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Gender-Sensitive Natural Resource Management (NRM) Research-for-Development

A Report for the Natural Resources Systems Programme

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research presents material from three case studies in India and Ghana in order to examine the gender sensitivity of NRM research-for-development projects. It has found that gender concerns are incorporated very unevenly into different parts of these projects, leading to different kinds of gender bias becoming manifest in different areas of their work. Where field-based activities and valuable natural resources are concerned, there tends to be an assumption that the natural partners for NR research-for-development projects are men. It is here that the 'harder science' dimensions of a project are concentrated. In these areas of research-for-development projects, insufficient analysis has been carried out into the gendered dimensions of NRM or poverty. It has been assumed that men are the main NR users and managers and that work with them will improve the well-being of the whole society, including that of women.

The NRM research-for-development projects do not ignore gender issues completely, however. Some projects 'balance' their field-based activities with men with income-generating activities that are often carried out predominantly with women. These latter activities often have a deeper concern with institutional processes, and with organizing group work and participatory sessions aimed at generating discussions about gendered roles and responsibilities. These efforts are targeted specifically at improving the lives and livelihoods of women, and also at challenging any wider gender inequalities. Their connection to NRM is often tenuous however, and they are problematic in other ways: firstly as these aspects of the projects involve women more than men, it follows that the hard work of challenging social inequalities is largely left to them. Secondly, such approaches perpetuate the stereotypical ideas that men's roles are in the fields, being productive, whereas women's roles are in the home, carrying out 'petty' income-generating activities, and nurturing the wider society. In most of the communities explored in this research, because men *are* carrying out work with NRs, the adherence to broad stereotypical generalizations means that women's contributions to NRM, and their dependence on NR use, are often ignored. By ignoring women's roles in NR use and management, an NR research-for-development project is in danger of undermining their rights, access and use of those NRs.

The present research explores some of the reasons for the biases that are evident in the projects examined. It shows how the biases are both structural and attitudinal, and how these combine together to make the biases particularly enduring. By identifying the biases, it is hoped that this research can contribute to more sensitive and more gender-aware NRM research-for-development in future.

The research has also identified some shortfalls in the research dimensions of these NRM for development projects. In particular it has found that purposive sampling of beneficiaries, where those involved in the research tend to be selected because they are already the formally recognised resource owners, mitigates against the involvement of women in the research. It also means that the research-for-development projects are not aware of how those who are the main resource owners and users relate to others in their community. There is an over-reliance on local volunteers, and the 'best judgement' of those volunteers, in identifying project participants and in monitoring results. Finally, the criteria for looking at the nature of poverty are frequently not fine enough, as they do not reveal a great deal about how

poverty intersects with other factors that influence social status, particularly those that affect women, such as marital status. The research also suggests that in research-for-development programmes, it is more difficult than often acknowledged to integrate the 'action' and 'research' elements. In particular, it is difficult for a project itself to monitor the social context and social impact of project activities.

The research also found that women are achieving significant benefits through same-sex savings and credit groups in India. By contrast, mixed sex groups performed very poorly in Ghana, suggesting that same-sex groups ought to be considered in Ghana, and could be the subject of further research. Same-sex groups, although successful, were also asking more of women, and limited to small-scale income-generating activities. This research suggests that both men and women ought to be involved in the different components of research-for-development, that is in both field-based and income-generating activities.

Finally, the research has found that the local community development workers play key roles in the different dimensions of these projects. Their roles need to be taken more seriously, and explored and monitored by projects more carefully.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

List of Acronyms

BAIF	Bharatiya Agro Industries Foundation
CBO	Community-based Organization
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIFOR	Centre for International Forestry Research
CLF	Community Level Facilitator
CO	Community Officer
CPR	Common Pool Resource
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
FAI	Forest Agriculture Interface
FLD	Front Line Demonstration
IDS	India Development Service
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGA	Income Generating Activity
JFM	Joint Forest Management
JFMC	Joint Forest Management Committee
MSK	Mahila Samarkiya Karnataka
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NR	Natural Resource
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NRSP	Natural Resources Systems Programme
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PU	Peri Urban
PUI	Peri Urban Interface
TERI	The Energy and Resources Institute
UAS	University of Agricultural Sciences

1 Introduction: Background, Aims and Objectives

This report draws on the experience of NRSP research-for-development projects in Ghana and India, to examine the extent to which such projects are successful in integrating gender concerns into their work. It also identifies some of the obstacles which limit gender sensitivity in NRM research-for-development projects, and ways in which these obstacles might be overcome.

'NRM research-for-development' refers to projects that aim to bring new knowledge, new techniques and new forms of organization to communities and individuals, usually the 'South', in order to generate 'development'. Conceived largely within the context of the 'sustainable livelihoods framework'[1], they contend that improved management of natural resources (NRs) and the well-being of individuals and communities are inter-dependent: improving the environment and reducing poverty are seen as inter-connected; achieving one should involve, and be instrumental in, achieving the other. The three cases of NRM research-for-development that are examined here include two in Ghana and one in India. In them, the different components of NRM research-for-development projects can be found. These include:

- the promotion of new NRM knowledges, techniques or forms of capital, such as new seeds
- the encouragement of alternative livelihoods and forms of income in order to improve use of, or alleviate dependence and pressure on NRs
- the establishment of groups and networks in order to facilitate improved access to decision-making forums and/or better policy-making capabilities
- the critical examination of the nature and politics of NR in order to campaign for or facilitate better NR use and policy-making.

These projects aim to integrate the technical and scientific concerns related to NR use and management with the social science concerns that relate to poverty and well-being.

There is enough evidence from existing studies to know that gender is a key determinant of rights to and benefits from NRs, and is also a main determinant of poverty among those dependent on NRs for their livelihoods across a wide range of social and cultural conditions. It is vital, therefore, that gender is considered and explicitly integrated into NRM research-for-development projects. A piece of research commissioned by NRSP and carried out by Magnus in 2003 concluded, however, that:

- Gender issues are incorporated unevenly into NR work, and the way in which gender is understood varies not only between projects but also between different people working on the same project.
- Although many projects demonstrate an initial commitment to and an awareness of the importance of gender issues, in practice the concern for gender often slips during the project cycle to the point where it effectively disappears.[2]

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[1] The sustainable livelihoods framework has been adopted by DFID and used in many of its policy-making processes since the late 1990s, see www.livelihoods.org for information.
[2] Adapted from Magnus (2003).

These findings raise serious concerns. The present research was commissioned in order to look more deeply into how and why gender concerns are frequently ignored, and the consequences of this. The aim of this research is also to illustrate why and how gender concerns are important, and to point to ways in which they can be integrated more systematically into NRM research-for-development projects in future.

Unfortunately, many of Magnus' findings have been confirmed by the present research. In addition to the two findings above, this research found that

- Many NRM projects have a gender bias and, where the most valuable natural resources are concerned, this bias tends to be male.
- Many NRM projects do not make a full or explicit examination of gender issues, and do not consider the consequences of their actions on gender relations.
- Many NRM projects continue to treat gender issues as a sub-set of broader issues rather than as a set of relations that intersect with all areas of NRM and development. As a sub-set they are considered to relate to women, instead of to men as well as women.
- Gender is often thought to be something that can be 'taken care of' by people who are brought in to 'do something about gender'; these people are usually women.
- Where women are involved in NRM research-for-development activities, their actions are often limited to subsidiary or 'add-on' project activities. These activities frequently have only tenuous connections to NRM.

However, this research has also found some positive examples in which the livelihoods of men and women have been improved by gender-sensitive NRM research-for-development.

1.1 Structure of this report

In this section (Section 1), the present research is introduced, and a brief outline of the methodology it used is provided. The major theoretical debates that have influenced the approaches to gender issues are also reviewed. This sets the present research in its theoretical context and examines the reasons why gender issues need to be integrated into research-for-development in the NRM sector. It also explores some of the critiques of different approaches to integrating gender concerns into development research and practice. Section 2 sets out the case studies of India and Ghana, and the findings from the visits to research-for-development projects in these countries. Section 3 is a general discussion of the findings and some conclusions from the research. This is followed in Section 4 by some recommendations.

