was the tax being "paid by the poor in the rich countries to the rich in the poor countries" in the name of development aid"<sup>4</sup>. This prompted a greater flow of aid for development work through the alternative channel of the voluntary sector.

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<sup>4</sup> Dipak Gyawali, 'Development Contradiction and Expectations from NGOs in Juha Vartola (ed) Development NGOs facing the 21<sup>st</sup> century : Perspective from South Asia. 2000. Kathmandu. Institute for Human Development, p.100.

NGOs ideally speaking are supposed to be non-profit and democratic development organizations. What sets them/their programmes apart from the governmental style of functioning is their flexibility, in terms of being able to work according to varied conditions, their participatory nature, and to some degree their sustainability. Instead of planning and implementing programs without any involvement of the people concerned, as is the governmental style of functioning, voluntary organizations or NGOs promote community development, as far as possible helping the people to understand their problems, designing workable strategies and implementing action programs. Considering the enormity of the demand for developmental work in these regions two approaches<sup>5</sup> are seen as appropriate -

- (i) Encouraging self-help and community development.
- (ii) Supporting programmes which have the potential to be replicated more widely.

The emergence of these new partners in development whether they are referred to as social actors, development partners, alternatives, NGOs, voluntary organizations or civil society organizations, offers a choice to the citizen for their association and involvement in a number of ways.

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<sup>5</sup> Juha Vartola. Op.cit.

### III

These initiatives which are mushrooming all over the region, as a response to the failure on the part of the State to deliver its promises, are sometimes seen in terms of a *social movement* where the people themselves struggle to realize their democratic rights.

'The social movements in the Third World assert the perspective of defining people's rights in the context of manifest and latent deprivations, immediate or long-term denial of rights and thus suggest a method of constantly grasping new sources of domination and seeking new possibilities of freedom'<sup>6</sup>.

Neera Chandoke<sup>7</sup> speaks of the post-colonial state as being 'developmentalist' as opposed to 'idealist'. According to her they worked with three notions of development where it was given greater importance than politics, democracy was equated to value free social processes, and the assumption that society had to be reformed because it could not regulate itself. There was no room for plurality of need nor the expression of it. In spite of the fact that these were supposed to be functioning democracies there was no real accountability nor democratic participation.

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<sup>6</sup> Manoranjan Mohanty (ed). 1998. People's Rights : Social Movements and the State in the Third World. New Delhi. SAGE. P.26.

<sup>7</sup> Neera Chandhoke. 'The Assertion of Civil Society Against the State : The Case of the Past Colonial World', Ibid.

Democratic systems are or were supposed to be the modern replacement for the *civil society* of the yester-years. `The concept of civil society embraces an entire range of assumptions, values and institutions such as political, social and civil rights, the rule of law, plurality of associations, representative institutions and or public sphere which are indispensable pre-conditions for democracy<sup>8</sup>. However this kind of a notion of civil society cannot be said to be truly upheld in these democracies because too many people remain outside the sphere of any kind of rights and as a result there is an urgent need for redressal and a strong feeling of discontent against the State. Whenever there is such a challenge to the State, civil society in its essence is resurrected as a response<sup>9</sup>. People are forced to look for solutions outside the control of State. Here voluntary organizations represent civil society norms where there is an involvement of maximum number of people who work within self-defined frameworks for the fulfillment of their own needs. India alone is estimated to have around 5,00,000 NGOs, many of them involved with women's issues<sup>10</sup>.

Another concept used to characterize social movements of the type under discussion is that of *creative society*. `The concept of creative society refers to a phase of development of a society in which a large number of potential contradictions become articulate and active ..... Creative society embodies a

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.29

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Human Development in South Asia. 2000. op.cit., p.159.

methodology of viewing society in terms of liberation from multiple dominations - class, caste, race, ethnicity, gender and many more yet to be discovered sources of domination - and it points at the processes already active or yet to be articulated, seeking to reconstitute society'<sup>11</sup>. Very often many of the State responses to any social movement has been negative and have been termed as disruptive. For instance the women's movement for gender justice is seen as opposing cultural traditions and creating social instability by imitating the Western model. In order to explain the nature of social upheavals in the post-colonial world, creative society proves to be useful as an analytical tool.

The conjunction of the (various women's social) movements with the effective functioning of the voluntary sector, provide a significant alternative to the people. The crux of democracy lies in its social organization and social base. Therefore as Kothari suggests, citizens groups have to be numerous and multifaceted so that the individual belongs not just to one set of organization ordained by the logic of the State or ruling party or opposition parties - but a whole system of organizations<sup>12</sup>.

Education of South Asian women is chosen as the factor to be studied because it not only aids individuals in improving the quality of life but is

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<sup>11</sup> Manoranjan Mohanty. 'Social Movement in Creative Society : Of Autonomy and Interconnection in Manoranjan Mohanty and Parthanath Mukherjee. Op.cit. p.65.

<sup>12</sup> Rajani Kothari (1987) : Voluntary Organisations in a Plural Society. Indian Journal of Public Administration. Vol XXXIII, No.3. July - Sept.. p.438.

universally considered as one of the most significant means of women upliftment. Chapter 1 deals with those concepts in gender analysis which act as analytical tools in understanding the reality of gender inequality. Gender related research helps in forming a framework of analysis and is important in bringing about a transformation of the existing status quo. Closely related are the women's movement in South Asia. The importance of the movements lie in the fact that they have been successful in bringing the issue of women's subordination and resulting manifestation to the fore-front in order to make an impact on policy formulations. The functioning of the movement in each of the five countries is traced along with the problems and contradictions within the movements itself.

Chapter II emphasizes the significance of women's education. Women's education is supposed to have a direct connection with certain other factors like child and maternal mortality, fertility, family health and educational attainment of children and especially girls. Despite the fact that repeated policy frameworks of the State commit to improving the situation of girls and women's education, there is still a wide gender gap. The deep-rooted constraints to women's education therefore warrant a study and these are enumerated in chapter II.

While the State has been the main player in the field of education, of late many see the voluntary sector as having important contributions to make. This is partially because of their innovative style of functioning and micro-level

successes. A critical analysis of the voluntary sector and their contribution is therefore relevant. Chapter III traces the functioning mechanisms of the voluntary sector and the problems that arise in them. Also included in Chapter III are a few of the successful programs run by NGOs and governments in the field of girl's and women's education.

These NGO programmes reflect the contribution of NGOs directly to the field of education and at a micro level have made a substantial effort & proved that change is possible where there is will & innovative effort.



## CHAPTER I

Women's studies have been called the intellectual arm of the women's movement and is seen as a transformative measure to the social sciences and as a means of collective awareness - building by shared experiences and participatory research. It is essential to understand, analyze and bring about a transformation of the existing social order through adequate comprehension of the language and concerns of the feminist/women's movement.

I

### (a) GENDER

“Gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles”<sup>1</sup>.

As an analytical tool it helps in understanding social realities concerning women and men. The distinction between sex and gender is essential in order to oppose the dominant trend of attributing women's subordination to biological determinism.

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<sup>1</sup> Kamla Bhasin. 2000. Understanding Gender. New Delhi. Kali for Women, p 1.

Socialization is the process wherein a new born infant is slowly taught those actions and values which are considered desirable by one's society so that the newcomer becomes a part of, or gains acceptance into, that society. "Each society slowly transforms a male or female into a man or a woman, into masculine and feminine, with different qualities, behaviour patterns, roles, responsibilities, rights and expectations. Unlike sex which is biological, the gender identities of women and men are psychologically and socially – which means historically and culturally – determined"<sup>2</sup>. This is also referred to as gender indoctrination. Since the process of gendering starts as soon as a child is born, it becomes difficult to distinguish the natural qualities of a child from those which are socially constructed.

While boys are expected to be tough, extrovert and not emotionally expressive, girls are encouraged to be demure, are closetted and kept home-bound. These are however not universal and the very fact that it is not indicates the variability of gender. As Ann Oakley puts it, "Gender is a matter of culture, it refers to the social classification of men and women into 'masculine' and 'feminine' ..... The constancy of sex must be admitted, but so also must the variability of gender"<sup>3</sup>. This is clear from the fact that women from various tribes

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p2.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Oakley. 1985. Sex, Gender and Society. England, Gower Publishing Company, p.16.

as well as women brought up in kibbutz's etc. enjoy a greater degree of equality and mobility than their counterparts in other types of societies.

Traditionally speaking thinkers and philosophers (mostly male) have maintained the position that females are weaker and while Aristotle referred to the female as 'mutilated male', Freud, said that for women 'anatomy is destiny'.

### **Biology Vs Sociology**

One of the major reasons men are considered superior to females is the false perception that males are biologically stronger than females. In strict terms of biology men are the weaker of the sexes and the Y chromosome is found to be the cause of many handicaps. Ashley Montagu in the book 'The Natural Superiority of Women' lists 62 specific disorders due majorely or entirely to sex-linked genes and found mostly in males. "About half of them are serious, and include haemophilia, mistral stenosis and some forms of mental deficiency.... At every stage of life, beginning with conception, more genetic males die than genetic females. More males than females are produced and the two facts of greater mortality and greater production seem to go hand in hand"<sup>4</sup>.

As in most other parts of the world, in South Asia too, the inherent biological superiority of women is brushed aside and cloaked by the social

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<sup>4</sup> Kamala Bhasin. 2000. Op.cit. p.9

inferiority imposed on them. The very purpose of conceptualizing the term 'gender' is therefore meant to oppose this man made inequality since neither sex nor nature is in truth responsible for the unjustifiable inequalities that exist between women and men. The fact that they are man-made constructs implies that they can be challenged and, in time, transformed.

From their very birth, male and female infants are handled differently, addressed differently, clothed and treated differently. Ruth Hartley explains how the gendering process takes place through four stages namely, manipulation, canalisation, verbal appellation and activity exposure"<sup>5</sup>. The ways in which children are handled is referred to as manipulation. While boys are treated as stronger from an early stage, girls are treated as weaker. This has its own repercussions as the physical experiences of early childhood are very important in shaping the self-perception of girls and boys. Canalisation refers to the process of channelising boys's and girls' attention towards different objects of interests. While girls are encouraged to play with dolls and kitchen sets, boys are gifted toy guns, cars, aircrafts etc. Through this kind of distinct differentiation in playthings, male and female children develop different capabilities and inclinations. Future choices in life would be instinctively made from familiarity and childhood orientation. Family members by means of the way they speak to children and the kind of things they say transmit aspects of gender roles directly

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<sup>5</sup> Ann Oakley. 1985. Op.cit. P. 174-175

and this is the category of verbal appellation. For instance girls are generally praised for their physical strength. The last process called activity exposure refers to the typical segregation of boys and girls wherein girls are directed towards helping in domestic work and boys go with the males of the house outside.

### **Socialization about Gendering**

Just as socialization is a very powerful process in indoctrinating the newcomer into the ways of society so that internalization is strong enough to inhibit the newcomer from doing those things which are considered unacceptable by society in every other sphere of life, the process of gendering is also as strong. "Sanctions or disapproval against children and adults when they deviate from their gender roles is another very powerful way of making everyone conform to expected male female behaviour. The most common form of sanction is social ridicule"<sup>6</sup>.

Apart from gender dominating internalized feelings, orientations and characteristics, there are specific places, which are exclusively meant for men, or women, i.e. gendered places. For e.g. a football ground, a way-side tea-shop, paan shop, a bar etc are usually considered male spaces. Women do not and

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<sup>6</sup> Kamla Bhasin. 2000. Op.cit. p.15

are not expected to venture into these zones by and large and surely not unaccompanied by men. Similarly the kitchen is a place usually, which becomes more or less a women's zone. However, one would find it quite difficult to specify any social space which are wholly for women.

Age old social institutions like language, education, family and religion are rooted in a system of patriarchy and serve to enforce and reinforce gender inequality in a number of ways. Language reflects gender inequality in society. Very often masculine references are used as the standard such as 'mankind', 'he' and 'his' even with reference to females. It is only now after an age of struggle that words such as Chairman, sportsman etc. are being changed into gender neutral terms.

"The language of social sciences, philosophy and other disciplines also continues to be patriarchal and ignores, marginalises or misrepresents women. The mode in which abstract thought is cast and the language in which it is expressed are so defined as to perpetuate women's marginality. We women have had to express ourselves through patriarchal thought as reflected in the very language we have had to use. It is a language in which we are submitted under the male pronoun and in which the generic term for "human" is "male"."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Gerda Lerner. 1986. *The Majority Finds Its Past : Placing Women in History*. Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, p.232.

## Role of Education and Religion

Education is one of the institutions and socialization mechanisms that is used to perpetuate the existing patriarchal ideology. It justifies or ignores gender inequality. Most school textbooks are blatant in their gender bias. Similarly feminists locate the family as one of the sites of gender inequality where women do not have equal access to resources, services and opportunities and power is negotiated. According to Bina Aggarwal, the household/family is a complex matrix of relationships in which there is ongoing negotiation, subject to constraints set by gender, age, type of relationship and "undisputed traditions"<sup>8</sup> An individual's bargaining power within the family with respect to resource sharing is in direct proportion to the individual's survival capacity outside the family. This would explain why different individuals have a stronger or weaker bargaining capacity in terms of relativity. Gender and age here form two such bases of inequality. Equality is therefore observed to be greater in dual-earner households as opposed to single-earner ones. Working class women cannot afford to observe, sex-segregation rules etc. since it is simply not feasible. Women who remain within the household, being dependent, or in seclusion are considered a symbol of social status in many patriarchal societies.

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<sup>8</sup> Bina Aggarwal. 1996. *A Field of One's Own. Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. New Delhi, Cambridge University Press. P.51.

All religions have been used by men for the suppression of women. The existence of separate personal laws based on different religions also affects gender relations. While Muslim Personal Law permits polygamy and unilateral divorce for men, Christian Law does not recognize adultery by a man as sufficient cause for divorce and Hindu Code does not allow adoption of children by parents of two different religions and so on<sup>9</sup>. All the religious laws are biased in favour of men in matters of property rights and inheritance.

#### **(b) The Sexual Division of Labour**

“The gender division of labour or sexual division of labour refers to the allocation of different roles, responsibilities and tasks to women and men based on societal ideas of what men and women should do and are capable of doing”<sup>10</sup>. These assignments however do not consider individual preferences or capabilities but are made according to sex/gender roles.

Looking after children and the necessities of survival like cooking and cleaning are never considered as requiring payment nor even as work. In most parts of the world even today men and women are not paid equally for the same work. According to the United Nations Development Project Human

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<sup>9</sup> Kamla Bhasin, 2000. Op.cit. p.30.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. , p.32



Development Report of 1995 the invisible and unpaid work contributed by women, annually is worth US \$11 trillion.<sup>11</sup> While women do more than 60 per cent of the hours of work done in the world, they get only 10 per cent of the world's income and own one per cent of the World's property. According to the UNDP Human Development Report 1995, women world over, hold only 14 per cent of the senior management positions. Further the ratio of women's and men's salaries in the United States is, and has been for the last century 3 : 5. Of the world's poorest and illiterate people, seventy percent are women. According to the UNDP Human Development Report 1995, women world over, hold only 14 per cent of the senior management positions. Further the ratio of women's and men's salaries in the United States is, and has been for the last century 3 : 5. Of the world's poorest and illiterate people, seventy percent are women <sup>12</sup>. US Census Bureau figures show that a US working women who has just completed college gets only 75 per cent of the salary offered to the men she studied with<sup>13</sup>. Another analysis made in 1991 found that at every educational level, women earned less than men with the same amount of schooling<sup>14</sup>.

Claudia Von Werholf had this to say about the relative situation of women who are economically dependent on their husbands, "The husband has 'the queen of commodities' i.e. money, in his pocket, but the wife is not paid for her

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.35.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.37.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.25.

work. The husband must give her only board and lodging, as he would also have to do for a slave. The housewife's working hours, conditions of work, holidays, leisure are not settled by contract; the marriage contract is not comparable to an employment contract. There is no right to strike, no sisterly organization of housewives; they are instead, individualized and atomized. They enjoy no social security on the basis of their work as housewives, nor are they protected by law from the despotism and violence of their husbands. In the home nobody ensures the observance of human rights, hence they are a private affair, which allegedly do not concern the public even when there is no guarantee of physical safety.

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The wife must serve, and above all, obey the husband; he can demand this in a court of law. In short the housewife is an unpaid worker, at the disposal of her husband, round the clock, all her life; even more, her whole person is at his disposal, including her sexuality and child bearing capacity, her psyche and feelings, she is at the same time slave and serf who is compelled to do all the work that her husband and children need, including demonstrate love even when she does not feel any. Here one works out of love and love becomes work. The situation may not always be intolerable, but it is impossible to predict that it will not become so."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Claudia Von Werlhof. 1988A. "The Proletarian is Dead : Long Live the Housewife" in Maria Mies, et al, Women : The Last Colony. New Delhi. Kali for Women. P. 175.

### ( c) Patriarchy

The reason why patriarchy as a system acquires importance from a feminist perspective because of its importance as an analytical tool in rejecting the notion of biological determinism. According to Sylvia Walby in her book, 'Theorising Patriarchy', Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.<sup>16</sup>

Juliet Mitchell uses the term to refer to the kinship systems in which men exchange women, and to the symbolic power that fathers exercise within these systems. This power, according to her, is responsible for the "inferiorised" psychology of women<sup>17</sup>.

Patriarchy is not a constant and does not remain the same in different societies, classes and at different points of time in history. There have been differing views on patriarchy over time and from differing corners. Of these the traditionalist view of patriarchy has been to accept it as biologically determined. Whether or not they claim to be using religion or scientific thought as a framework of analysis, they more or less unanimously makes certain blanket

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<sup>16</sup> Kamla Bhasin. 1993. What is Patriarchy? New Delhi. Kali for Women, p.5.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

assumptions. They consider the inferior position of women as something inevitable, in the course of nature and that it, as a feature, has survived because it was for the best. If these assumptions are acceptable then the existing order was/is to be upheld and supported.

The traditionalist explanation has neither a historical base nor is it supported to any degree by scientific evidence but finds refuge in religion and the biologic determinist stand.

Most religions maintain that men and women were created differently with women subordinate to men and therefore they are assigned different roles and duties. The biological explanation believes that men is superior to the woman in physical strength and that since women bear children and nurture them, they are incapacitated and meant only for home-building and child-rearing tasks. Her physical inferiority also makes her less capable of reason and decision-making. Freud and Aristotle who said that 'the courage of man is shown in commanding, of a women in obeying'<sup>18</sup> are two well-known proponents of this theory.

In his 'Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State (1884), Engels attempts an explanation for the origin of patriarchy. Engels believed that woman's subordination began with the development of private property, when

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<sup>18</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich and English Deirdre. 1988. For Her Own Good : 50 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women. London, Pluto Press, p.19

"the world historical defeat of the female sex" took place. There was, according to him, greater gender equality before the advent of the capitalistic mode of production. With the invention of new tools and the acquisition of private property, men found the need to retain power and property and consequently the need to have their own children to inherit these. To ensure the inheritance, it became essential that the mother-right be over-thrown. Both patriarchy and monogamy for women came to be established for these very reasons and during this period. While such a theory solely based on economic factors is much critiqued, Gerda Lerner expostulates the reasons why his contributions to the understanding of patriarchy and its origins is significant<sup>19</sup>. He made several important connection like that between structural changes in kinship relations and changes in the division of labour on the one hand and women's position in society on the other, between the establishment of private property and monogamous marriage and also between the economic and political dominance by men and their control over female sexuality.

Here the radical feminists differ in their explanation because they believe that gender inequality originated prior to private property. They consider women as a whole as constituting a class. The main reason for gender inequality is explained as psychological differences, perhaps, originating from biological differences. The main cause of women's subjugation is attributed to the control

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<sup>19</sup> Gerda Lerner. 1986. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press. P.23

of men over women's reproductive capacity. Some go further to say that patriarchy is in truth connected to male psychology. Men have a psychological need to compensate for their inability to bear children and that directs them to construct institutions of dominance according to Mary O'Brien<sup>20</sup>.

There is further a socialist feminist position which tries to choose a middle path between the Marxist and radical feminist positions. While, they believe, many factors have led to the origin of patriarchy, the economic system being one of them, there is a relation between them but the relation is not of a causal nature. According to the patriarchy and capitalist theory, expostulated by some including Heidi Hartmann, all men are linked by patriarchy to each other irrespective of class. Hartmann defines patriarchy as a set of relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them, which in turn allows them to subjugate women<sup>21</sup>. Maria Mies, also an exponent of this school links feminist action and theory and goes on to say how men consider themselves as being productive and this productivity is closely linked to the invention and control of tools. 'Without tools man is no Man'<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Kamla Bhasin. 1993. Op.cit, p.26.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.29.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.31.

Further, women throughout the ages have been and will be the producers of new life, female productivity is then the 'pre-condition of male productivity' and without this all other forms and modes of production lose their meaning.

### **Why women are considered closer to nature?**

Another important reason for the subordination of women is the fact of reproduction, not as an issue in itself but because of the associated implication due to which women are seen as closer to nature (as opposed to culture) and therefore inferior within the framework of a culturally defined system of values. The exclusive physiological functions of women have tended universally to limit her social movement. The fact that she is responsible for the feeding of new born infant keeps her house-bound. As Sherry B. Ortner put it, "woman's physiology, more involved more of the time with 'species of life', woman's association with the structurally subordinate domestic context, charged with the crucial function of transforming animal-like infants into cultural beings; 'woman's psyche', appropriately moulded to mothering functions by her own socialization and tending toward greater personalism and less mediated modes of relating - all these factors make women appear to be rooted more directly and deeply in nature"<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Sherry B. Ortner. *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?* In Carol C. Gould (ed.) 1997. *Gender : Key Concepts in Critical Theory*. New Jersey. Humanities, p.23

According to Nancy Chodorow, men tend to emphasize and over-emphasize the gender differences because of an early created crisis in identity wherein male children tend primarily to see themselves as one with their mother, a primary femaleness which threatens the sense of maleness. Because of early developed, conflictual coir gender identity problems, and later problems of adequate masculinity, it becomes important to men to have a clear sense of gender difference, of what is masculine and what is feminine, and to maintain rigid boundaries between these<sup>24</sup>. To support this, researches have found that fathers tend to sex-type children more than do mothers.

## II

### **The Women's Movement in South Asia**

Women in most parts of the world lose out by being women. According to the Human Development Report 1997 of the United Nation's Development Programme, there is no country that treats its women as well as its men, according to a complex measure that includes life expectancy, wealth, and education<sup>25</sup>. The world community has been slow to address the problems of women, because it has lacked a consensus that gender based inequality is an

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<sup>24</sup> Nancy Chodorow. Gender Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytical Perspective in Carol C. Gould, Op.cit, p.35.

<sup>25</sup> HDR. 1997. United Nations Development Project. Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press, 0.39



urgent issue of political justice<sup>26</sup>. All other kinds of discrimination and inequality like apartheid have been deemed as an outrage by the world at large, and have mobilized the international community. The outrages suffered everyday by millions of women -- domestic violence, child sexual abuse and child marriage, inequality before the law are not considered universally as an outrage on human life and dignity and therefore are not referred to as human rights abuses.

Developing countries, in particular, present a grimmer picture since gender inequality is strongly linked with poverty<sup>27</sup>. When debilitating factors like gender and poverty combine, the result is a chronic failure of human capability. In the developing countries as a whole, there are 60 per cent more women than men among illiterate adults; the female school enrollment rate even at the primary level is 13 per cent than that of males; and female wages are only three-fourths of male wages<sup>28</sup>.

Recently, however, the mobilization of an international women's community at many levels, from local collectives to regional NGOs, to government programs, to international agencies and human rights programs, has begun to make real progress in putting the subordinate status of women on national and international agendas.

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<sup>26</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum. 2000. Women and Human Development. The capabilities Approach. New Delhi. Kali for Women. P.298.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

The broad definition of feminism as accepted by women representatives from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in a South Asian Workshop was 'An awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in a society, at work and within the family and conscious action by women and men to change this situation'<sup>29</sup>. In this sense there has been a strong feminist movement in South Asia working to challenge the patriarchal system in different ways and their challenges have been local, sporadic and spontaneous, through independent women's formations or associated with other social movements or political parties. Individual women and women's organization have analysed and opposed in very many ways the different forms of violence women are subjected to. They have struggled to get amendments in laws, for stricter implementation of existing laws etc. Women's groups and feminist researchers have also studied the impact of development policies and programmes on women and have attempted to interact with national governments on policy planning and implementation.

The universality of female subordination, the fact that it exists within every type of social and economic arrangement and in societies of every degree of complexity, indicates to me that we are up against something very profound, very stubborn, something we cannot rout out simply by rearranging a few tasks and

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<sup>29</sup> Kamla Bhasin and Nighat Said Khan. 1986. Some Questions on Feminism and its Relevance in South Asia. New Delhi. Kali for Women. P.3

roles in the social system, or even by reordering the whole economic structure"<sup>30</sup>. It becomes necessary therefore to on the one hand have an extensive research framework to work on the problem of gender equality and on the other a strong movement to oppose gender-related atrocities and lobby for equal rights. The women's movement in South Asia as a whole has made tangible differences to the status of women and it is therefore important to analyse them individually and collectively and link these with the direction in which government and non-governmental organizations should move in order to ameliorate the socio-economic status of women.

#### **(a) The Women's Movement in Pakistan**

The problems faced by the women's movement in Pakistan are significant ones which find likeness with those faced in many other countries where fundamentalism is a threat to women's freedom. According to Fauzia Gardezi, two of the main problems encountered by the women's movement in Pakistan have been the problem of trying to work within an Islamic framework and that of having too insignificant an incorporation of feminism in the movement<sup>31</sup>. Since fundamentalist forces as a practice use women as emblems of tradition, their main focus has been on curbing their freedom and denying them their rights. The period from 1981-91 saw the passing of draconian anti-women legislations

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<sup>30</sup> Sherry Ortner. Op.cit. p.16.

<sup>31</sup> Fauzia Gardezi. 1994. 'Islam, Feminism, and the Women's Movement in Pakistan : 1981-91, in Kamla Bhasin, et al, Against all Odds. New Delhi. Kali for Women, p.51.

as part of a period of islamisation. Various Islamic laws were proposed or enacted such as the Haddood Ordinances, the Law of Evidence and the law on Qisas and Diyat. These laws made it difficult to prove rape, put victims at risk of being charged with adultery (and thus in effect silencing them), and reduced the worth of a woman, and her testimony in some cases, to half that of a man. Religion was also employed to justify various government directives on women's dress, a plan to create a separate women's university, and an unwritten ban on women's participation in spectator sports. Faced with these problems, the movement was divided along two lines - between those who felt that in order to strengthen their stand they would have to clearly work outside the framework of religion and those who felt that it was important to work within an Islamic framework. The former found greater purchase among the upper and upper-middle class and they felt there was need for "a movement that poses resolution of its problems in opposition to Islamic discourse. The point is not to reject Islam, but to clearly state that the issue of women's rights is a secular issue of human rights"<sup>32</sup>. On the other hand were those who firmly believed that in order to reach out to more number of people and especially in order to include lower-middle class and working class women, who would not be compelled to join the movement unless it was firmly rooted in Pakistani culture and therefore an Islamic framework, they could not afford to fight from a strictly secular plank. This latter stand despite its plausible appeal however is one which is on shaky

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<sup>32</sup> Shahnaz Rouse, "Women's Movement in Pakistan : State, Class, Gender", South Asia Bulletin, vol. VI, No. 1, Spring, 1986, p.36

ground because it implies handing over power to the very fundamentalists who endorse women's subordination. Further focus would tend to get narrowed down to only those problems related to religion and not on the rest of the very real problems that women as a whole face. Gender related problems like domestic violence, economic dependency and male control over women's lives however afflict all women regardless of their class-status. The danger of allying too much to the Islamic tenets while attempting to protect women's rights further lay in having at some point to compromise on certain issues. For instance women activists who belonged to the second school refrained from smoking in public places and hesitated to be vocal about the governments' proposal to ban women from participating in spectator sports. In the process of not wanting to alienate anybody, there stands a greater chance of giving in to the very patriarchal culture one is expected to challenge.