By way of situating this study I would also like to comment on my own personal experience of working in the field of NRM research (if not research-for-development, as defined above). It is my belief that 'good research', by definition, includes within it an adequate consideration of gender issues. My previous research experience has led me increasingly to the suspicion, however, which has been confirmed by this research, that unless gender issues are placed explicitly on the research agenda, the way in which they influence NRM, and the way in which men and women may be influenced differently by changes in NRM, tend not to be appreciated. I have therefore welcomed this opportunity to review in more detail the case for taking

gender more seriously and to put forward some examples of the ways in which this may be done.

1.2 Research Methodology

A framework for the research was selected which was developed from the environmental entitlements framework (for example, Leach, Mearns and Scoones, 1997). This framework allowed for the gendered nature of the different components of NRM and poverty to be considered, taking into account all the different processes, from the NR itself, to the well-being of the person: including the nature of the resource base, the rights and access to the resources, the use that is made of the resources, the division of labour, the knowledge and availability of technology and capital, the marketing, and the control over products and benefits. These different components of the research also represented entry points in which 'action researchers'[3] may be working and/or trying to bring about change. This research aimed to examine these entry points and the success of such initiatives. It was not thought that each project would reveal a similar engagement with all the different components of NRM identified through this framework, but that each would be strong in particular areas. The environmental entitlements framework provides a 'thinking exercise' through which to identify the processes and the ways in which their gendered nature had, or had not, been considered by the NRM research-for-development projects.

The value of the environmental entitlements framework is also that it advocates that attention should be paid to the institutional context of NRM, as well as to the material reality of the resource base and people's capabilities. The institutional dimensions of NRM and poverty refer to the 'rules in use' which determine NRM access, use and benefits (Leach et al. 1997). The proponents of the environmental entitlement framework stress that the informal institutional dimensions of NRM (in other words those 'rules in use' and the 'regularized practices' that are not necessarily formally recognised or sanctioned) are as important to shaping outcomes as the formal institutional processes, such as those advocated and recognized by the state (*ibid*). NRM and poverty are both shaped by the combination of these *de facto* and *de jure* rules and practices.[4] This approach is particularly useful for gender-sensitive work, as women often rely on informal institutions for access to and use of NRs (Rocheleau and Edmunds, 1997); in other research frameworks these informal practices often go unrecognized.

Field visits were made as part of this research, with the aim of grounding the discussion in particular examples, to improve understanding of the constraints and achievements of research-for-development, and to allow the researcher to fill knowledge gaps, to learn from partners and to contextualise the findings. Ghana and India were selected for the field visits, as both countries had ongoing work in the NRM research-for-development sector. They also both had ongoing projects funded by NRSP, which could be used as a starting point. In addition, both countries had ongoing work in the peri-urban sector, and with communities dependent on forest resources. There were therefore some similarities between the resource issues and

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[3] The term 'action researchers' is used to refer to researchers in research for development projects, whose research has an action or development component.
[4] Such that uses of NRs are often multiple, and access to the resources may be defined by different and overlapping sets of rights.

aims of the research in the different countries that could be used to facilitate comparison, despite the different social, cultural, historical, institutional and political contexts. Although the projects in each country were in different geographical areas, with different social, cultural, historical and environmental characteristics, it was thought there might be some institutional and historical similarities which might facilitate comparisons and highlight differences.

The projects were visited and interviews were carried out with people who had been involved in the NRM research-for-development activities. Where possible, the areas of the work and the beneficiaries were also visited, which allowed a further investigation of the gendered nature of NRM and poverty in the different settings. In each case, effort was also made to meet with and talk to people involved in other NRM research and/or development projects in the two countries, to discuss the ways in which gender had been integrated into their work.

The NRSP projects that were visited and the people who helped to facilitate this research are listed in the following table. A visit of 20 days was made to India in August-September 2004, and of 17 days to Ghana in October-November, 2004.

Case Study	Country	NR context	NRSP Code	Project contact	Geographical location
1	India	Peri-urban Interface (PUI)	R8084	Sangeetha Purushothaman and Rob Brook	Hubli-Dharwad
2	Ghana	Peri-urban Interface (PUI)	R8090	Korsi Ashong and Benedict Fosu Adjei	Kumasi
3	Ghana	Forest Agriculture Interface (FAI)	R8258	Kojo Amanor and David Brown	Brong Ahafo

It was initially hoped that the research would be able to explore the experiences of integrating gender into NRM work among a much wider group of development practitioners and researchers. In this way, the focus would have been not only on NRSP projects, but something could have been said about how the NRSP projects compared to others. In practice, the time-scale of the research, in which most of the work had to be carried out over a five months' period, precluded a detailed investigation of other projects. Where possible other projects were visited: discussions were held with beneficiaries of the CIDA-funded project, 'Ghana-Canada in Concert', which is also working in Kintampo District, Ghana; the work of the organization Mahila Samarkiya Karnataka (MSK), which promotes women's rights in Mysore, India, was visited, and group discussions were held with some of its beneficiaries; in India and Ghana, researchers and development practitioners of other organizations were interviewed, including, CIFOR, NR International (who were also interviewed in the UK), CARE, World Bank, DFID, IFAD, and IDRC. These interviews, together with a review of relevant literature, made it possible to contextualise the investigations of the NRSP projects. It made it possible to think more carefully about the ways in which the geographical, historical and social contexts influenced the way in which the NRSP projects engaged with gender issues.

As this research aimed to examine the way in which gender is important in NRM research-for-development practice and interventions, it was necessary for it to be slipstreamed into existing projects. The excellent co-operation of people working on NRSP projects made it possible to collect a considerable amount of information in a relatively short period of time. But this research was not anticipated at the time of the conception of the other NRSP projects, which already had research demands on their time, deadlines and ongoing research commitments. The work of enabling me to talk to people in the communities they were working with also had the potential to contribute to their research fatigue or to disrupt relationships with people that had been carefully built up. Consideration of these factors limited the research in some ways.

Another constraint on this research was that the data available from the different projects was not necessarily comparable. In some cases, such as the peri-urban project in Kumasi, consolidated data sets were available which allowed some basic quantitative analysis of different gendered activities to be carried out. In other cases, the nature of the different gendered activities was described to me by people employed on the projects, or was observed directly in the field, but similar quantitative data was not made available. Within each of the project areas there is also a great deal of heterogeneity in terms of gender relations, systems of inheritance, and rights to resources and environments, which makes it difficult to compare in any simplistic way one project or country to another. The different cases provide insights into both the challenges and opportunities for integrating gender issues into NRM for development, and where there are similar experiences which indicate more general findings, these have been emphasised.

1.3 Theoretical debates, concepts and questions

In this section I review some of the main approaches to gender in the field of development. Studies of gender and development, such as those by Kabeer (1994), Jackson and Pearson (1998), Rasavi and Miller (1995), Schech and Haggis (2001), Young (2002), and McIlwaine and Datta (2003), identify a series of shifts in approach over time, from what have been described as 'gender blind' and 'welfare' approaches, to 'women in development' (or WID), and, most recently, 'gender and development' (or GAD) approaches. In this history, approaches such as 'women environment and development' (or WED) and ecofeminist approaches, which influenced each other as well as development thinking more generally, especially in the field of NRM, tend to be slotted into the history of ideas somewhere alongside WID.

A history such as this can only be one interpretation and a simplification of what were much more complex and contested debates and events. Each of these approaches is underpinned by certain political ideals and approaches, and one approach is not necessarily easily given up and replaced with another. The analysis here of some the basic tenets that are associated with each of these approaches makes for clarification in several areas: Firstly, it allows the conception of gender that is used in this report to be made clear, together with the reasons why that conception is made. Secondly, it highlights the reasons why, even in the supposedly most scientific and technical fields, it is important to take into account the gender relations (and other social relations) of the community among whom work is ongoing. Thirdly, by outlining some of the critiques of these approaches, it is possible to highlight some of the

potential dangers associated with different conceptions and assumptions about gender relations.