Rana Riaz Saeed feels that the biggest failure of the movement has been the tendency to look at all women irrespective of class, region and ethnic background in the same light and trying to find solutions to multifarious problems with one formula<sup>33</sup>. At the risk of taking too individualistic a stand, she does have a significant point to make. According to her the very fact that virtually no attention or importance is given to the numerous successful women who can be and are equivalent to their counterparts in more developed countries who lead

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<sup>33</sup> Rana Riaz, Saeed. 2001. *The Movement in Pakistan : Advocating Women's Rights*. Islamabad. Development Economist.

full and independent likes with careers and their own choice of lifestyle is problematic if progress is to be made. Women's development initiatives whether of the government or otherwise make sweeping generalizations on the appalling status of Pakistani women without taking into account the plurality of the picture. "This general bashing of Pakistan on women's issues has very negative effects. It puts off international donors. Pakistan has one of the smallest number of NGOs working and one of the reasons for that is often quoted to be the anti-woman image of this country ..... Advocacy is good and so is the struggle for women's rights. But to be productive, the advocacy as well as the struggle has to be focussed. One cannot expect to solve the problems of all Pakistani women with one formula because there is no such thing as 'a Pakistani women'"<sup>34</sup>.

Despite the disagreements and conflicts within the movement itself, Pakistan has a vibrant women's movement with many activist groups like the *Shirkat gah* and WAF (*Women's Action Forum*) etc. who are constantly on the alert and actively oppose the anti-woman acts of the state without whom the freedom and lives of women in Pakistan would be curtailed and put to greater hardships.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

## (b) The Women's Movement in Bangladesh

Bangladesh being a strongly patriarchal society, the men play a dominant role both within the family as well as in society as a whole. Particularly in rural areas, a strong patriarchal order prevails. All decisions in most villages are made by a body of males called the *Shalish*.

As in most countries of the developing world and south Asia in particular, Bangladesh is a country where women are subordinated by the rising obsession with fundamentalist traditions and practices. Bangladesh is not governed by Shariat laws and fatwas are strictly prohibited, the practice of declaring them by "the half-educated rustic mullahs with virtually no knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence" continues<sup>35</sup>. These mullahs interpret the Quranic injunctions and sunna in their own free wheeling way to repress and subjugate the women, taking advantage of their illiteracy .....(and) of the religions sentiments of simple rural folk". Fatwas are pronounced on adultery, rape, divorce, etc and the verdict almost always goes against women. Much attention of the world community was attracted by the fundamentalist ire against writer Taslima Nasreen. Despite this, most women activists resent the picture created by the Western media (in reaction to the fatwa against Nasreen) of Bangladesh being an oppressive society where women are cloaked in silence and are helpless

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<sup>35</sup> R.M. Pal. Women's Movement in Islamic Countries. New Delhi. PUCL Bulletin. Dec.2000.

before fundamentalists. They see the rising level of fundamentalism as a reaction against the emerging strength of the women's movement in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has had more than its share of liberation struggles and women have been equal participants in them. Women all more and more emerging out of their homes into the work area as poverty levels increase. Alternative employment and opportunities have also been created by the rising number of non-governmental organizations. This emergence of women as a force is threatening to the fundamentalist forces. They consider the women's movement in Bangladesh as a strong, unified one where everyday, hundreds of ordinary women confront and resist fundamentalism. Women have organised themselves under NGOs, trade unions and middle-class organizations such as research organizations. The main concern of NGOs continues to be with advocacy and awareness-building. While earlier women worked largely in unorganized sectors, now these women work with other women trade union activists. There is a strong link between all the different groups and the coming together of two or more of these as specific issues might demand is not unusual. The left have taken up core issues which directly and indirectly affect women like communalism and environmental destruction etc.



### ( C) The Movement in Nepal

An organised women's movement in Nepal began with their struggle to overthrow the Rana regime during the first half of the twentieth century<sup>36</sup>. Most of the women involved were in some way or other related to prominent male leaders of the political opposition. During the period between 1950-60, Nepal enjoyed a brief period of democracy during which women's organization grew and began to seriously advocate legislative reformation of oppressive practices like polygamy and child marriage. 1960 once again saw the demise of a proper democracy when king Mahendra sought to establish what was referred to as 'Panchayat Democracy'<sup>37</sup>. During this period the *Nepal Women's Organisation* (NWO) was established and was expected to serve the needs of women through different programmes but it failed to make any real impact. It remained limited to providing adult literacy classes and stereotypical traditional skill development training for women. From the 80's onwards however there was gradual increase in the number of NGOs working with women's issues and funds were used to increase awareness among the lower classes especially in villages through a combination of various programmes like income generation, health and political/legal advocacy along with Non-formal education programs. 1992 saw the emergence of the WSPG (*The Women's Security Pressure Group*), a women's advocacy group which is active in raising awareness on issues directly

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<sup>36</sup> Belbase, Shrestha and Singh. 'The Nepal Experience', in Vimala Ramachandran (ed.) 1998 *Bridging the Gap between Intention and Action*. New Delhi. ASPBAE and UNESCO. P. 187

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.190.

concerned with discrimination against women and in proposing/ pressurizing in favour of policy reforms in those areas<sup>38</sup>. These groups most significantly help by forging vital links between elite urban women activists and rural women by their widespread membership and activities.

This does not however go to say that there are no conflicts of interests and perspectives between the two groups of women. One of the differences in outlook of lies, for instance, in the demand by certain urban based women activists for a reformation of the property laws in Nepal. As it exists, the property law in Nepal is based upon persevering the family structure and is regarded as being progressive. The Human Development Report in South Asia 2000 says that Nepal laws are relatively women-friendly. In terms of property rights, women are given two different legal statuses according to the existing laws.

If a woman remains unmarried beyond the age of thirty five, as a daughter she is legally entitled to inherit an equal share in property as would a son. As a married woman, she is entitled to half of the share of her husbands property. Women belonging to the urban elite, according to certain women activists, do not see this as promoting equality between men and women. Lack of access to familial property, according to them, and therefore lack of control over resources are obstacles to women's participation in development projects and in decision-

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.190.

making processes. Further women are effectively excluded from institutional credit since they have little access to inherited property. Activists belonging to the opposing school of thought feel that where millions of women live under severe conditions of poverty and there is no parental property to share to begin with, these reforms will be of no consequence. Reformation of these laws would only benefit few while destabilising the existing family structure. Over-emphasis and attention on such issues, they feel, sidetrack attention from the pressing problems of increasing female trafficking, feminization of agriculture and abysmal levels of educational achievements

#### **(d) The Women's Movement in India**

The women's movement in India can be quite easily referred to as one of the most dynamic and vibrant of all political movements in India. The origin of the movement can be traced from the social reform movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when campaigns for the improvement of the conditions of women's lives were taken up, initially by men. By the end of the century women had begun to organize themselves and gradually they took up a number of causes such as education, the condition of women's work and so on. It was in the early 1900's that women's organizations were set-up, and many of the women who were active in these later became involved in the freedom movement. While many saw independent India as the necessity to change the woeful status of women,

not much happened to justify that vision. Patriarchy, it became obvious, had simply taken on different forms. The 60's and 70's thus saw a spate of movements in which women took part both inside and outside political parties. This had its period of lull during the period of emergency after which political activity once again resumed. It was around this time that many of the contemporary women's groups began to get formed, with their members often being women with a history of involvement in other political movements. One of the first issues to receive country-wide attention from women's groups was violence against women, specifically in the form of rape and what is known in India as 'dowry deaths'. Most protests were then directed against the government and because women were able to mobilize support, the State responded by making the laws on rape and dowry much more stringent. But it soon became apparent that mere changes in the law meant little without a change in societal attitudes. There was a need for raising awareness or conscientisation, and as a result legal-aid and counseling centers were set up and attempts were made to establish women's shelters. Women's activity was on a high, and whether or not it could be defined as 'feminist', it was nonetheless geared towards improving the conditions of women's lives.

In recent years, however, the nature of the movement changed drastically into a more thought-out and complex response to specific issues. Since the movement appears to comprise of urban, western and middle-class women, the

movement itself is sometimes seen as a modern and westernized product which is far-removed from the lives of millions of underprivileged women inhabiting the villages of India. This image arises only because the urban, middle class women are more visible and while their participation is undeniable, campaigns like the anti-alcohol in Andhra Pradesh and similar campaigns in various parts of India which are started and sustained by poor, working class women who form the backbone of the women's movement in India<sup>39</sup>.

NGOs have become a powerful force in the women's movement and there are hundreds of them focusing solely on women's issues. In Uttarakhand alone there are four hundred such NGOs. In the hill areas of UP a strong women's movement developed from the famous Chipko movement to defend forests in the 70's. But while few rise to the need of the hour and do good work, the rest funded as they are by foreign donors tend to cater to the priorities of the donors and rarely tend to be confrontational. While the women's organizations affiliated to CPI and CPI-M and other left organisations like the *AIPWA (All India Progressive Women's Association)* do play a major role in the women's movement, some of the women activists from within the party itself felt that they had failed to seriously challenge sexual inequality, cultivate female leadership, or address the problems of poor rural women.

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<sup>39</sup> (Urvashi Butalia et al. *The Womens Movement in India : Action and Reflection*, Communique. No.42-43, July-Aug. 1997). Ibid.

Herself a Marxist and a feminist Shahnaz Sheikh puts this quite eloquently, 'Now, I had learnt a lot of things from my association with Marxist-feminist women's groups and their analysis of society, but the first thing that struck me was : they say they're a women's group but they can't even relate to a woman - we don't do case work, they say ! first of all we don't see women as "cases"..... Then they say, we don't glorify personal struggle - nobody is saying glorify it, we all know that collectives give more strength - but then I used to feel my struggle is useless, it has no value"<sup>40</sup>.

There are therefore internal contradictions within the movement itself but this is more or less characteristic and feminists like Urvashi Butalia contend that rather than looking at the absence of a single cohesive movement as a weakness, its plurality might on the other hand be better accepted as one of the strengths of the movement.

#### **(e) The Women's Movement in Sri Lanka**

Women have made rich contributions to the Sri Lankan economy from very early days, as part of the huge work force on tea plantations, in export productions like the government industry, but this is not given the visibility deserves. Only of late after a prolonged struggle have they managed to attain

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<sup>40</sup> Shahnaz Sheikh in an interview with Ritu Menon, in Kamla Bhasin, et.al 1994. Op.cit.p.189.

equal pay as men in the plantations. They form a sizeable portion of the teaching professionals. The first women's community organization *Lanka Mahila Samiti* was started in 1930 and its main concern was development through rural women's participation in civil society. Many other civil society organizations were established in the following decades like the Sri Lanka Federation of University Women, the Women's Political Union etc. The All Ceylon Women's Conference was established in 1984 as an apex association for all such organizations. Due to the consistent efforts of these women's groups a separate Ministry of Women's Affairs was established. The activities of these groups varies from research on women's issues at the national level, to community work at the micro levels of village and district. The NGOs in Sri Lanka relating to gender issues are also fairly large in number. According to a survey of 291 NGOs in 1996, nearly 20 per cent were concerned with women's issues of development and advocacy<sup>41</sup>. WIN or Women in Need is one such NGO that works with the issue of domestic violence. The women's organizations have been able to successfully lobby for a range of including employment, sanitation, housing and nutrition for the women of their communities. However, it is still felt that of all the South Asian countries, Sri Lanka has perhaps the least developed women's liberation and strengthening it would be beneficial in the extreme, especially in the light of the specific problem of ethnic strife in Sri Lanka. Despite this Sri Lanka has the highest levels of literacy and female enrolment in primary education in the South Asian region and this reflects the political will of the State in Sri Lanka.

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<sup>41</sup> HDSA. 2000. op.cit.

### III

It is apparent that the women's movement remains heterogeneous and multi-polar. While there are a number of groups with differing and sometimes opposing ideological orientations and covering a wide-variety of issues and strategies, all of them share a common concern with the subordination of women. The movement has a broad base and all issues are taken as women's issues rather than falling into the trap of too narrow a focus and range of concerns.

The women's movement has managed to bring to the forefront the problems of women's subordination and this has helped in increasing the efforts to improve their status by the State as well as other civil society organizations.



## Chapter II

In the previous chapter, an attempt is made to study important concepts used in gender research and to describe the feminist discourse apart from tracing the women's movement in South Asia which is indispensable in the process of transformation of society as it exists. There is a universal consensus on the fact that education is an essential factor in order to improve women's lives. In this Chapter the direct impact of women's education is studied along with the numerous factors which stand in the way of girl's and women's education.

### **Significance Of Women's Education**

"Literacy is a basic tool of self-defence in a society where social interaction often involves the written media. An illiterate person is that much less equipped to defend herself in court, to obtain a bank loan, to enforce her inheritance rights, to take advantage of new technology, to compete for secure employment, to get on the right bus, to take part in political activity, in short, to participate successfully in the modern economy and society."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen. 1995. India : Economic Development and Social Opportunity. New Delhi. Oxford University Press.p.109.

Educating women means progress in the economic, social and political spheres in general and specifically has a bearing on the family. Differences between the sexes in the status of health, education and employment opportunities are the only factors which can be used to judge the levels of gender inequality. Therefore the study of these factors acquires significance. One of the primary interests in attempting to study the educational status of women is the concern in obtaining equal access to resources and opportunities for women. That women's education has strong links to reduced child and maternal mortality, reduced fertility, improved family health, increased educational attainment of children and specifically girls are firmly established facts.<sup>2</sup>

### **Impact of Education**

Studies report that one extra year of female schooling reduces female fertility by 5-10 per cent and translates into a decline in child mortality by 5-10 per cent<sup>3</sup>. A study on India demonstrates that higher female education and wider availability and use of medical services are two crucial factors associated with low infant mortality in the state of Kerala.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Human Development in South Asia (HDSA). 2000. Karachi. Oxford University Press and Mahabub ul Haq Human Development Centre, p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 109

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth M. King and M. Anne Hill. 1993. Women's Education in Developing Countries : Barriers, Benefits and Policies. Baltimore. John Hopkins University Press, p. 13

<sup>5</sup> Primary Education in India. 1997. A world Bank Publication, New Delhi, Allied Publishers

According to a World Bank Report (1999), a study of forty five developing countries found that the average mortality rate for children under five was 144 per 1000 live births when their mother were totally uneducated, 106 per 1000 when they had only primary education and 68 per 1000 when they had some secondary education.<sup>5</sup>

### THE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S SCHOOLING

	BANGLADESH	INDIA	NEPAL	PAKISTAN	SRI LANKA
<u>AGE AT MARRIAGE</u>					
a) No schooling	13.8	15	n/a	18.3	21
b) Primary	13.9	16.8	n/a	18.9	20.9
c) Secondary or more	16.1	20.2	n/a	22.5	24
<u>DESIRED FAMILY SIZE</u>					
a) No schooling					
b) Primary	2.6	3.1	3.2	4.3	3.5
c) Secondary or more	2.4	2.6	n/a	4.1	3.4
	2.2	2.2	2.4	3.4	2.8
<u>CONTRACEPTIVE USE</u>					
a) No schooling					
b) Primary	41	34	23	8	54
c) Secondary or more	46	50	n/a	18	62
	57	53	45	38	62

Source : R. Jeffery & A. Basu (ed.), 1996. Girls Schooling, Women's Autonomy and Fertility change in South Asia. New Delhi, Sage Publications.

Educated mothers are more likely to want to send their girl children to school. For Pakistan, N. M. Shah (1984) cites a study showing that two-thirds of illiterate rural women wanted only religious education for their daughters, whereas of those rural women who had upto six years of schooling, two-thirds

wanted their daughters to complete secondary school and 17 per cent wanted them to have a college education.<sup>6</sup>

Studies further reveal that the wife's role in decision-making may be weaker than the husband's when the husband's education is much greater than the wife's.<sup>7</sup> Little control by women over their reproductive lives and over the allocation of resources for children may mean larger families and less healthy children. Therefore a large gender gap can lead to significant welfare losses.

## **CONSTRAINTS TO WOMEN'S EDUCATION**

All the South Asian countries, with the exception of Sri Lanka, face similar problems in increasing female participation in the education process. South Asia's female literacy rate of 36 per cent is the lowest among all regions of the world : It is much lower than the average for the developing world (62 per cent) and compares poorly with 48 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 95 per cent in East Asia (excluding China).<sup>8</sup> South Asia has 243 million illiterate women today – two-thirds of the regions adult female population and 45 per cent of the world's total illiterate women.<sup>9</sup> Every country has emphasized in successive Five Year Plans the priority to be given to education but this has however not been able to

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<sup>6</sup> Shahrukh R. Khan, 'South Asia' in Elizabeth King (ed). op.cit., p. 226

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 19

<sup>8</sup> Human Development in South Asia. 1998. Islamabad. Oxford University Press.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

translate itself into tangible improvements in statistics. The reasons for this are many and varied including poverty and culture constraints. Low parental motivation is a powerful obstacle in the path of female education. According to Dreze and Sen the reasons are three-pronged.<sup>10</sup> The first being that the gender division of labour where the benefits of female education, when females are exclusively involved in domestic work and child-rearing and at least agriculture, is not directly perceivable. Secondly, the income derived by females, as a result of education or otherwise, does not benefit in the long run her natal family but her marital one. Thirdly, the conception that more dowry would have to be coughed up so that an educated daughter can marry a 'more educated' boy.

In Pakistan only one in every four females is literate compared to one in every two males. Translated into literacy percentages, the literacy rate for females is 25 per cent and 55 per cent for males. In Nepal the overall literacy rate was 38 per cent for both sexes, 56 per cent for males and only 21 per cent for females. In India the female literacy rate is 39 per cent as against 67 per cent for males. Bangladesh had female literacy at 27 per cent and male literacy at 50 per cent. The only exception to the dismal figures is Sri Lanka which had an exceptionally high rate of 88 per cent for females and male literacy at 94 per cent<sup>11</sup> (All figures are for 1997).

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<sup>10</sup> Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen. *Op.cit.*, p. 134

<sup>11</sup> HDSA 2000. *op.cit.*, p. 105

STATE OF FEMALE EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA								
	INDIA	PAKISTAN	BANGLADESH	NEPAL	SRI LANKA	BHUTAN	MALDIVES	SOUTH ASIA
Primary Enrolment Ratio (NET) 1997								
GIRLS	71	62	70	63	100	12	98	70
BOYS	83	71	80	93	100	14	96	81
TOTAL	77	67	75	78	100	13	97	76
Secondary Enrolment Ratio (NET) 1997								
GIRLS								
BOYS	48	17	16	40	79	2	49	41
TOTAL	71	33	27	68	73	7	49	61
	60	25	22	55	76	5	49	51
Literacy Rate (%) 1997								
GIRLS								
BOYS	39	25	27	21	88	30	96	37
TOTAL	67	55	50	56	94	58	96	64
	54	41	39	38	91	44	96	51

Source : Human Department in South Asia, 2000. Karachi. Oxford University Press and Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre.

The problems enumerated are always the same and cut across political boundaries. These include

- a) Poverty,
- b) Social apathy to women's education,
- c) Lack of economic returns to the family of orientation,
- d) Need of the girl child's labour in domestic work.
- e) Personal security,
- f) Notions of having to pay more dowry for educated girls and
- g) Misinterpretation of religion.

These are complex and inter-related problems which need more than resource allocation and government policies. The broad heads under which they can be classified are

- (i) Poverty.
- (ii) Infra-structural Problems.
- (iii) Cultural constraints.

- (i) *Poverty* : Grinding poverty is the biggest barrier to education in South Asia, making the direct costs of schooling and the opportunity costs of forgone child labour too expensive for most families to afford. Further the resource allocation of any country to female education is automatically

related to that country's general economic and social development. The South Asian countries fall in the low income group with corresponding low GNP per capita.

<b>Distribution Of Adult Population By Highest Education Level, Gender, And Urban Or Rural Residence, South Asia, About 1980. (Per Cent)</b>						
Country and level of schooling completed	FEMALES			MALES		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
<b>BANGLADESH</b>						
a) No Schooling	83.2	68.2	85.5	57.5	39.7	61.7
b) Primary	12.0	15.6	11.5	21.1	20.1	21.3
c) Secondary	4.4	14.5	2.9	19.1	32.1	15.9
d) Tertiary	0.3	1.8	0.1	2.4	8.0	1.1
<b>INDIA</b>						
a) No Schooling	83.2	-	-	57.6	-	-
b) Primary	7.9	-	-	15.6	-	-
c) Secondary	7.6	-	-	22.4	-	-
d) Tertiary	1.2	-	-	4.3	-	-
<b>NEPAL</b>						
a) No Schooling	36.4	27.8	39.0	41.2	24.9	43.8
b) Primary	41.6	24.5	46.6	26.3	16.3	27.9
c) Secondary	17.1	32.3	12.7	25.0	34.4	23.5
d) Tertiary	4.9	15.3	1.9	7.6	24.4	4.8
<b>PAKISTAN</b>						
a) No Schooling	89.1	71.2	96.0	65.8	44.5	75.3
b) Primary	5.2	11.5	2.8	12.8	14.9	11.8
c) Secondary	4.8	14.3	1.2	18.1	31.9	11.9
d) Tertiary	0.9	2.9	0.1	3.3	8.6	1.0
<b>SRI LANKA</b>						
a) No Schooling	20.1	10.4	22.8	8.3	5.2	9.5
b) Primary	45.6	39.4	47.3	51.2	39.9	55.6
c) Secondary	33.5	48.3	29.3	39.0	51.6	34.0
d) Tertiary	0.9	1.9	0.6	1.5	3.4	1.0

Source : Elizabeth M. King and M. Anne Hill (ed), 1993. Women's Education in Developing Countries : Barriers, Benefits & Policies. Baltimore : John Hopkins Univ. Press.

The South Asian countries clearly have an insufficient allocation of resources for education. Over-all South Asia is spending 3.5 per cent of its GNP on education, compared to 4.3 per cent in East Asia, 5.5 per cent in Sub-Saharan



Africa and 5.5 per cent is the Arab States.<sup>12</sup> The negative impact of these low financial commitments is made worse by the persistent neglect of some priority areas of education, such as basic education and women's education. In South Asia, education budgets are generally distorted in favour of higher general education. The bias in the South Asian region in favour of colleges and universities greatly squeezes the financial budgets for basic education.

However some experiences demonstrate that poverty of national income is no barrier to the spread of basic education where the political will to overcome this is high enough. Several of the poorer states within India have managed to achieve higher levels of education than the richer ones. Kerala with a per capita income of \$1017 (1993) has a literacy rate of 90 per cent, compared to 58 per cent in Punjab which has more than double the per capita income of Kerala. Similarly, in the international scenario. Sri Lanka and Maldives have already achieved over 90 per cent adult literacy rate and near universal primary school enrolment. Vietnam with a per capita income of \$1208 (1994) has attained an adult literacy rate of 94 per cent while India with a per capita income of \$1348 had 52 per cent literacy and Pakistan with per capita income of \$2154 is even further behind, with 38 per cent literacy.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> HDSA. 1998. op.cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

At the individual level, a family's income appears to be related positively to the education of girls. A higher income enables the family to bear both the direct and indirect costs of education. A number of studies including Rosenzweig's (1980) and Ahmed and Hasan's (1984) show that girls education varies positively with their family's income and land holdings.<sup>14</sup>

**(ii) Infra-structural Problems/School factors**

Among these are the insufficient number of female teachers, distance of the school from home, lack of basic amenities and irrelevant curricula. Several experiences showed a dramatic expansion in girl's enrolment once these supply-side constraints are overcome.

Less than 25 per cent of primary school teachers are women.<sup>15</sup> Cultural forces create a need for female school teachers as also for single-sex schools. Parents feel more motivated to send their daughters to school when they know that they will be taught by women teachers. At the primary level there are few female teachers in most countries : 25 per cent in Pakistan, 27 per cent in Bangladesh, 31 per cent in India. Sri Lanka is a notable exception with 82 per cent female teachers.<sup>16</sup> There is considerable evidence that primary school

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<sup>14</sup> Shahrukh R. Khan *op.cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>15</sup> HDSA 1999 *op.cit.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

enrolment and completion rates and achievement levels particularly for girls are higher when teachers are female.

Most of the schools studied have been found to lack even the most basic amenities. Many of the schools do not have toilets or drinking water and many did not even have a blackboard or books. Sinha and Sinha (1995) found that only 9 per cent of the sample schools in their report on Indian districts benches and chairs; 59 per cent had blackboards (after Operation Blackboard); only 39 per cent had government provision for purchase of chalk from their own resources or with collection from students; 13 per cent had toilets; 16 per cent had teaching materials, classes are commonly held in verandahs or open spaces (with the exception of Kerala). Similarly in Bangladesh Qasem (1983) found that 71 per cent of the rural schools and 53 per cent of the urban schools had no latrines. Most parents are found to be reluctant to send their girl children to schools which do not have toilets.<sup>17</sup> A study by Ahmed and Hasan (1984) found that families have withdrawn students from schools for this reason alone.<sup>18</sup> Many Pakistani parents are also resistant to enrolling their daughter in schools that do not have high, solid boundary walls to ensure privacy (Anderson 1988).

There are two basic problems relating to curricula one being that uneducated parents prefer that their daughters only learnt childcare, cooking and

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<sup>17</sup> Shahrukh R. Khan op.cit. p. 230

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

other skills which might aid their domestic work as part of the curriculum. The second problem being that the existing curriculum in most South Asian countries are inherently patriarchal. Kalia (1980) analysed that the content of 41 Indian textbooks (in Hindi and English) used in four states and Delhi revealed that males were the exclusive leading actors in 75 per cent of the lessons with females taking precedence in only 7 per cent of the lessons. She found only seven biographical sketches of women but 47 of men.<sup>19</sup> Women, she concludes, were still being prepared for a role requiring only servitude and support. Singhal (1984) also cites evidence from India confirming the existence of sex stereotyping in Hindi textbooks.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, Gunawardena (1987) points to a textbook survey showing that non-stereotyped sex roles outnumbered stereotyped roles in Sinhala and Tamil textbooks.<sup>21</sup> Women & girls are presented as passive characters, while boys and men are presented in various active roles. Generally, in a gender neutral situation, illustrations depict a boy rather than a girl. Even in information on folk art, handicrafts, and agriculture, where women's role had been traditionally significant, or co-operative and other development programmes and community activities where women have made a remarkable contribution in recent times, they are not mentioned in the textbooks or depicted in illustrations. Such stereotypes in educational material reinforce patriarchal gender ideology that justify women's inferior and unequal status in all social

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid  
<sup>20</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

structures and proves to be an obstacle to women's participation as agents in formal education and development.

### **(iii) Cultural Constraints**

A number of religions and social norms stand in the way of women's education. Domestic work, marriage, betrothal and parental indifference are major obstacles. Early marriage and the importance of preserving a girl's good reputation lead to widespread withdrawal of girls from school at puberty, especially if they attend co-educational institutions.