Finally, this history is important, because a study of the different projects on the ground demonstrates that the expected changes as predicted by the theory, with one approach being completely replaced by another, has not taken place in practice. Different projects, or even different people within different projects, may have more sympathy with one approach than another. Certain approaches are stronger over certain periods of time, but none of the approaches discussed here has come to dominate to the exclusion of all others. Different stages in this 'history of ideas' contain elements that are alive and well and being enacted today.

1.3.1 The Case for Focusing on Women

Early development projects have been categorized as 'gender blind' in that they thought little about how their interventions would influence men and women individually; development planners worked with the household as a unit which in practice meant that, if they co-operated with anyone at the local level, it was usually with men, who were provided with resources, training and opportunities by development projects. An excellent example of the nature and consequences of this kind of approach is Carney and Watts' (1991) work on rice farming in the Senegambia, where colonial and then development planners wanted to improve food production and cash incomes for the Mandinka people by providing new technologies and introducing cash-cropping.[5] The development planners assumed that men were the farmers, and that if they worked with the male household heads, then the benefits of their improved system would 'trickle down' to the rest of the household. Carney and Watts argue that in practice, as men became more engaged with cash-cropping and as the land improved through the application of new technologies, women, who had been major cultivators of rice, found themselves being marginalized from land that they used to cultivate and no longer the recipients of labour from their husbands. The results of these interventions were: a breakdown in some of the forms of co-operation between men and women; the marginalization of women's subsistence production; more labour demands on women; more mouths to feed (as labourers for the cash-cropping came to live with households and had to be fed by the women); a decline in rice production, and, ultimately, food shortages.

The particular importance of this case to the research in hand is that it is a robust illustration of the way in which technological interventions and improvements, which are often thought to be neutral (in other words they are thought to help everyone equally and bring general benefits to all members of society) are far from it: technological interventions can lead to far-reaching transformations in labour relations, in tenure practices and in relations between people. It is not possible, therefore, for technical and scientific work to be carried out without consideration for its wider impacts, and those impacts must be monitored over time. These impacts are likely to be unforeseen as well as foreseen (and, it is to be hoped, positive). It is not therefore possible merely to make technical 'improvements' and expect the social issues to take care of themselves. It is often assumed that a 'trickle down' of benefits

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[5] See also Dey (1981).

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will take place but this and much of the other work on gender and development has demonstrated that on the whole this does not happen in practice (Kabeer, 1994).

The Senegambia case also illustrates the way in which gender relations were either not considered at this time in development, or were considered in a simplistic manner in which men were assumed to be the productive labourers, the breadwinners, while women stayed at home, looked after the children, and carried out domestic and reproductive labour. This approach - dominant in the twentieth century up until the 1970s and 1980s - projected on to developing countries stereotypes and ideals of gender relations from the West: men went out to work, and women stayed at home. Some development projects did target women specifically, but the programmes concentrated on promoting improved domestic arrangements, such as better hygiene, childcare, cooking facilities, family planning, or training in 'appropriate' crafts, such as knitting, sewing and crochet. Some of these approaches are described as 'welfare' based approaches, as they concentrated on improving society's welfare through work with women. Projects often legitimised these approaches by referring to what is attributed to an 'African proverb': 'if you educate a man, you educate a man, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family and a nation'. But one of the consequences of these projects was that they failed to recognise the contributions that women made outside the home, and as women's extra-household activities were unsupported, the result was that they were often undermined, as in the Senegambia case discussed above. Such ideas had the potential to limit women's activities to the home and undermine their economic and other forms of independence.

In the 1970s, campaigns began to challenge the older models of development which promoted traditional and stereotypical ideas of the gender division of labour (Rogers, 1980). Most accounts of the development of the approach that followed, which is referred to as the 'women in development' (WID) approach, cite the importance of Boserup's (1970) *Woman's Role in Economic Development* in its emergence. This book presented data to argue that historically in many societies women played a prominent role in production outside the home. What is more, in societies where women played a productive role, Boserup argued that their position *vis-à-vis* men was much stronger. Women's productive activities and positions were seen as having been undermined by the male-biased economic and development policies of previous years.

Boserup's argument was undoubtedly influenced by the growing women's movement and fitted well with arguments being put forward for economic and educational equality for women. In development terms, these and other ideas were translated into the promotion of women's activities outside of the home, and the provision of training and other opportunities (Young, 2002). The idea was to support female productive activities where they existed and introduce them where they did not. In practice, in combination with other ideas about universal sisterhood and the need to overcome male domination, these ideas led to projects which targeted women in isolation. Much support was provided to forms of organization such as women-only groups (Kabeer, 1994; Rasavi and Miller, 1995; Harrison, 1997; Chant, 2000; Schech and Haggis, 2000; Datta, 2004).

Accounts that trace the histories of these ideas emphasize that there was initial resistance to them by the more established development institutions (Kabeer, 1994; Rasavi and Miller, 1995). However, when the efficiency argument was made (that

women's engagement in production would contribute to economic growth, and that their withdrawal from economic activity would cost their economies dear) these projects gained more support, as they also fitted well with the emphasis on economic development of the time.

In the area of environmental policy and NRM, two other movements were becoming influential: the 'women, environment and development' (WED) approach and ecofeminism. Both of these approaches drew on the idea that women have a special relationship with nature. For WED, women were seen as having specialist knowledge, abilities and responsibilities for NRM because they were the main users and managers. They were also seen as having stronger interests in NRM, because as the main users of NRM, they suffered disproportionately from environmental degradation. Joekes, Green and Leach (1996) describe how the WED approach changed in emphasis over the decade of the 1980s:

In the early 1980s WED approaches commonly portrayed women as the primary victims of environmental degradation, bearing the brunt of pollution and deforestation and the major responsibility for coping with shocks such as drought… In the late 1980s women came to be seen less as 'victims' and more as efficient environmental managers and conservers of natural resources, pointing to evidence that women were heavily engaged world-wide, according to the terms of local agro-ecological practices, in environmental protection and rehabilitation: building conservation terraces, planting trees and dealing with seeds and wild plants to safeguard biodiversity, for instance (Joekes, Green and Leach, 1996, 27).

Ecofeminism shares with WED the idea that women have a special relationship with the environment, but in many ecofeminist ideas, for example, those of Shiva (1988), this special relationship is not just derived from women's heavy dependence on NRs, but also from an innate and natural bond that exists between them. This bond is seen as having been threatened and destroyed by the broader project of development and modernization, a process dominated by male instincts to dominate and destroy nature. By contrast,

women are able to offer an alternative, more cooperative, nurturing and caring relationship with nature based on what she [Shiva] calls the 'feminine principle' or prakriti (Jewitt, 2002, 45).

These ideas have been subject to heavy criticism, for essentialising and idealizing women (Jackson, 1993; Leach, 1994). They have nonetheless been influential and elements of ecofeminist ideas and WED were incorporated into policies in the 1990s. Joekes, Green and Leach demonstrate how WED ideas were taken on board by the World Bank and by Oxfam, and how ecofeminism also *'colours the Miami declaration adopted by a large international conference of women activists prior to the Earth Summit at Rio'* (1996, 29). The information from the case studies researched here shows that when women's role in NRM is considered today, it is often in a way that bears some resemblance to these approaches, and is no doubt influenced by them. In the Indian forestry sector, for example, it is claimed that women are the main users of the forest, have most knowledge and suffer most at the hands of environmental

degradation.[6] These claims are used to legitimise the promotion of women in decision-making structures.