The fear that schooling would undermine a girl's traditional mindset and reduce their willingness to engage in physical labour. Education is perceived as making females self-centered, defiant of parental authority and uninterested in household affairs. This view is supported by a number of country studies including Desai (1987), Seetharam and Ushadevi (1985) for India, Shrestha (1986) for Nepal and Smock (1981) for Pakistan.<sup>22</sup>

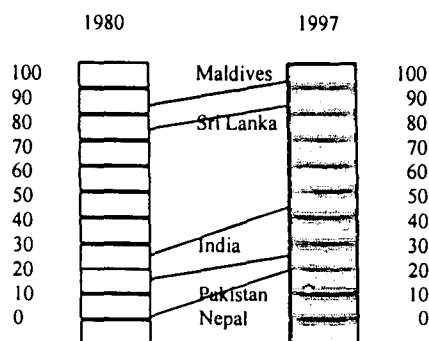
It would not be fair to say that there has been no improvement at all in the last twenty years in terms of literacy rate & primary school enrolment rates apart from other factors considered part of the development indices. The average literacy rate of women has doubled from 17 per cent in 1960 to 37 per cent in

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.227

1997.<sup>23</sup> The primary school enrolment rate for girls, has risen significantly, reaching parity in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and near parity in several states of India and in Bangladesh. But again in Pakistan, Nepal and some states in India, gender disparity in enrolment is still very wide.

Figure 1 Progress in Female literacy



Source : HDSA 2000.op.cit., p.104.

There is no dearth of policies laying special emphasis on female education but the creation of policies does not necessary imply its implementation as is proved in the South Asian countries.

<sup>23</sup> HDSA. 2000. op.cit., p. 172

Box 1

## Recurring policy recommendations to enhance girls' access to education

- Schools within walking distance, closer to the place of habitation; if necessary, satellite schools for remote hamlets;
- Provide child care facilities/crèche within school premises;
- Escorts for girls, if school is at a distance from the village or hamlet;
- Introduce flexible school timings and region-specific school calendar;
- Provide alternative modes/forms with non-formal, condensed courses for drop-outs, residential schools (Ashram Shalas) for special focus groups like nomadic tribes, etc.;
- more women teachers in rural areas, with residential accommodation;
- expand the pool women teachers by lowering qualifications, intensive training (near the place of habitation), provide regular educational support, organize special condensed courses for drop-outs who can be trained to work as teachers, provide secure accommodation for outstation teachers, etc.;
- make curriculum relevant to the lives of poor women who are engaged in a struggle for survival;
- recognize the problem of working children and provide special facilities for them;
- introduce facilities for 'bridge programmes' to enable drop-outs to re-enter the school system;
- provide incentives like uniforms, textbooks, exercise books, attendance scholarships, free bus passes, etc.;
- involve the community in managing the school through advocacy, mobilization, and formation of village education committees with at least 50 per cent women members;
- improve the quality of education, motivate teachers to make learning a pleasurable experience;
- decentralize educational planning and administration, and bring it closer to people so that it reflects the special needs and aspirations of the community;
- address management issues that inhibit the implementation of government policy, such as grievance redressal, administrators' and teachers' unions resistance to flexible timings, school of calendar, recruitment of women with lower qualifications from rural areas, recruitment of local youth in remote areas where teacher absenteeism is rampant, appointment of teachers to a specific school, etc.;
- mobilize public opinion for primary education and universal literacy in general, and women's education in particular. Advocate for greater political will and administrative commitment. Make it a national mission with time-bound 'targets', akin to the National Literacy Mission (NLM) and the National Elementary Education Mission (NEEM).

Source: Vimala Ramachandaran (ed.), 1998, op.cit. p.78.

In post-independent India there has been special emphasis on women's education in the National Committee on Women's Education (NCWE) under the chairpersonship of Durgabhai Deshmukh, the Hansa Mehta Committee appointed by the NCWE (1962), the Bhaktvatsala Committee, the Indian Education Commission under Dr. D.S. Kothari (1964-66), the National Policy on Education (1968), the XIIIth meeting of NCWE (1974), Committee on the status of women in India (1974), National Policy on Education and Program of Action (1986), and the Revised National Policy on Education and Program of Action (1992) apart from the Five Year Plans. In the chapter 'Education for women's equality' of the National Policy on Education (1986), it is stated that,

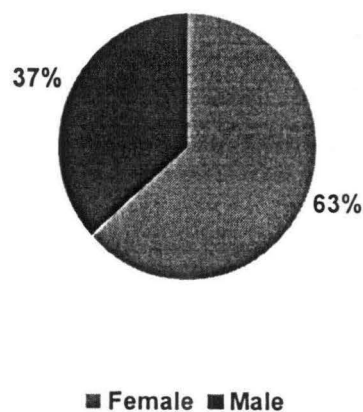
Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distributions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The national education system will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators, and the active involvement of educational institutions. This will be an act of faith and social engineering .... The removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to, and retention in, elementary education will receive



overriding priority, through provision of special support services, setting of time targets, and effective monitoring ....<sup>24</sup>

The same pattern of show of (political) commitment is repeated in the other countries of South Asia but more than fifty years after independence the educational status of the female half of the population continues to remain grim in India as well as Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan with the only exception of Sri Lanka.

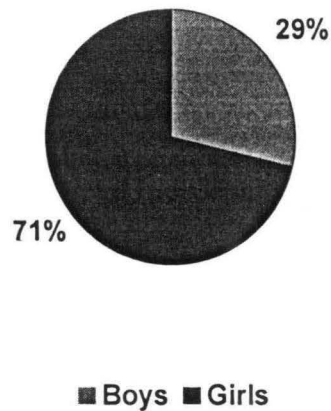
**Figure 2a :**  
**Illiterate females as a percentage**  
**of total illiterate population (2000)**



<sup>24</sup>

Government of India, National Policy on Education (1986). New Delhi.

**Figure 2b:**  
**Girls out of school as a percentage of total out of school children (1997)**



*Source* : HDSA, 2000, op.cit. p.104.

The significance of women's education as one of 'the most powerful levers' to bring about a change in the status of women and promote gender equality is universally recognised. Though many studies have been done on the impact of education on the various factors comprising the human development indices the pace of improvement in the field of girls and women's education has been by and large slow and unsatisfactory. While many factors have been identified as chiefly responsible for this slow rate of growth, lack of political will in terms of actual implementation is a significant problem. This is apparent from the fact that certain countries within the region and certain states within India and Bangladesh have managed to achieve better growth rates despite facing the same problems in effect.

### CHAPTER III

While voluntary organizations have made significant change in the development process of the South Asian countries, many factors have proved obstacles in their making seniors inroads as far as the development indices go. The sheer magnitude of the problem, lack of coordinated effort and problems of implementation prove to negate some of the most innovative efforts in the process of development. However, focusing on the pockets of achievement would be beneficial as it proves that concentrated and dedicated work which might appear off-beat does yield big benefits. In this Chapter the focus would be on the functioning of the voluntary sector both as individual efforts and in coordination with the state apparatus as well as on the problems faced by them. Further attention would be directed towards the view that while NGOs do make a significant difference, they cannot, for a number of reasons, be looked upon as the sole guardians and builders of the development process.

A 1994 UN document describes an NGO as a 'non-profit entity whose members are citizens or associations of citizens of one or more countries and whose activities are determined by the collective will of its members in response

to the needs of the members of one or more communities with which the NGO cooperates'<sup>1</sup>.

This kind of a broad definition includes various types of groups except for private businesses, revolutionary or terrorist groups and political parties. Other popular substitutes for the term NGO (private voluntary organizations, civil society organizations, and the independent sector) are likewise terminally vague. In order to actually comprehend the characteristics and reality of NGOs, it would be beneficial to focus such factors as their respective goals, membership and funding sources.

### Classification of NGOs

Goals	Membership and Personnel	Funding	Activities
<p><b>Ultimate Goal?</b> Change societal norms; improve understanding; influence agendas, influence policies, implement policies; solve problems absent adequate government action?</p> <p><b>For What/Whose Benefit?</b> Public interest (for single purpose or broad social benefit), private interests of members or groups of firms; interests of the "non-represented" (future generations, planet)?</p>	<p><b>Members?</b> Individuals, organizations? Quasi-governmental, voluntary, open to everyone, etc.?</p> <p><b>Geographic Range?</b> Community, substantial, national, regional, transnational?</p> <p><b>Personal?</b> Undifferentiated (voluntary), expert and professional, invited, elected, managerial?</p>	<p><b>Sources?</b> Dues/assessments, donations, foundations, governments (grants or contracts) intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)?</p>	<p><b>Function?</b> Advocacy; information gathering and analysis; information dissemination; generation of ideas and recommendations; monitoring and watchdog role; service delivery; mediation/facilitation; financing and grant making?</p> <p><b>Area of Operation?</b> Community, subnational, national, regional, international?</p> <p><b>Targets?</b> Public consumers, governments, IGOs, nonstate actors (including other NGOs, private sector)?</p>

Source: P.J. Simmon. 1998. 'Learning to Live with NGOs', Foreign Policy, Fall, 1998.

<sup>1</sup> P.J. Simmon. 1998. 'Learning to Live with NGOs', Foreign Policy, Fall, 1998, p.83.

The following can be listed as what constitute the features of voluntary organizations<sup>2</sup> -

- (a) It is a grouping of several people.
- (b) The grouping is formal, lasting and characterized by on-going projects.
- (c) It is a non-profit organization.
- (d) Voluntary associations share resources i.e, time, information, finances, etc.
- (e) Sharing resources helps in the realization of specific or collective interests.

Simple classification of voluntary organizations would be according to<sup>3</sup> -

- (i) Orientation of the voluntary organization - Here the point of focus is on the areas of interest pursued by the organizations. These can be grouped under two heads according to whether they focus on functions of organizations and grouping and serve to protect the interests of the members. These would come under the head of instrumental organizations. The second group focus more on meeting collective needs and are called Expressive Organisations.
- (ii) History of creation and change - Richard Balme<sup>4</sup> distinguishes three major types of organizational structures based on their modes of

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<sup>2</sup> Voluntary Organisations. Current Sociology, July 1998, Vol.46 (3), p.64.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.65.

creation and change. (a) traditional (b) socio-cultural (c) para-municipal (to lighten the municipal-administrative workload).

- (iii) Fields of intervention - Voluntary organizations are classified according to the fields in which they work like health, education, social science, religion etc.

Korten presented a categorization of NGOs in a special NGO issue of World Development journal (1987) which he called the three generations of private voluntary development action<sup>5</sup> -

- (i) Relief and Welfare - Relief activities are the origin also for many large welfare oriented NGOs. "As these organizations brought their expertise to bear in non-disaster situations they gave birth to a first generation of private voluntary development assistance. As development strategy relief and welfare approaches offer little more than temporary alleviation of the symptoms of under development"<sup>6</sup>.
- (ii) Small-scale self-reliant local development - Recognizing the limitations of relief and welfare approaches, many NGOs undertook in the later 1970s community development activities such as preventive health, improved farming practices and local infrastructure. They stress local self-reliance sustained beyond the NGO assistance. Often the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> David C. Korten. 1987. 'Third Generation NGO Strategies : A Key to People-Centered Development'. World Development, Vol.15, Supplement Autumn, 1987, p.145.

activities are similar to those of the government in areas where the government does not reach.

- (iii) Sustainable systems development - The focus of this approach is on facilitating sustainable changes in villages and sectors of NGO activity. The role is more catalytic rather than operational service delivery. Here high levels of technical and strategic competence are required.

This classification of Korten's has been widely referred to ever since. Though it has been criticized for a number of reasons including for tracing the development of NGOs as having improved or progressed over a period of time and paying scant attention to the actual complexity of the structure of NGOs.

Judith Tendler identified seven typical characteristics of NGOs that are considered as their comparative advantage in relation to the development assistance of the State<sup>7</sup>. According to these 'articles of faith', NGOs reach the poor, are participatory, apply process oriented methods, differ from the public sector by not being bureaucratic, corrupt, uncommitted and inefficient, are experimental and innovative, strengthen local institutions and work cost effectively.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>7</sup> Judith Tendler (1982) Turning Private Voluntary Organization into Development Agencies : Questions for Evaluation. AID Program Evaluation Discussion paper no.12. Washington DC . U.S. Agency for International Development. P.3-7.

## **FUNCTIONING**

The most important aspects of the functioning of NGOs include funding, partnerships and the sustainability of NGO-led development projects.

## **FUNDING**

Maximum of the funding to the voluntary organizations come from foreign sources. There are a number of problems with the concept of external funding -- the obvious being the accountability of NGOs and another being that programmes are dependent on the present concerns of donor agencies and the possibility that their concerns can shift at any time. However, problems notwithstanding NGOs have a high degree of credibility as far as donor agencies are concerned. Disappointment with official government programs and projects is growing and NGOs have gained such prominence that development transfers through these types of organizations it would seem have become more or less obvious from the donor's point of view. For instance in Norway, in the beginning of the 1990s the share of bilateral aid to NGOs was 25 per cent with the percentage continuing to increase<sup>8</sup>. In the US the government has announced that in future it is going to channel about

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<sup>8</sup> Terje Tvedt. 1995. Non-Governmental Organisations as Channel in Development Assistance. The Norwegian System. OSLO, Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. P i.



40 per cent of its development assistance through NGOs<sup>9</sup>. And, according to certain calculations, the value of total resources from NGOs to the Third World countries accounts for about 15 per cent of total overseas development assistance<sup>10</sup>. The rise of NGOs in South Asia is also directly linked to this new aid practice in world development.

In India, a voluntary organization wishing to receive foreign contributions must apply to the central government for registration under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) which was enacted in 1976. The FCRA regulates the acceptance of foreign currency or foreign hospitality by certain persons or associations. A voluntary organization that is not registered may apply to seek prior permission of the government to receive foreign contributions. There are around 15,000 development organizations registered under the FCRA as eligible to receive foreign funds, and an estimated 60,000 NGOs involved in development activity<sup>11</sup>. Similar mechanisms last in other countries too and this gives an idea as to how much aid is being given for development work on the whole to all such organizations in totality.

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations (1995) Press Release. Soc/4365, March 13. Copenhagan, UN World Summit for Social Development. P.2.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Fowler. 1992. 'Building Partnerships between Northern and Southern Development NGOs. Issues for the Nineties. Development, No.1.p.17.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Norton. 1996. 'The Non-Profit Sector in India. Kent, Charities Aid Foundation. P.21.

The organizations can be broadly classified under two heads<sup>12</sup> namely (a) grant-making organizations which can further be sub-classified as foundations, Donor Agencies, National and International Development Agencies, Specialist NGOs, Support Groups and Denominational initiatives and (b) Operating organizations which can be sub-classified as Traditional charities, Development NGOs, community organizations and people's organizations and campaigning and advocacy organizations.

Funding for development projects are broadly from two sources - (a) government funding and (b) foreign funding. Foreign funding comes from a number of sources including from NRIs, MNCs, Fund-raising groups and Donor agencies, Indian Business' and individuals with earnings outside India and company giving.

Given the changing international scenario, donor priorities change every few years. NGOs have learnt to adapt to changing international funding priorities, moving when the donors move. With the exception of membership based organizations and those that mobilize funds from the public, the proportion of foreign funds have gone up in leaps and bounds.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

### **Problems in Seeking Funding Support<sup>13</sup> -**

- (i) Processing requests for funding assistance is complicated and long drawn-out because of bureaucratic red-tapism and more or less the most favoured for funding are large well-established NGOs.
- (ii) NGOs receiving such funding find it difficult to plan long-term projects because they are dependent on uncertain sources of funding.
- (iii) NGOs may not always be able to stick to their original goals and areas of interests since these would have to take a back seat to those of the aid agency.
- (iv) Priorities of the funding-agencies keep changing over time.
- (v) Inevitably equality does not exist between the NGOs and donors because of the relative dependence of the former on the latter.

### **Sustainability of NGO development projects**

Globalization shifts the balance of power from public to private interests, including NGOs. However, 'sustainable development requires a change in power relations that means much deeper than this : a shift from using power over others to advance our selfish interests, to using power to facilitate the self-development

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<sup>13</sup> Hari Mohan Mathur., 'Participatory Development : Some areas of current concern', Sociological Bulletin, 46 (1) March 1997. p.86.

of all. This demands constant attention to personal change, and a series of reversals in attitudes and behaviour<sup>14</sup>. NGOs as explicitly value-based organizations - have a crucial role to play in supporting those changes through their program activities, constituency-building work and organizational praxis. Policies on sustainable development have been framed by international institutions and these have been shaped by both external and internal pressures. 'Sustainability is an integral component of security embracing economics, politics, international relations, culture, and the search for a more holistic conception of survival'<sup>15</sup>. Accordingly, NGOs and other such non-state actors can support the goals of sustainability.

In order to achieve sustainable development, it is of crucial importance to protect the basic rights of local people over their own resources in an increasingly global economy. This being the case, NGOs could take up the responsibility of representing and reinforcing the needs of the poor since these are otherwise largely ignored by international institutions and multinationals.

A development programme is considered sustainable when it is able to deliver on appropriate level of benefits for an extended period of time after major financial, managerial and technical assistance for an external donor is

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Edwards and Gita Sen., 'NGOs, Social Change and the Transformation of human relationship : A 21<sup>st</sup> Century civic agenda', Third World Quarterly, Vol.21, No.4, p.605, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Sumit Roy., 'Sustainable Development : The Role of International Institutions and NGOs', World Affairs. Apr-June 2000. Vol.4 #2. p.91.

terminated<sup>16</sup>. The ultimate impact of a project with respect to its relevance to the needs of the developing country and the aims of the decision-makers is one measure of judging the sustainability of a project.

Factors which affect sustainability as enumerated by Farhad Hossain<sup>17</sup> include -

- a) Government policies
- b) Management capacity
- c) Organization - NGO very often have too informal an organization structure without a well-defined hierarchy and inadequate communications. Instead of being concerned with long term solutions, immediate responses are sought.
- d) Local participation - While NGOs do much better than the State apparatus in terms of including the community into the programs meant for their benefit, they should be part of the process of planning and implementation at all stages of a project.
- e) Financial factors - Even a minimum dependence on community contribution would be a futile exercise in most of the countries of the Third World.

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<sup>16</sup> OECD (1989) : Sustainability in Development Programmes : A Compendium of Evaluation Experience . Selected Issues in Aid Evaluation - 1. Paris, OECD.

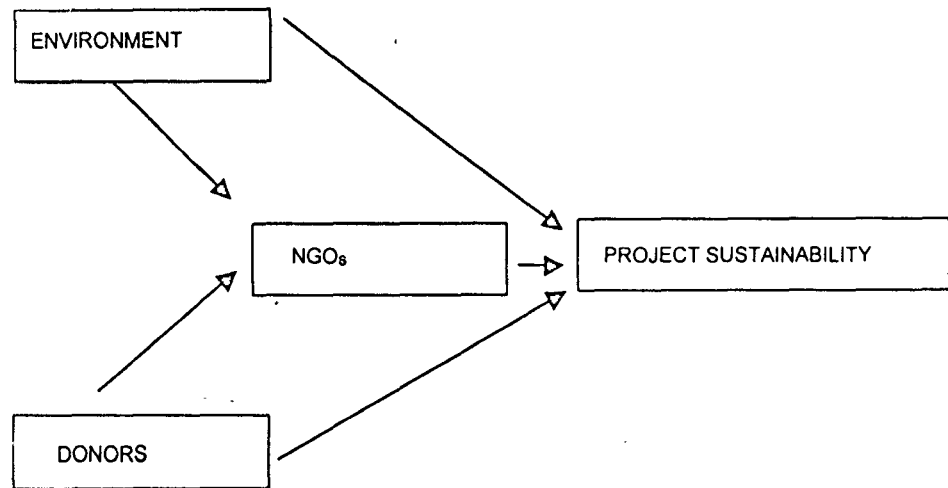
<sup>17</sup> Farhad Hossain. 'Sustainability of NGO-led Development Projects : Lessons from South Asia, in Juha Vartola et al (ed. 2000), Development NGOs Facing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Kathmandu. Institute

- f) Techno Factors - In the case of projects requiring technical expertise, community participation reduces due to lack of skill and therefore external experts become essential.
- g) Socio-cultural factors - In societies where there are differing lifestyles and choices ranging from traditional to modern, programs have to be region specific in order to yield the best results in terms of gender sensitivity etc.

For analytical purposes, the most important factors affecting the sustainability of NGO-led development projects are the over-all and particular work environment of the NGOs in the developing countries, donor policies and commitment levels with respect to the NGOs and the overall management capacity of the operating NGOs<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> for Human Development. P.26-30.  
Ibid.



Careful analysis of the environment where the NGOs function is important to successfully complete a given project. The working environment of the NGOs in the developing country should be studied to ascertain whether governmental policies would be supportive or hostile to their activities. In order to understand the sustainability of a project in the particular target country especially considering ones which have a long-term framework, the policies and commitment of the donor agencies on their own terrain should be studied. The organizational structure, ability to generate maximum local participation of the operating NGO is also vital to the success of a project.

## **Relationship Between NGOs and the Government.**

For long term sustained change and development, a common platform of the government sector, the NGO sector, and the corporate sector and aid agencies are needed to synergize efforts in that direction. The efforts of both international bodies and the government to solve developmental problems through macro-planning have proved to be inadequate because of a variety of factors of which the absence of the involvement of the people for whom the programs are meant is only one. In order to eliminate child labour and to universalize primary education, full time formal schooling is seen as the only real solution by some. In order to achieve this aim it is necessary to simultaneously create the demand for education and lobby the government to meet this demand. On the other hand Tandon (1997) contends that a united effort by the voluntary sector to provide formal primary education could result in bringing about a substantial increase in the literacy rate<sup>19</sup>.

It would prove beneficial for the government to use the expertise and reach of NGOs working with the poor for a more effective system of delivery for their own programs. At present, NGOs do not get enough of importance when it comes to spending government funds. But this could change when it recognizes

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<sup>19</sup> Rajesh Tandon. 1997. 'Voluntary Sector in India : Past Assessment and Future Prospects', prepared for the National Assembly of Voluntary organizations, New Delhi. October 2-4, 1997 (mimeo).



the ability and cost-effectiveness of NGOs in implementing programs. A conference convened by the Planning Commission in 1993 brought together senior officials, politicians and senior representatives of the NGO sector for the first time. There was a consensus about developing a more collaborative partnership between the sectors in working on problems and delivering programs. The conclusions of this event are set out in a report published by the Voluntary Action Network India (VANI) - Action Plan to bring about a collaborative relationship between voluntary organizations and government. A joint committee had been set up with around ten representatives each from government and the NGO sector. This body is chaired by the CAPART Director-General<sup>20</sup>. Its aim is to find ways of strengthening collaborative partnerships between the government and NGOs. Governments recognize the specific strengths of NGOs in reaching the poor and are increasingly turning to them as a resource supplemental to their own.

### **Reasons why NGO linkages with government assumes significance.**

Most NGOs are dependent for funding on foreign/external donors. This jeopardizes the continuity of any long term project because foreign funding comes with no guarantee of its constancy stretched over time.

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<sup>20</sup> CAPART (Council for Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural Technology) is an important quango - government sponsored agency - and funding agency for rural development work through

The foreign funding received by NGOs forms only a small part of the total expenditure on rural development by the government of India. (GOI). The entire funds received by NGOs from internal and external sources account for only 10 per cent of the over all budget of the GOI for poverty alleviation<sup>21</sup>. An effective collaboration between the NGOs and GOI would ensure that the remaining 90 per cent is effectively spent on the most essential areas. The fact that the government controls the wide frameworks and policy environment within which organizations have to operate implies that it would be beneficial for NGOs to enter into a positive relationship with the government in order to successfully implement their programs. Collaboration between government and NGOs is now common practice, giving prominence, visibility and importance to the latter and further contributes to their legitimacy<sup>22</sup>. NGOs by and large have a dual role to play as they need to collaborate with the government and at the same time have to oppose those policies of the government which are detrimental to the common man.

NGOs all of a sudden assumed more visibility and importance and this is often related to the process' of globalization and liberalization. 'Disillusionment with the public sector and India's own dismal record in providing quality social services to the poor, prompted liberalization pundits, donor agencies and banks

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NGOs.

<sup>21</sup> Narasimha Reddy and Rajasekhar. Development Programmes and NGOs. Bangalore. Bangalore Consultancy Office. P.9.

<sup>22</sup> Rekha Wazir. 2000. The Gender Gap in Basic Education : NGOs as Change Agents. New Delhi.

to champion the cause of the private sector. For almost a decade now NGOs have been seen as the magic bullet that would cut through red-tapism, inefficiency and corruption and reach much-needed health care services, credit, education and so on to the poor<sup>23</sup>. Though there are those officials within the government who strongly advocate the importance of NGOs, by and large most are sceptical about viewing them as a one-stop solution. Though they do not deny the integrity, innovation and dedication of some organizations, they do tend to view NGOs with suspicion.

Governments tend to be extremely sensitive about what bureaucrats perceive as an invasion of their space and interfering with authority. Based on his study of NGOs in Asia, Bowden (1990) observed, 'The conflict exists at the working levels of government in virtually all countries. Even countries where the political and top administrative echelons are supportive of the NGO sector (India and Sri Lanka for instance), large segments of the field administration resent NGOs<sup>24</sup>. Dependence on foreign funds and the existence of a number of dubious organizations draw attention to the problems of just putting them in charge of social services. Sometimes governments do find it useful to coordinate activities with NGOs. From the governments' point of view contracting projects to reliable NGOs very often solves a number of resource problems; they save on

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Sage Publications. P.17.

<sup>23</sup> Vimala Ramachandaran, 'NGOs in Time of Globalisation', Seminar 447 November 1996, p.57.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Bowden. 1990. 'NGOs in Asia : Issues in Development', Public Administration and Development, 10 pg.147.

taking on the liability of long term staff as well as infra-structural costs and can at any point terminate contracts with NGOs. However, since most of them receive outside funding there is always the danger that they will lose autonomy and mouth agendas of external agencies. For this reason many government officials oppose the idea of involving them in policy making and program development. Sometimes suspicions run high enough to even suspect some NGOs of espionage<sup>25</sup>.

### **Problems in NGO-Government Collaborations**

Since the style of functioning differs greatly between the government and NGOs many obvious problems crop up including problems of coordination between those who design the program and those who implement the program. There are problems of mutual distrust and lack of flexibility. NGOs inevitably feel that government funding comes with strings attached and this hampers their independent functioning. The NGOs have common perception that governmental procedures are purposefully made more difficult. For instance the process of registering new NGOs, slow approval of NGO projects and regularly demanding reports on their projects. Lack of accountability on the part of NGOs is seen by many as one of their biggest drawbacks.

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<sup>25</sup> Leon Gordenkar and Thomas G. Wliss, 'Devolving responsibilities : a framework for analyzing NGOs and services'. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.18, No.3 p446. 1997.

In the specific field of education, there is wide consensus among the NGOs themselves that there is no alternative to a total reforming of the already existing system; other alternatives and parallel interventions can provide inputs but are insufficient in themselves<sup>26</sup>. Rekha Wazir (2000) enumerates the reasons why education cannot be handed over in-toto to the voluntary sector<sup>27</sup> -

- (a) It would not be possible for any NGO(s) to serve as a suitable substitute for the government in the delivery of formal education at a national, regional or state level.
- (b) If various local grassroots organizations combined to deliver educational services, problems of coordination would inevitably arise.
- (c) Quality, uniformity of standards, substance and curricula could pose problems.
- (d) Since NGOs are not accountable to any head, the question of legitimacy arises. Further since they receive foreign funding, there is uncertainty about the continuity of NGO projects.