Where WID targeted women and worked with women's groups generally, WED targeted women and worked with women's groups in order to develop projects such as tree nurseries, soil and water conservation and agroforestry projects. The advantage of these approaches was that they were conceptually straightforward and provided a sense of certainty about how to proceed and what the results would be. They represented 'win-win' or 'win-win-win' scenarios: working with women would help women and the economy, or working with women could help women, the economy *and* the environment. They were therefore attractive to development organizations.

From the 1980s onwards, a broad range of literature has argued that many of the previous approaches that targeted women were problematic in various ways (Cleaver, 2002; Chant, 2000; Cornwall, 1997; Jackson, 1993; Harrison, 1997; Jewitt, 2002; Kabeer, 1994; Schech and Haggis, 2000). Firstly, it is argued that some of these projects treated all of the women they worked with as the same, which meant that project initiatives were often captured by elite women and/or poorer and less powerful women failed to receive the benefits. The projects prioritized a gender analysis of social relations, but failed to consider other kinds of social discrimination at work, such as class, caste, ethnicity, race, age, and marital status, which intersect with gender in powerful ways. Female-headed households were often missed by these studies, and a focus on women also meant that groups of men who may also be vulnerable were missed (Cleaver, 2002). Projects based on notions of universal sisterhood were also criticized, as many women from the 'South' challenged women from the 'North' for claiming to share and be able to understand their experiences, when in fact their experiences were very different (Mohanty, 1986; Schech and Haggis, 2000). Others have commented that campaigns for equality are based on concepts of individuality which are not necessarily appropriate or relevant to non-Western concepts of the person (Kabeer, 1994; Schech and Haggis, 2000).

Secondly, the targeting of women and the formation of women-only groups as the main vehicles for development have also attracted criticism. In the first place, like the welfare programmes before them, they asked women to do more towards their own - and society's - development, and in so doing they added to women's workloads (Harrison, 1997; Chant, 2000). Women were being asked to take the major responsibility for improving their position, when the source of their marginalized position was produced in society as a whole (Cornwall, 1997). Why should women have to work harder to redress inequalities that were structural and produced and perpetuated by men and women? In the present research, a comment by a woman in a group discussion in Hubli-Dharwad, India, captured this sentiment, when she said that

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[6] A representative of the Ministry of Environment and Forests at the National Afforestation and Eco-development Board (NEAB) commented, for example, that *'Women are the most dependent on forest resources, particularly through their use of and dependence on non-forest timber products and fuelwood. Women are main contributors to the household economy (and therefore also the Indian economy) through their use of forests. Women are the bearers of ecological knowledge, and these specific knowledges must be used in forestry management and incorporated into forestry management. So there is a strong shift now towards taking into account the views of women, to provide women with support structures for their activities and needs'* (Author's interview, 17/8/04).

women on their own could not manage to tackle the problem of male alcoholism in their village, because *'one hand alone cannot clap!'*

Other cases have been used to argue that working with women on their own is problematic not only because it requires more of women, and because it fails to engage with the root causes of the inequities, but also because it can also lead to other problems. Many studies of women-only projects comment on tensions and conflicts that are provoked between men and women, when development organizations work only with women (Chant, 2000; Cornwall, 2003). A good example of this is the 'two wings' agroforestry project in Kabale, Uganda, which was brought to my attention during an interview with NR International's forestry programme researchers. The 'two wings' project initially engaged women's groups in agroforestry activities in order to help reduce problems associated with soil erosion, loss of water from soil, and low crop yields, and to generate benefits for the women in terms of increased supplies of fuelwood, fodder, fruits and incomes. The project was conceived as a 'win-win' project and demonstrates the efficiency argument for involving women in projects well: the project aimed to improve the environment, to improve women's lives, and the costs of the development project would be kept low through the involvement of women whose *'experience and talents for innovation should help reduce costs in coming years'* (Vashee, 1997). The labour requirements of the agroforestry activities were high, but what is more interesting here is that problems emerged because the women's activities were not receiving the support of the wider community. Men became suspicious and resentful:

Men tend to view the planted trees as a threat to their traditional rights of land tenure. This discourages women from planting; they feel they will not benefit from the tree products. In some cases, men have actually uprooted the trees women have planted… Women who plant trees are seen as challenging the men who have always controlled land, trees and cash. Men are traditionally regarded as the planners, thinkers and decision-makers, and the women's agroforestry initiatives evoke male resentment and fear that the women will usurp their cultural role (Vashee, 1997).

In this case, the approach of working with women-only groups was therefore abandoned. Vashee (1997) writes that, as a consequence, men became more involved, and the project was struggling to ensure that the women did not become newly excluded from the project's activities.

Theoretical work has also identified dangers in the way in which women are equated with the poor in development discourses (Jackson, 1993). This is a common tendency: in interviews for this project, when I asked how a project considered gender issues, or how a project ensured that women were included in a study, I was often told that *'we work with women because they are the poorest. Women make up at least half of the poorest people, and, therefore at least half the people we work with are poor'.*[7] Jackson refers to the equating of women with the poor as the *'feminization of poverty'* (1998, 43), and argues that it is problematic because it disguises variability in the way in which women experience poverty. Even among female-headed households, some women, particularly widows, divorcees and separated women, are often among the poorest, but others may receive remittances and may not be among the most

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[7] Magnus also had similar findings (Magnus, 2003).

vulnerable (Jackson, 1998; Chant, 2004). The definition and experiences of female-headed households vary tremendously from place to place, so much so that it is difficult to generalize. Equating women with the poorest also draws attention away from examining how gender relations structure that poverty, and how gender relations are likely to impact on interventions that are aimed at counteracting poverty. They focus on generating income without necessarily addressing unequal gender relations. As Jackson writes, *'the subordination of women is not caused by poverty'* (1998, 60). Tackling poverty will not therefore tackle the subordination of women and all the problems that are associated with it.

1.3.2   Gender and Development (GAD)

Out of the critiques and frustrations with WID and WED, and from other broader influences[8], another approach has developed, which is called 'gender and development' or GAD (Young, 2002). While WID targeted women on their own, GAD emphasises that women's marginality is a product of the way in which gender relations are constructed in society, and that those gender relations are not constructed in a vacuum - they are constructed between men and women. Hence, if you want to change gender relations to improve women's lives, you have to work with men too. With GAD the emphasis shifts from a focus on women, to a focus on power relations in society more generally. All forms of unequal power relations that have the affect of marginalizing or excluding groups or individuals need to be counteracted in order for development to take place - economically, socially and politically. Challenging gender inequalities becomes part of a broader project of challenging all social inequalities, including those of caste, class, race and ethnicity.

The GAD approach has also drawn on more nuanced approaches to understanding male-female relations, particularly in the household. Where WID saw the household largely as a site of contest, in which the dominant position of men had to be resisted by women, GAD approaches have drawn on ideas of co-operation and conflict to emphasise that alliances exist between men and women as well as conflicts (Kabeer, 1994; Rasavi and Miller, 1995). The household is the site of bargaining, and 'togetherness', and the way in which men and women can support each other is valued by the men and the women themselves and ought to be valued by development projects also (Agarwal, 2003; Rasavi and Miller, 1995). Thus GAD moves away from *'Old style feminist theory [that dealt with men] at a stroke: men were classed as the problem, those who stood in the way of positive change'* (Cornwall, 1997). Attention has been drawn to the existence of groups of vulnerable men, particularly since large-scale economic changes have led to breakdown in 'traditional' family structures and 'traditional' male roles. Improving women's lives involves helping men too, and building on some of these alliances.

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[8] One of the major influences was a school of thought commonly referred to as WAD or Women and Development. This approach was heavily influenced by Marxist approaches, and argued that gender inequalities were produced and reproduced by global political and economic inequalities, and by the capitalist nature of development itself (Schech and Haggis, 2000; Young, 2002). Counteracting gender inequalities produced out of patriarchal forms of exploitation could only be achieved, therefore, if imperialist and capitalist forms exploitation were also challenged (Lim, 1983; Schech and Haggis, 2000; Young, 2002).