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<sup>26</sup> Atreye Cordeiro, 'Building Partnerships and Collaborations for Education', in Rekha Wazir (ed). Op.cit., p.227.

<sup>27</sup> Rekha Wazir (ed). Op.cit. p.257.

- (e) In attempting to replace government, NGOs could well lose their attributes of openness and flexibility and become susceptible to bureaucratic behaviour.

According to Wazir, in light of the magnitude of the problems and the very legitimate reasons enumerated above, it is very important that the State be held responsible and accountable for providing universal primary education. A well-defined role of NGOs and appropriate strategies in a proper framework with the State as the key player would work most efficiently where voluntary organizations are not substitutes but will play a complementary role.

NGOs currently concentrate on two main focal areas, one on creating a demand for education and the other on enhancing the supply side. Successful intervention, it is felt, depends on these complementary strategies. A list of strategies which have initiated and supported successful programs have been made by Haq and Haq (1998)<sup>28</sup> -

- (i) Advocacy for girls education including raising awareness of the social and economic benefits to girls education.
- (ii) Minimizing the expenses to be borne by parents in terms of fees as well as other indirect expenses.

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<sup>28</sup> Mahbub ul Haq and Khadija Haq. 1998. Human Development in South Asia 1998. Dhaka, Oxford University Press. P.92.

- (iii) Modifying the curriculum so as to make it more gender-sensitive and relevant.
- (iv) Making efforts to increase the number of female teachers and promoting training.
- (v) Improving access by providing schools closer to their dwellings to improve female-enrolment and by providing necessary infra-structural facilities for girls.
- (vi) Increasing local participation at all stages of planning, development and management of education programmes.
- (vii) Developing flexible school calendars and modes of teaching so that girls' can manage schooling as well as complete their domestic chores.
- (viii) Including parents in the educational process by teaching them to attain basic literacy.
- (ix) Using multiple delivery systems - formal, non-formal and alternative.

## II

### **Successful Education Programmes in South Asia**

Though much remains to be done in the sphere of education in order to see any progress in the larger picture, South Asia has some successful and innovative programs which have made a big difference regionally.

## Bangladesh

There has been three decades of massive NGO activities in Bangladesh with the poverty alleviation agenda on the forefront. While there has not been any spectacular advancement in the status of the poor, the Bangladeshi NGOs have nevertheless become world famous and role models for many people and institutions in developing and donor countries alike. Chief Among them is the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). With more than 500,000 paid staff, it is perhaps the largest NGO in the world<sup>29</sup>. BRAC has been conducting programs in health education and poverty alleviation for over two decades.

It started a non-formal primary education (NFPE) programme in 1985 with experimental schools in twenty-two villages. The aim was to develop a model of primary education to provide basic education to the poorest rural children and the model had to be a replicable one. By January 1995 the programme expanded to some 28,500 schools enrolling over 900,000 children who had never before achieved any meaningful learning<sup>30</sup>.

BRAC schools are mainly of two types - Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) for children between the age group of 8-10 and Primary Education for

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<sup>29</sup> Juha Vartola (ed.). Op.cit.

<sup>30</sup> Roushan Jahan in 'The Bangladesh Experience', in Vimala Ramachandaran (ed.). 1998.



Older Children or PEOC, between the age of 11 and 16. Both the types of schools follow three-year courses. The focus is on women - over 70 per cent of the students are girls and 90 per cent of the teachers are women<sup>31</sup>. Education is provided without any payment of fees and all the educational material are given free of charge.

The innovative features of BRAC schools which have made them such a success include a relevant curriculum, appealing extra-curricula activities, flexible school hours which are coordinated by the parents, locally recruited teachers, each running one school with thirty three students, non-formal examination and no home work, continuous assessment is used to measure progress, local participation, regular contact between the parents and teachers and linkages with formal schools so that after completing these three years these students can move to upper classes.

Education for all is a national goal and BRAC has made a significant contribution to it. This model of schooling, the NFPE, has become a role model and has moved beyond national boundaries with some countries already adopting the system.

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<sup>31</sup> Bridging the Gap between Intention and Action . New Delhi. ASPBAE and UNESCO. p. 48.  
Ibid.

## Pakistan

- (a) Pakistan has a number of innovative NGO programmes in education. The Buniyaad Literacy Committee Council (BLCC) is one such organization with the main agenda of increasing female literacy with the help of local participation. The council is running 845 non-formal primary education centers in 7 districts of Punjab, linking literacy with skills training, and in 40 villages, with credit, getting the graduates adjusted into the formal system, and establishing mini libraries in the villages<sup>32</sup>. A substantial number of its graduates, 34 per cent have been inducted into the formal school system. The drop out rate from these programs are minimal at 15 per cent whereas elsewhere in Pakistan, the drop out is 60 per cent. The main aim is to promote women empowerment through education, BLCC's programmes include<sup>33</sup> -

- (a) non-formal basic education (6 months).
- (b) Non-formal primary education (2 years and 6 months).
- (c) Adult education.
- (d) Gender-related learning focusing on young mothers.

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<sup>32</sup> Ruquia Jafri, 'The Pakistan Experience', in Vimala Ramachandran (ed.), *Bridging the Gap Between the Intention and Action*. Op.cit. p.240.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

(e) Capacity building of NGOs and CBOs.

(f) Networking with the government, NGOs and communities.

A single teacher and a single classroom most often are sufficient for the functioning of a BLCC school. Each of these have about 30-40 students between the age of 7-15 years with a few older students. Teachers are no more than high school graduates. School hours are for about three hours per day. BLCC functions on a system where a teachers empowerment fund is established. This consists of a small amount given to them every month to spend on the school whatever they feel is necessary. The success of the program is attributed to the mechanism of empowerment or the Mujahida-e-Ilm. The agent of change being the teacher is one of the focus' of the Program.

**(b) The Aga Khan Education Service (AKES)**

The AKES work in the least developed areas of Pakistan and conduct extensive educational and teacher training programs. Improving the quality of education and extensive hands-on teacher training programs are its main concerns. Around 180 schools comprising of around 20,000 learners are run by AKES<sup>34</sup>. Of these more than 70 per cent are female. Whereas percentage of girls in primary education in other backward areas is a meager 21 per cent, areas

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* p.239.

where AKES functions have a female enrollment rate of 41%<sup>35</sup>. There is a significant decrease in the drop-out percentage. The average age of marriage in the area has increased significantly. The high school graduates of AKES schools supply the work force as teachers and health workers. Further scholarships are given to promising students so that they can go in for higher education in cities. This makes an impact on the sex-ratio of the overwhelmingly male-dominated teaching force. Small but significant differences mark the teaching style of AKES run schools. The teaching is more learner - centric rather than teacher-centric, curricula is more related to the environment and more relevant to the learners, and individual attention is given to each learner.

There are many such small endeavours in Pakistan which collectively do make a difference to the educational status of girls and women. Aurat Foundation, the All-Pakistan Women's Association (APWA), Damen, Pakistan Academy of Social Sciences (PASS), The Adult Basic Education Society (ABES), Alif Laila and many others are representative of the collective will of the voluntary sector and the community to promote female education.

## **Nepal**

### **(a) Cheli-beti programmes for out-of-schools girls**

This is a programme conducted by the Seti Education for Rural Development Project (SERDP) and is run in one of the most deprived regions of

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Nepal. This was an experimental programme which inspired many others and which were effective in improving the primary education system. The Cheli-beti classes were meant for girls between the ages of 8 and 14 and who had not been able to avail regular schooling. The entire course material is covered in less than five months and classes are held for two and half hours per day. The innovative features of Cheli-beti include flexible school-timing, relevant curricula which the children could relate to (similar to the Eklavya project in India), and inclusion of education on family, health and agriculture into the literacy classes. The Cheli-beti programme is quite a successful one and continues to provide an alternate education for those unable to attend regular school.

Another important programme of the government is the Non-Formal Women's Education Programme (NWEF) which is meant for girls and women aged between 14 and 45 years. The various programmes under this are of differing duration, some of which are as short as three months and others which can go up to nine. All of them promote literacy and some provide vocational training, and entrepreneurial skill training.

There are a number of successful joint projects of the government and some NGOs in Nepal. These include Health Education and Adult Literacy programme (HEAL), Women's Literacy, Savings and Credit Programme (WLCP),

Basic Education for the Least Educated (BELE) and a member of others (see appendix).

Many of these programmes receive outside funding and help from the Ford Foundation, Save the Children (USA) and other such international organizations.

## **India**

In the attempt to alleviate the status of primary education a number of programmes were initiated by the government including the Shiksha Samakhya Programme in Madhya Pradesh, Lok Jumbish and Shiksha Karmi in Rajasthan, Anandayee Shikshan in Maharashtra to mention a few. In the NGO sector also a number of organizations have been attempting to introduce different methods to increase school enrollment levels especially in the field of women's and girls' education. These include MV Foundation, Andhra Pradesh; Marushalas of Urmul Trust; the Eklavya and Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme in Madhya Pradesh; the Centre for Learning Resources, the Mahila Shikshan Kendra of Urmila Samakhya, and PROPEL of the Indian Institute of Education, Pune; the Mahila Sandarshikha of Seva Mandir, Rajasthan; SIDH, Uttar Pradesh; Digantar, Rajasthan; and Alarippu, New Delhi<sup>36</sup>. While they have all been innovative and successful programmes, Mahila Samakhya stands out because it

is 'the only government programme, that seeks to address the constraints that prevent women and girls gaining access to education' and it continues to be a programme with a difference<sup>37</sup>.

### **Mahila Samakhya ~ Education for Women's Equality.**

The Mahila Samakhya Programme covers 40 districts and over 6,876 villages in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Assam<sup>38</sup>. During 1998 the programme was expanded into a new state i.e., Kerala covering two districts. The *sangha* is the village level women's collective and is the nodal point of the Programme. The programme has a cluster coordinator in charge of 10 villages called a Sahoyogini who performs the function of mobilizing and organizing women. She is the main link between the village sangha and the district implementation unit of the programme. While these units supply the resources for the programme, they are in turn supported by a state office.

The Sangha address all those issues which women consider important including issues relating to their livelihood, health, access to resources to mention a few. They actively participate in village affairs. They take active

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<sup>36</sup> Vimala Ramachandran (ed). Bridging the Gap Between Intention and Action. Op.cit., p.97.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.121.

<sup>38</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development. Annual Report. 1998-99, Department of Education., p.17.

interests in enrolling children and especially girls in the village schools, make use of economic programmes to their benefit, increasingly access various government schemes like Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), TRYSEM, DRDA etc. They have even implemented watershed management programmes in a few villages. The MS programme has obviously managed to harness the collective potential of rural women in improving their own situation in various areas of interest and need. It has been successful in creating a platform for their collective action not rigidly sticking to a literacy programme. The programme has managed at the same time to increase the literacy levels of the women as well as given them an opportunity to improve the quality of their own lives.

NGO programmes in education are hailed as innovative efforts to improve the status of women's education. While reasons have been given against the possibility of handing over education to the voluntary sector lock, stock and barrel, their inclusion as a vital part of the governments programmes is essential to the effort of increasing female literacy levels and the percentage of girls' enrollment in primary education. Non-formal education in particular has gained from the efforts of NGOs because of their ability in designing creative and feasible programmes like those of the AKES and BRAC among others.



## CONCLUSION

The problems of gender inequality prove obstacles to the entire process of human development and this is only natural since a development which neglects half the population can only be an incomplete one. Gender discrimination has deep roots in society and exists everywhere in the world whether to a greater or lesser degree. The South Asian region has the worst record of gender inequality and this has been a theme of discussion over too long a period of time. The patriarchal system which forms the backbone of the problem has been tough to transform and efforts to do so result in it assuming different forms at different points of time.

It is said that the first feminist must have been born the day patriarchy was established<sup>1</sup>. While there have been individual and collective moves to oppose the subjugation of women from an age old period, these have only now consolidated themselves into powerful movements and their presence can be clearly felt. South Asia too has a strong women's movement in every country and they perform multiple roles, as activists in order to oppose objectionable acts, as researchers who so to speak arm the movement and as agents of advocacy performing the vital task of raising social awareness and changing

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<sup>1</sup> Kamla Bhasin and Nishat Said Khan. 1986. 'Some Questions on Feminism and its Relevance in South Asia'. New Delhi. Kali for Women. p i.

hardened social mindsets. While the first attempts to ameliorate the status of women was made by 19<sup>th</sup> century (mostly) male reformers, the representation of women by their own kind develops a momentum of its own. The movement though plural and dispersed makes a tangible difference to women's lives. The power of the collective especially when they perceive a common problem is of vital importance and this can be seen in various cases. For instance, the experiences of the Mahila Samakhya Programme in India showed that women who come together under various '*sanghas*' found solutions to many problems besides literacy. They found a means as a collectivity to improve their livelihood and act upon different issues of interest to them.

While they battle forces of fundamentalism, patriarchy and traditional mindsets, awareness of their own rights is developed and there are corresponding collective moves to make use of opportunities available to them to improve their socio-economic status. Every country and within every country, different pockets have their own specific set of problems besides those commonly perceived as gender issues. As was observed in the different countries, at times the fact that the movement as a whole has some common very significant goals is lost amidst the conflicting interests of various sections of the movement. For instance urban and rural women's groups of different economic classes in Nepal have differing views on the Nepalese property law with regards to women's inheritance rights. While the urban elite see the

reformation of these laws as fundamental to the process of improving condition of women, certain other groups see this as a wasteful exercise which neglects other more significant problems like the alarming increase in female trafficking and low rate of literacy and educational achievements.

Similarly in Pakistan too there are conflicts of interests as is quite apparent where the requirements of different groups of women are different and there are differences of opinion regarding the framework of action of the movement.