GAD approaches are far from the established orthodoxy. Perhaps because they emphasise the way in which gender has to be understood as relational and in the context of other power relations, they are complex, and they are not - unlike WID - easy to translate into policies and programmes. Questions remain about whether same-sex groups or mixed-sex groups are more effective, and about how to integrate economic, social and political aspects of any project. Recent work suggests that approaches that attempt to challenge all forms of inequality together, and that focus on the need to work with men together with women, and include vulnerable men as much as women, have in practice led to women being left out of the equation again (Cornwall *et al*, 2004).[9]

1.3.3 Summary

This review of the theoretical debates and critiques helps to contextualise the case studies and the analysis of the findings from the present research. It points to some of the assumptions that lie behind particular approaches, several of which are evident in practice today, and to some of the dangers inherent in these assumptions. It also gives the background to the way in which gender is conceptualised in this research. Gender is understood in this paper as relational: as a form of socially-constructed power relations that shape what is expected and what is possible for men and women, and the nature of the relationships between men and women. Research-for-development projects need to explore the way in which gender intersects with all forms of practice and 'sets of rights' to the NRs and to the benefits from those NRs.[10] Gender relations influence the use, and sometimes the abuse of NRs; they influence who sustains, who takes decisions about and who benefits from the NRs. Gender relations are also dynamic and changing as a result of processes of negotiation and bargaining between men and women and as a result of changes in the NR base. In addition, a study of the gender dynamics of NRM research-for-development needs to do more than 'add women' or 'target women', although it is important that women are present as contributors to the research, as participants and as beneficiaries, as well as men.

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[9] A similar sentiment was reflected in the comments of one DFID official who was interviewed as part of this research. Referring to the process of mainstreaming, in which gender issues have been transformed from a specialist concern to one that must be considered in every part of every project, he said, 'gender, like the environment, has been mainstreamed off the agenda' (DFID officer, 2004).

[10] For review see Rocheleau and Edmunds (1997).

2. Case Studies

2.1 Case 1: The Peri-Urban Interface of Hubli-Dharwad, Karnataka, India

2.1.1   Introduction

The first case examines research being carried out in the peri-urban interface of Hubli-Dharwad, an agglomeration of two cities in Karnataka State, India. The research 'Enhancing Peri-Urban Livelihoods and NR Management in Mugad cluster, Hubli-Dharwad' (henceforth described by its NRSP code, R8084), was implementing participatory action plans developed under a previous NRSP funded project (code R7959). These two projects also built on previous research projects in the Hubli-Dharwad peri-urban interface (PUI), which collected and analysed baseline data on processes taking place in the region. Much of this information has been presented in two books: *Changing Frontiers: The Peri-urban Interface Hubli-Dharwad, India* (2001) edited by Brook, Purushothaman and Hunshal; and *The Peri-Urban Interface: A Tale of Two Cities* (2000) edited by Brook and Dávila.

The R8084 project represents a collaboration between academics and development practitioners, between Universities and Research Institutes in India and UK, and Indian NGOs. The Universities involved include Bangor, London and Birmingham Universities, UK, and the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Hubli, India. The NGOs involved are the India Development Service (IDS), and the Bharatiya Agro Industries Foundation (BAIF). The work is co-ordinated by the Best Practices Foundation (BPF), an Indian NGO specialising in research and development.

The aims of R8084 are to enhance peri-urban livelihoods, particularly of the poor and the very poor, and to enhance NRM by providing training in skills related to improved livelihood strategies and improved NRM. It also aims to build the capacity of communities to influence decision-making processes and to obtain resources from key policy and administrative institutions in the PUI. The project thus combines a 'new knowledge', 'scientific' element with an 'institutional', 'social organization' element in its work. On the 'new knowledge', 'scientific' side, the main project activities take the form of Front Line Demonstrations (FLDs) of techniques such as improved pest management, intercropping, agro-forestry, composting, soil and water conservation, and animal husbandry. On the social organization and institutional side, the activities include the following: the formation of self-help groups, '*sanghas'*, which serve as credit and savings groups and participate in development activities; the development of income-generation activities through training and exposure visits; engagement in broader community-level group NR improvement activities, for example, tree planting, water tank restoration, and culvert construction for improved drainage. Through these activities the project aims to contribute to tackling poverty, and also to a) test the effectiveness of the participatory process that produced the project's action plans, and b) test the validity of the new knowledge about NR based production and livelihoods. It also aims to halt or reverse degradation in the NR base, before it '*is lost to the advancing urban area'*.

The project works in six villages around the cities of Hubli and Dharwad: Gabbur, Mandihal, Channapur, Daddikamalapur, Kotur and Mugad. Another village, Surashettykopar, more distant from the Hubli-Dharwad city complex, where BAIF has been working for around seven years, was also visited as part of this research. Although BAIF's work in Surashettykopar had not been carried out as part of R8084, it was possible to examine there the impact of their development initiatives over a longer timeframe.[11]

2.1.2 Gender Awareness: Research Intentions

The projects that led up to R8084 demonstrate an awareness of the importance of gender relations and the way in which they influence NRM and poverty. But the *Changing Frontiers* publication, for example, notes that there is very little village level data on poverty in the PUI in general and almost nothing on the gendered dimensions of that poverty. Given the lack of data it comments that

Conditions pertaining around Hubli-Dharwad have to be inferred from what is known elsewhere in India… Within the poor, female-headed households and households with large numbers of children, were especially vulnerable.[12]

The analysis that follows in the same publication emphasises the high variability in NRM and poverty over short distances in the PUI and the complexity of the processes of change taking place. But, in practice, it provides little information on gender relations or on the way in which they intersect with livelihoods, NRM or poverty.

The PUI is an environment in which the livelihoods in the urban fringe are deeply intertwined with the opportunities provided by the urban centre, and vice versa. Because of this interconnectedness, and the degree of mobility of individuals, the literature comments that the PUI cannot be described as either urban or rural. As part of this research, the visits to the different villages in PU Hubli-Dharwad, where R8084 was involved, reveals the way that gender intersects with all of the interconnected processes taking place. Gender influences who moves to the city (daily or for longer periods), what they do there, and the impact that the move has on the household and society. Gender also influences who does what in the PUI: for example who works the land, who is using NRs, what they do with them, and who is able to engage with project development activities. This research also found that, even over short distances in the PUI, the way in which gender is constructed varies extensively: gender intersects with factors such as geographical distance, NR availability, livelihood opportunities, age, caste and religion, to generate a variety of gendered patterns of mobility, NR use, and poverty.

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[11] The visit to Hubli-Dharwad was facilitated by Sangeetha Purushothaman (R8084 Project Co-ordinator, India) of Best Practices Foundation. Interviews and group discussions were made with the help of Sangeetha Purushothaman, and with translation and other research assistance from Vasant Rao and Sinduja Krishnan, also of Best Practices Foundation. The Community Officers, Technical Officers and representatives of IDS, BAIF, and UAS, also gave time to be interviewed, to show me the places where they are working, and to introduce me to some of their beneficiaries.

[12] Brook, Purushothaman and Hunshal, 2001.

2.1.3   Examples of the intersection of gender with other factors and the variability of gender patterns

For example, in Mugad village I was told that *'both men and women, equally, shift to the urban in search of labour'*[13]. Visiting Dadikamalapur village I was told that *'none of us [women] go to Hubli-Dharwad. Our husbands go and take milk everyday for sale in Dharwad'.*[14] In Mandihal village, men go to the urban centres and work in construction, and women work locally in quarries crushing stones (see figure 1).

The patterns, practices and experiences of migration are not only gendered, but they also impact on gender relations. They impact on what is expected of, and acceptable to, men and women, and these shape NR-related activities, responsibilities and benefits. In the dynamic PUI these vary with migration practices and also with the local availability of other forms of income and NRs.

Figure 1: Women working in quarry in Mandihal village

In areas where a there is a lot of male migration to the city, women tend to take greater responsibility for farming activities, and carry out agricultural tasks previously thought of as male. Many of the women encountered as part of this research pointed to men's use of alcohol as a contributory factor to a withdrawal from agricultural and household responsibilities. They perceived that alcohol consumption and migration to the urban centre were linked: men who go to town use their salaries to buy alcohol, which leads to a deterioration in their behaviour.

Women in the PUI also seek out alternative, non-agricultural livelihoods. Some travel to the urban centres for daily labour or to market produce. In Kotur village, where there are factories nearby, women work and make goods such as pickles. Here women are usually employed for a six month period only, however, so that the factories can

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[13] PUI team meeting, 23/8/04.
[14] Discussion group, 26/8/04.

avoid becoming liable for paying social benefits such as sick pay or holidays. In Mandihal village, where many women work in quarries, they have withdrawn significantly from agricultural activities. They explained to me that the income they derive from crushing stones is more reliable, even if the work is unpleasant. Agriculture in the area has suffered from drought and unpredictable climatic conditions in recent years. In addition, investors have come into the area and further reduced the availability of good agricultural land.

The variability in the gendered patterns of NRM that exist in the PUI can be illustrated more specifically through a review of the livestock management practices in three villages. In Dadikamalapur village, the women are responsible for the cleaning of the animal stall, collecting fodder and for grazing the cows or buffaloes. The men carry out the milking, and market the milk to the milk marketing board in the city, or directly to people's homes or to the market. In Gabbur village, the women also carry out the majority of the work of keeping the cows and buffaloes, but both men and women milk. The men take the milk to the market, but the women make curds and take these to the city and market them directly. Curds are sold in small units, and the men of Gabbur are not willing or able to sell them. Finally, in Channapur village, men carry out the majority of the livestock management labour: they graze the cattle, clean the cattle sheds and make dung cakes for fuel (a practice that is usually assumed to be a female responsibility).

The variation that exists in the gendered nature of mobility and NR use between villages is such that it is not possible to generalize. *'Conditions pertaining around Hubli-Dharwad'* (see quote above) **cannot** *'be inferred from what is known elsewhere in India'*, as even information from one village cannot necessarily be translated to another in the same PU context. When starting a project, baseline information on this variation needs to be collected, as it can highlight differences between areas which otherwise might go unrecognised.

Understanding the variation in gender relations, and the specific nature of gender relations in a particular place, can be crucial to the success or otherwise of a development intervention. This can also be illustrated through the case of livestock management in two of the villages mentioned above. One of the development project's main activities has been assistance in acquiring livestock and support for livestock management.[15] In Gabbur village, both men and women have acquired livestock through the project, and by all accounts the initiative has been successful up to now, as it has benefited both men and women. Although women carry out the majority of the labour, both men and women market different livestock products from which they derive an income.

However, in a meeting in Dadikamalapur village, when the project staff asked people what the project could do for them, the men asked for more buffaloes. The project staff noticed that no women had spoken in the meeting, so they called them together separately and asked them what they thought. The women said, *'Please, do not give us any more buffaloes. We do all the work and the men take all the milk to the city and*

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[15] Development organizations are keen to provide livestock as they see them as a way to contribute to a household's nutrition as well as to household income. The need for fodder is thought to have the potential to engender in beneficiaries an awareness of and desire to develop good NRM.

come back with alcohol!'.[16] Women in Dadikamalapur have no control over the marketing of livestock products or over the income derived from that marketing. Giving buffaloes in this situation would have added to women's workloads, from which men derive income, and which they control. The provision of buffaloes to this community would have only been appropriate if it could have been accompanied by changes in the gender division of labour and control over livestock products and market income. This case also illustrates the importance of sometimes meeting with men and women separately.

In Gabbur village, where the men market milk and the women market curds, a better understanding of the gender division of labour and the gendered nature of control over products and income might also have improved the chances of success of a further proposed project activity. The project's market research had suggested that processing the milk into butter would 'add value' to the NR milk, and would be more profitable. The project's suggestion was that the women would make the butter and that the men, whose knowledge and access to the more lucrative non-curd markets was considered superior, would market it.

In a long meeting, the women repeatedly refused to accept the plan. Women made comments like, *'we'll only sell milk. We can't work in the fields and then come home and make butter'.*[17] The project staff felt that the women were over-conservative. One (male) project member appealed to the women *'you have been doing this work for many years [making curds]. That is why it is hard for you to break out and do something new'.*[18] Another (male) staff member cajoled them *'We've given you so many things, and you have refused this…. We are not leaving you here, we will see that you will do butter! I don't have much money but everyday I'll come and I'll eat your head [nag you] until you agree to butter production'.*[19]

The project staff members' views of the women's reaction fit well with pre-conceived and stereotypical ideas of women as conservative, un-business-like, risk-averse and unambitious. An alternative interpretation is that the women's reluctance stems not only from the prospect of additions to their work load, but also from the fact that the meeting gave no assurances that provision was going to be made to safeguard their share of the income from the marketing of the butter. The usual practice in Gabbur was for men and women to control the income that they received from the produce they marketed. The women were not convinced that they would be guarranteed an income from produce marketed by men. In addition, some commented that curds and butter were difficult to make at the same time, so if they shifted to butter production there was a danger that they might lose their current source of direct income altogether. At the least, one outcome could be that they would become more dependent on men.

If thought had been given to the importance of access to markets and to the control of income, it might have been possible to discuss their significance explicitly, to have a more open and honest form of communication, and to negotiate an agreement. Looking into these aspects of NRM and poverty requires a 'following up' of all the

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[16] PUI team meeting, 23/8/04.
[17] Project meeting with women (various ages, various *sanghas*), Gabbur village, 26/8/04.
[18] Project meeting with women (various ages, various *sanghas*), Gabbur village, 26/8/04.
[19] Project meeting with women (various ages, various *sanghas*), Gabbur village, 26/8/04.

implications of the intended changes. In this case, after a discussion of the NR technique and marketing, an exploration of how income is controlled within the household is required. Interviews with research and development agents working in the NR field commented that this kind of 'follow up' is often missing in NR work.[20] The cases discussed here reveal that such 'follow up' is essential, and can sometimes explain why initiatives are accepted and successful, or rejected and failing.

In summary, in each place, the gendered division of labour, the gendered responsibilities with regard to NRM, and the gendered use of and control over the NR products, all need to be assessed: one village is unlikely to be the same as another, and change can take place over short periods of time. In addition, sensitivity to the variability in the gendered nature of NRM in the PUI in each project area is likely to bring a greater awareness of the variability in NRM in the PUI more generally, vital to successful NRM intervention.

2.1.4 Gender and 'new knowledge' NRM activities

As well as demonstrating that not enough attention is paid to the variability of gendered practices, the study of R8084 illustrated that where the 'new knowledge', 'scientific' elements of those projects are concerned, there is often a lack of involvement of women.

The 'new knowledge', 'scientific' aspects of the project were mainly directed by the academic team of researchers from UAS and from British Universities. The NGOs were involved in the mobilising of people and the monitoring of results.[21] When I asked a group meeting with the project team who exactly was involved in their activities, I was told, firstly in relation to Field Level Demonstrations (FLDs):

It [FLD] is a crop demonstration, and it is mainly done involving men because they are the ones who look after the fields. Women's involvement in FLD is rare and I have not come across any FLD involving women. In the peri-urban area we have given 89 FLDs in five villages… There are different kinds of intercropping like sorghum-based, soybean-based, maize-based, cotton and savi as a whole. Here women are not involved directly, but they come and work as labourers for weeding and likewise jobs.[22]

Secondly, in relation to other NR-related activities:

In the implementation of the action plans for the NRM with regard to agro-forestry, horticulture and tank restoration, it is usually men who are participating more in these activities. Women participate more when it comes to weeding or to any other

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[20] A NR International project working with women in the fishing industry in southern India had tried to increase productivity and incomes by improving the techniques used in the fish processing which was mainly carried out by women. The researchers involved told me that the work with women was considered to be a success, but they had no idea of how any improved income was controlled, shared or used at a household level. The time and scope of the research for development project had not allowed for such 'follow-up'.