One of the points which strike as being significant here is that the movement appears weak and dispersed only because one expects a uniform and singular voice to emerge from the entire community of women as a whole, but this is to ignore the diversity of experience and needs. The fact that they do not always speak in the same voice is not so important as that there exists so many voices which can and will speak when necessary.

The persisting indicators of gender inequality appears in the very obvious lag in the human development indices. In every factor women are at a greater loss and this coupled with the constant lobbying of women activists has attracted the attention of policy makers and the international community. World Conferences on Women like the one held in Beijing (1995) created what they termed the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and this signified a turning point in

the global struggle for women's rights. All previous agreements were incorporated into a comprehensive document and the BPfA having specific and measurable policy goals was seen as the definitive International Agreement regarding the status of women. Governments were chiefly responsible for implementation of the BPfA. The agreement however called upon all multilateral and non-governmental organizations at the local, national and international level, along with the private sector to contribute to its effective implementation. The June 2000 special session of the UN General Assembly to assess the implementation of the BPfA was again attended by all the different players in the field and the agenda to be discussed at this session was titled 'Women 2000 : Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' and is commonly called the Beijing Plus Five (BP5). BP5 reports were prepared as a joint effort of governments, NGOs, the private sector and other civil society organizations. Included in the report are good initiatives, major obstacles, persistent and emerging issues and future courses of action. (see appendix).

Education is universally seen as one of the most significant means of improving the status of women. Much attention is therefore given to creating ways of improving girls' and women's education. In order to do so it is important to primarily raise social awareness about the significance of education as a tool for empowerment and also to understand the constraints involved. These constraints as has been seen in Chapter II cannot be overcome by legislative

acts and policy formation but by raising social awareness and making necessary initiatives to change the present social mindset if any progress is to be made. The fact that there are stringent laws against dowry, for instance, has not been singularly successful in reducing the later of dowry deaths. The very nature of the constraints indicates that a multiple pronged approach to the problem has to be undertaken.

The women's movement is a response to the perceived needs of women and is a part of the answer to represent and act on behalf of all women. Similarly, the voluntary sector is also a response to felt needs and a large number of such organizations exist which focus solely on women's issues including on domestic violence and advocacy, education and health to mention a few. There is a large interface between them and activists of the movement are very often proponents of the voluntary sector. The voluntary sector as has been observed are touted as the panacea to all the problems of development in the face of the various governments' failure to deliver on their promises. The voluntary organizations do have a number of advantages over the governmental style of functioning, in that they are flexible, believe in local participation and have been able to successfully implement innovative programmes in various sectors like health and education. Since they do not follow a rigid framework of action which would apply uniformly to all situations, unlike the government, it is possible for them to act creatively and faster on different problems. The lack of

red-tapism is a big advantage in comparison to the governmental style of functioning. But they too have their share of drawbacks in the form of sources of funding and corresponding problems of sustainability. Another major problem is that of being unable to replicate successful micro-level programs at the macro-level. Another problem often pointed out is that of creating dependency. After initiating a project and implementing it, there is very often the danger of making the functioning of the project and therefore the community dependent on the presence of the organization. NGOs such as Astha, in Rajasthan, India, that have a plan to phase out from villages which, with the emergence of local leadership, become capable enough to take care of themselves, are fewer in number<sup>2</sup>. The study examines the functioning of the voluntary sector and some of their successful programmes on women's education in South Asia. While some of the problems discussed do pose difficulties in achieving sustained success in programmes and ensuring their replication on a larger scale, the fact that NGOs have become an integral part of the process of improving the condition of women's lives and especially educational achievements is seen.

Just as it has been futile to depend on the state exclusively for the development needs of the entire population, similarly the NGOs should also not be looked upon as the sole providers of the social services. Coordinated activity between the two prove to be most beneficial and this is also directly reflected in the successful joint projects conducted by them. This kind of joint action by and

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2 Harimohan Mathus . 1997. Op.cit. p.68.

for the people corresponds with Gramsci's definition of the State. According to him the State could be defined as force plus consent in which political society organizes force and civil society provides consent<sup>3</sup>.

While it can be seen that as it exists there are joint efforts of the State, private sector and civil society organizations like NGOs in the development area, it has been observed that the compact between these, which underpins effective governance is weak in the region. How can be strengthened and a better method of coordination between these effected for more efficient results could be studied further.

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<sup>3</sup> D. Bandyopadhyay. 1999. 'Voluntary Agencies as Agents of Transformation', *Mainstream*. Oct. 23, 1999. p.21.

**Illustrative table of some key issues and successful models (India)**

The issue	Successful models/innovations
Lack of access in rural/remote areas and dysfunctional schools.	Shiksha Karmi model : localized recruitment of teachers, intensive training input, convert non-functioning primary school to a functioning SK School.
Community involvement in environment creation, mobilization and management.	MV Foundation's efforts to mobilize community support through village level youth facilitators, continuous interaction, visible activities hosted by village, success in weaning children away from labour into schools.
Kindling an interest in education and knowledge amongst women.	Mahila Samakhya's strategy of facilitating structures and environment for women to come together and launch out on a path of self-discovery, confidence building, awareness, education, and action.
Need for relevant curriculum for rural women engaged in the battle for survival.	Nirantar's effort to develop a relevant curriculum while ensuring adherence to minimum competency levels expected in Class V.
Creating a pool of educated aware women in rural areas as role models.	Mahila Shikshan Kendra (of Mahila Samakhya Programme), Mahila Shikshan Vihar of Lok Jumbish, and Mahila Prashikshan Kendra of Shiksha Karmi Project have sought to provide intensive, good quality education for school drop-outs and never been-to school women, thereby creating a pool of educated and confident women in rural/remote areas.
Raising the morale of teachers and involving them in joyful and creative education.	Shiksha Samakhya Proshika in Madhya Pradesh, a large scale programme embedded in the formal school system, aimed at raising the morale of teachers and also giving them an opportunity to experience creative teaching and learning.

*Source* : Vimala Ramachandran. 1998.



### The status of CEDAW in South Asia

- Bhutan and Sri Lanka signed CEDAW in 1980 and ratified in 1981; Nepal signed and ratified in 1991. All three countries have done so without reservation. In Nepal, ratified International agreements automatically enter the national body of law.
- Bangladesh ratified CEDAW in 1984 with four reservations. In 1997, its reservations to CEDAW were partially withdrawn, thus accepting. Articles 13(a) (equal rights to family benefits) and 16(t) (equal rights to guardianship).
- However, two reservations have been retained : to Article 2 (complete elimination of discrimination through all possible constitutional, legislative and legal provisions) and to Article 16 (equal rights in marriage and at its dissolution), considered to be in conflict with Shari'a law.
- In Pakistan, on 21 August 1995, just prior to Beijing Conference, the cabinet decided to sign CEDAW. The next government ratified the Convention on 12 March 1996, with a reservation to Article 29(1) (international arbitration of disputes between States concerning interpretation of CEDAW), and with the general declaration that CEDAW would be implemented in accordance with the Constitution of Pakistan. After the Shariat Act (1990), the Constitution has stipulated that all laws must be in accordance with Islam. While many argue that discriminatory laws do not find their basis in Islam but in sexist interpretations of Islamic Law as well as prevalent norms and customary practices (Ali 1995), as Khan (1998) points out, this reservation 'indirectly provides Pakistan with a loophole it can use against repealing Islamic law that discriminate against women'.
- The Maldives ratified CEDAW on 1 July 1993, but maintains reservations to Article 7(a) (equality in eligibility to vote and to run for elections) and to Article 16, as the former conflicts with the Constitutions and the latter, with Maldivian understanding of Islamic Shari'a. While Maldivian women are equally entitled to vote and to be elected to government, they do not have the right to become head of state.
- When India ratified CEDAW in 1993 – having signed the document in 1980 – it introduced two declarations. The first permits a local interpretation of Articles 5 (a) (measures to modify prejudicial social and cultural customs and 16(1), 'in conformity with its policy of non-interference in the personal affairs of any Community without its initiative and consent'. Fifty-three years on, this policy continues to stand in direct conflict with constitutional declaration that the state would move towards a uniform civil code. India also declared, in relation to Article 16(2), that 'though in principle it fully supports the principle of compulsory registration of marriages, it is not practical in vast country like India with its variety of customs, religions and level of literacy'. India also maintains a reservation to Article 29.

**It is important to note that of the fifteen Muslim countries around the world that have signed CEDAW, there is no clause on which they have a consensus reservation (Azhar 1995), illustrating the importance of culture and leadership to religious interpretation.**

## Beijing Plus Five Balance Sheet

## SOUTH ASIA

Policy and Programme initiatives	Remaining challenges and policy gaps
<b>Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutionalization of Beijing process has allowed;</li> <li>Formulation of plans, and establishment of national machineries for women's advancement</li> <li>Increased interaction between and among NGOs and governments at various levels; and their increased awareness of women's issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State resistance to gender mainstreaming, and political and economic marginalisation of women's departments etc.</li> <li>Political inconsistency, poor governance and an overall lack of commitment to women's empowerment</li> <li>Inadequate gender desegregation of statistical databases/ knowledge-bases</li> </ul>
<b>Women's rights, human rights</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness of, and demand for, women's rights</li> <li>Establishment of institutional mechanisms for the investigation and reform of discriminatory laws; superior courts setting new precedents regarding women's rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persistence of patriarchal attitudes/practices; discriminatory laws/policies; non-implementation of protective legislation</li> <li>Rising communalism, religious fundamentalism and conservatism, limiting women's mobility and security.</li> </ul>
<b>Women, violence and armed conflict</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SAARC Convention on Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children adopted at Ministerial Meeting (Colombo, July 1998)</li> <li>Women's police cells established in several countries</li> <li>Women's Initiatives for Peace co-ordinated peace rallies in Karachi, New Delhi and Dhaka (1999); Indo-Pakistan Women in Solidarity (2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trafficking of women and girls within/across countries has assumed alarming proportions; ratification of SAARC convention stalled due to postponement of 1999 Summit.</li> <li>Increased violence against women, particularly domestic violence and the victimization of women in the name of honour, but no specific domestic violence laws in any country</li> <li>Scale/quality of women's police cells fall short of requirements; women severely underrepresented in security forces</li> </ul>
<b>Women, poverty and the economy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased focus in National Plans on meeting the needs of poor women</li> <li>Growing number of microfinance, income-generation and self-employment programmes specifically targeting poor women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing poverty among women, especially due to growing numbers of female-headed households and on-going denial of women's rights to land, property, mobility and social support</li> <li>Women primarily employed in informal sector as unskilled, low-paid, insecure labour, unaccounted for in statistics</li> <li>No mainstreaming of women's microfinance programmes by commercial banks</li> </ul>
<b>Education and training of women, and the girl-child</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attempts to increase girl's enrolment, attendance and survival through changes in school regulations and teacher recruitment policies, infrastructure improvements, direct financial support</li> <li>Increasing number of non-formal and vocational education programmes targeted at women, primarily run by NGOs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excepting Sri Lanka and Maldives, large gender gaps in literacy, enrolment and completion remain</li> <li>Declining education and training budgets and expenditures</li> <li>Traditional norms including early marriage continue to hinder girl's education</li> </ul>
<b>Women in power and decision-making</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seat reservations have increased the number of women in local politics</li> <li>Awareness-raising, capacity-building, lobbying and networking surrounding political empowerment issues increasingly undertaken by NGOs and NGO-government partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women remain poorly represented in policy, administrative, judicial, legislative bodies; seat reservation legislation often stalled</li> <li>Majority of effectiveness as local politicians hindered by lack of training, male backlash; women's entry into politics hindered by corrupt, money-centered, violent political culture</li> </ul>
<b>Women and health</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health policies and programmes increasingly approaching women's reproductive health in a holistic manner</li> <li>Increased recruitment of female health workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Population control/reproductive health continue to eclipse other aspects of women's physical and mental well-being throughout their life-cycle</li> <li>Pervasive anaemia still endemic, and health care for women in remote areas and regions in conflict remains inaccessible.</li> </ul>

Source: HDSA 2000

## **Recurring policy recommendations to enhance girls' access to education**

- Schools within walking distance, closer to the place of habitation; if necessary, satellite schools for remote hamlets;
- Provide child care facilities/crèche within school premises;
- Escorts for girls, if school is at a distance from the village or hamlet;
- Introduce flexible school timings and region-specific school calendar;
- Provide alternative modes/forms with non-formal, condensed courses for drop-outs, residential schools (Ashram Shalas) for special focus groups like nomadic tribes, etc.;
- more women teachers in rural areas, with residential accommodation;
- expand the pool women teachers by lowering qualifications, intensive training (near the place of habitation), provide regular educational support, organize special condensed courses for drop-outs who can be trained to work as teachers, provide secure accommodation for outstation teachers, etc.;
- make curriculum relevant to the lives of poor women who are engaged in a struggle for survival;
- recognize the problem of working children and provide special facilities for them;
- introduce facilities for 'bridge programmes' to enable drop-outs to re-enter the school system;
- provide incentives like uniforms, textbooks, exercise books, attendance scholarships, free bus passes, etc.;
- involve the community in managing the school through advocacy, mobilization, and formation of village education committees with at least 50 per cent women members;
- improve the quality of education, motivate teachers to make learning a pleasurable experience;
- decentralize educational planning and administration, and bring it closer to people so that it reflects the special needs and aspirations of the community;
- address management issues that inhibit the implementation of government policy, such as grievance redressal, administrators' and teachers' unions resistance to flexible timings, school of calendar, recruitment of women with lower qualifications from rural areas, recruitment of local youth in remote areas where teacher absenteeism is rampant, appointment of teachers to a specific school, etc.;
- mobilize public opinion for primary education and universal literacy in general, and women's education in particular. Advocate for greater political will and administrative commitment. Make it a national mission with time-bound 'targets', akin to the National Literacy Mission (NLM) and the National Elementary Education Mission (NEEM).

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