[21] This was particularly the case where the NGO, IDS, was concerned, that was working in four of the six villages. The NGO BAIF also had its own research station, and introduced and monitored its own 'new knowledge' technical solutions and innovations.

[22] Meeting with UAS team, 21.08.04.

income-generating activity. In most of the field operations men are the ones who are participating.[23]

When I asked why women were not involved directly, as they were working on the land (if only as weeders!), an IDS staff member explained: *'women are the NR users, not the decision-makers'.*[24] Another member of the IDS team explained separately:

The land is in the hands of men…. All the assets are in the men's names. Tradition cannot be broken. Even if a letter is written to a man's daughter, it is addressed to the son-in-law… All the major decisions with respect to the environment are made by men.[25]

The project had therefore taken tenure rights and official decision-making power in the community as the criteria for involvement in their activities. Such criteria make men appear to be the 'natural partners' for NR-related work, as land tenure rights are in the hands of men; few, if any, women in these communities hold land in their own names. Official decision-making power is also in the hands of men, and is also related to formal tenure rights, as whoever holds formal rights has superior rights to decide what is done with those resources. Projects are loath to interfere in matters that they perceive of as being cultural, for fear of being accused of insensitivity. But these two criteria combine to create a male bias in the project's field-based NR activities.

Figure 2: A man (left) who has taken part in FLDs, showing two Community Officers his vermicompost

The male bias exists despite the fact that the project staff were aware of, and showed respect for, the degree of involvement of women in NRM in practice. For example,

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[23] UAS team, 21.08.04.
[24] IDS staff member, 25/8/04.
[25] Meeting with IDS Community Organizers, 23/8/04.

the same (male) researcher who had commented that the field-based activities involve men more *'because they are the ones who look after the fields'* also explained:

In agriculture, 50% of the work is done by women. When the people plan cropping, men and women plan together. A woman's participation is a routine thing and there is nothing special about it. Her participation is actually more (weeding, collection of fodder for livestock, taking care of them). Men just plough the land and harvest. According to me women spend more time in agriculture than men. If we see all the activities, she participates in the planning, planting, weeding, harvesting, and so on.[26]

Working only with formal decision-makers, tenure holders, and those doing the 'ground-breaking', more visible work, is problematic. If only men attend meetings and training programmes it is possible that they are taking decisions and agreeing to changes in NR techniques and practices that are implemented by women. During visits to the field areas I met several women who were maintaining fruit trees, bunds or other NR activities that had been implemented following training, but it was their husbands or sons who had attended the training sessions. It is possible to interpret this as a success, as evidence of the filtering of knowledge through to others in a community. But other researchers have commented that it is important to be aware that these practices can represent an additional burden on women and that the work again remains invisible (Joekes et. al. 1996). If the women do not attend the trainings or meetings, then they cannot comment on how they experience them.

An approach that assumes that it is enough to work with the formal decision-makers to improve livelihoods and environments, assumes that those decision-makers will act in a way akin to 'benevolent dictators' (Kabeer, 1994) in the household. It assumes that through their supposedly wise decisions in partnership with the project, the productivity of the land will be improved through better techniques and practices, and overall everyone will benefit. It accepts the gendered division of responsibility and power on the grounds that it is the cultural situation as one that can not and should not be altered. In the words of the IDS officer: *'tradition cannot be broken'.*

The danger is that such an approach may lead to further marginalization of women from the decision-making processes and further disenfranchisement. Although women may *officially* be excluded from decision-making processes, studies of intra-household power relations in agricultural communities demonstrate that their prominent involvement *in practice* gives them influence on what takes place, however formally unrecognised (Scott, 1985; Bourdieu, 1977). The involvement of a powerful outside body that does not recognise the less visible unofficial contribution of women in terms of labour or decision-making, has the potential to strengthen the power of the formal decision-makers, to silence further the point of view of women, and to entrench further inequalities of power.

Research projects need to listen to the more muted voices of different groups, which are often those of women, and form partnerships with those that are doing the work as well as those who are the formal decision-makers. The section above has already demonstrated how practice on the ground varies significantly from the 'official' or stereotype of that practice. Following the discussion of these ideas with project staff,

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[26] UAS team, 21.08.04

some of the members of R8084's research team expressed the opinion that, in hindsight, more could have been done to include women:

In terms of the University research, the inputs are only for men. What happens is that they don't know about the women's awareness or their voices. No research has been done on women's involvement.[27]

In NR activities women could have been more involved. But it did not strike me at the time. In most places the men were so enthusiastic about getting involved that there was no time to make this decision [about who should have been approached]. It would probably have been better to involve the women, but we did not have time to think about it.[28]

This section demonstrates further what is meant by, and necessary for, gender-sensitive NRM for development. It means carrying out a gendered analysis: following up how NR activities and poverty are configured by and configuring gender relations, and it means including in a study an examination of the gendered nature of tenure, labour, marketing opportunities and practices, and control over income. But the development of this gender analysis must not be to the detriment of the inclusion of women. Recent criticisms of approaches that argued that it was enough to include women in a project, without careful analysis of the gendered dimensions wider processes (the 'add women and stir' approach[29]), have led to a new risk that older battles for women's inclusion and for attention to women's voices, are being forgotten (for summary see Whitehead, Harrison and Cornwall, 2005).

2.1.5   Methodological Considerations

In the visits to the villages, it became apparent that there were other factors which contributed to the neglect of women's involvement. Similar factors have been examined extensively as constraints in the field of development and gender, and hence it is disappointing that they are still exerting a strong influence on the research and development practice. For example, It was commented that some women have been excluded from participating in the workshops because of the times of the meetings, and because women have many different demands on their time.[30] Several people engaged in research on this project (as well as with the other projects studied as part of this research project) also commented to me that sometimes it is difficult to work with women. I was told that women 'talk in circles', 'they don't know the answer', 'they do not trust easily' or 'they are not straightforward'. Working with women was seen as time-consuming and difficult. Research-for-development workers were not always motivated enough to provide what they saw as the extra time and resources in order to understand women's perspectives, or to include women effectively in their projects.[31]

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[27] IDS staff member, 25/8/04.

[28] IDS Community Organizer, 23/8/04.

[29] For a review of this critique see McDowell, 1989.

[30] IDS staff member, 25/8/04.

[31] These comments are very similar to the findings of Ardener (1975), which were reviewed as still exerting an influence on the inclusion of women into a project in India by Mosse in 1995:

> *[there are] general issues concerning assumptions about the 'accessibility' of women to the project, and the representation of women's perceptions. This latter is not a new problem, nor*

2.1.6 Gender and Poverty

This research also found that the way in which 'the poor' was defined and understood also limited the extent of gender sensitivity of R8084. Firstly, the project pledges to work with the poor and the very poor, but because it also works with people who manage and use land - a valuable commodity - this often meant that it was not working with the poorest. Secondly, it is often assumed that women are the poorest, but there is a great deal of variation in the situations of different women, depending on factors such as age, marital condition, number of children, and the income of members of her family. But the project's categories of 'the poor' did not help in distinguishing between different kinds of women, and their experiences.

The project employed a broad framework for analysing the communities that they are working with which divides people into four categories:

1. Rich: own more than 14 acres of rainfed land, own house and tractor; highly paid salaried employment (of more than Rs10,000 per month), own businesses and have savings.
2. Medium: Own 5-13 acres of rainfed land, engage in small enterprise or are low salaried employees (of Rs5,000 per month or less).
3. Poor: Own below 3 acres of rainfed land; are agricultural labourers or factory workers.
4. Very Poor: Landless, do not always live in their own homes, lack assets and are agricultural labourers.[32]

The discussion above has outlined how for various FLDs, the participants were chosen because they had enough land, and sometimes of good enough quality, to be able to host the FLDs. Thus those involved in the FLDs are not the very poor, and it is unlikely that they are always within the category of the poor. One farmer who had taken part in bund construction and various on-farm trials in Mandihal village, told us that he had become involved in bund construction and the production of vermicompost because his son, who was employed in the agricultural service, had heard about the initiatives and had encouraged him to take part. Thus here, those participating have more in common with the 'productive poor' described by the project in Kumasi (see Case 2).

In discussion with UAS about the women to whom they manage to gain access and with whom they work with as part of this project, they commented that *'the women were illiterate, zero asset based and demotivated'.*[33]When I asked about female-

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one restricted to PRA research methods… While men were universally accepted as "good informants", able to articulate knowledge and explanations (models) which met the expectations of investigators and included representation of women's concerns, women were considered difficult to reach, 'they giggle when young, snort when old, reject the question, laugh at the topic, and the like' [Ardener, 1975]' (Mosse, 1995).
Mosse's work has shown in more detail how the exclusion of women from the research processes causes a problematic male bias in research findings. Any development activities based on such research are unlikely to be appropriate for, or to benefit, women. Unfortunately, the same biases still appear to be exerting an influence on research-for-development programmes.
[32] Brook, Purushothaman and Hunshal, 2001, 63.
[33] UAS interview, 21/8/04

headed households, I was told that *'There are very few women-headed houses here. Exceptional cases like widows head the houses'.*[34] I was told that the extended family is strong in South India, and that women who might otherwise be heads of female-headed households, tend to be incorporated into their larger kin group. On my first visit to a village, however, the first two women I met, both of whom had come to watch the activities of the project and were not participating themselves, were female household heads. It seems the idea of the extended family is partly wishful thinking. There are female-headed households here, and there is little information on the numbers in a given community, or the extent of their participation in project activities. In discussion with an IDS staff member, she commented that, with the benefit of hindsight, it is possible that the project did not use fine enough categories with which to differentiate between the groups of poor in the community. The majority of the people in the area are poor, but it would be good to have some other ideas about why and how they are poor, and how this varies for men and women.

2.1.7 Problems of conflating and homogenizing groups

In discussion of the way in which women are incorporated into project activities it became clear that women were conflated with a broader category of people in the PUI, the landless. In the PUI there are a large numbers of landless people, including people of scheduled castes, tribal groups, or occupational groups such as potters. There are also people who have lost land through difficulties and/or through the encroachment of the city or the influx of city-based entrepreneurs and developers. The project has been seriously concerned that its FLDs and other farm-based activities are unable to reach and help this group or people, who are often among the poorest. It has therefore tried to design activities which can overcome their exclusion. These activities generally come under the heading of 'income-generating activities' (IGAs), and they include chicken rearing, kitchen gardens (growing flowers, medicines and fruits), production of vermicompost (difficult but not impossible without much land), honey production, livestock rearing, soap production, incense production, silk production and various trading activities:

The rule of the project is not to discriminate against the landless. So they [the communities and the project] come up with projects where both the landed and the landless can both be involved. They come up with tailored solutions for the landed and tailored solutions for the landless, so the entire thing is balanced.[35]

There is not enough information at present to comment on the relative value of the different projects for the landed and the landless (which can be equated with field-based activities and different income-generating activities respectively), but the conflation of the groups women and the landless is likely to be problematic and disadvantageous for both. There are women who are landless, but women who have access to the fields of their male kin, and to the produce of it, are not in the same category. Each landless group also faces their own particular difficulties that must be examined and addressed. Some of the landless groups also make vital contributions to NRM in the area: potters, for example, who collect clay from the bottom of water

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[34] UAS interview, 21/8/04.
[35] Meeting with IDS Community Organizers, 23/8/04.

tanks make a significant contribution to the desilting of the water tanks, which is enjoyed by the rest of the community.

There are dangers inherent in lumping all kinds of inequality together. This has been a recent trend in several research and development projects, which have combined concerns for different marginalised groups after realising that gender is not the only form of inequality in society, and that forms of inequality such as caste, ethnic group, age and class can be just as important in generating exclusions. But although people may share the experience of exclusion because of their gender or their caste or class, the way in which that exclusion is structured and manifest is likely to be different. The assumption that the experiences of women and a group of people of a particular caste or class group are the same leads to a lack of appreciation of those differences. In the case of women, as we have seen already, assuming that they are landless furthers the assumption that they have no involvement in field-based activities. It is likely to lead to their further marginalisation from the processes through which decisions are taken about the land that they often cultivate.

Although project R8084 has strived to provide opportunities for the landless it appears to find working with field-based activities easier. Again, a trickle-down argument is made which supposes that work with the landed will benefit women and the landless:

Agriculture is the basic activity [of the project]. Landless people take up supportive activities like agricultural labour, carpentry, blacksmithing and other forms of rural artisanal crafts. By improving agriculture many people can benefit in these service industries. If the NR activities are enriched, then landless people will also benefit. [36]

There is little hard evidence to support (or, admittedly, to refute) the view that a trickle down of benefits from the development of field-based activities is taking or will take place. It can be concluded from a study of the history of development practice, however, that trickle-down must be proven and cannot be assumed.[37] This conclusion has serious implications for projects working with NRM which may, by their very nature, be biased towards the landed. They are unlikely therefore to target the poorest and have the potential to further strengthen inequalities rather than challenge them. They need to work harder to overcome any implicit bias in their projects, and at the least to monitor the processes that they currently optimistically assume are happening.

In addition, the strong association of women with IGAs that are not NR based, and men with field-based project activities is potentially problematic. The people in peri-urban communities want off-farm activities and sources of income, especially as their access to resources has been under pressure. But the danger is that these gendered differences reinforce the ideas that women's work is not in the field (in the same way as older development projects thought that women's work was in the home), potentially making women's contribution to land-based activities invisible.

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[36] UAS team, 21.08.04

[37] The focus on tackling poverty that has become prominent over the last two decades can be viewed, in part at least, as a result of the recognition that it is not enough to create economic growth and assume that it will 'trickle down' to the poor: without efforts to ensure that there is some distribution of resources it is unlikely to take place (see Todaro, 2000).

2.1.8 Success of Self-Help Groups

Although this research has found that the equating of field-based project activities with men, and the income-generation activities with women is problematic, it also found that some of the 'institutional' elements of the work with women were very successful. In particular, the *sangha* self-help groups were impressive, and appeared to be bringing about improvements in women's (and sometimes also men's) lives.

*Sangha*s have also been formed in other parts of India. They are self-help groups, and they are used to save money, to access credit and to organize group activities. Each *sangha* usually has around 15 people, and the members meet weekly and contribute an agreed amount of money. This can be used for a specific purpose by the group, is the source of loans for individuals in times of need, or can be used as collateral to access further credit. It is very difficult for an individual to obtain credit, but I was told that the banks are keen to lend money to *sangha*s. In addition, *sangha*s are in the process of grouping together to form a federation of *sangha*s, the *mahasangha*, which may provide another source of credit for individual *sangha*s, and a source of support when the development project is finished.

There are men's *sangha*s and women's *sangha*s; I did not come across any mixed sex *sangha*s in the Hubli-Dharwad area. During visits to the different communities I met with members of several women's *sangha*s who described to me some of the benefits that they had obtained through *sangha* membership. Being a member of a *sangha* had often improved the economic situation of an individual woman, but women also told me about how it had improved their self-esteem. There is also some evidence to suggest that the formation of *sangha*s had led to the political empowerment of the women involved, and had enabled them to have some influence over the wider community in which they lived. In *sangha* membership, economic empowerment, personal empowerment through increased self-esteem and self-confidence, and political empowerment can be seen to be often linked together.

First and foremost, the membership of the *sangha* is formalised: the membership is fixed, the members agree to meet at a regular time and contribute a regular amount of money, and to abide by fixed bye laws. The formalization of the membership and its activities is vital as it allows the women to keep money separately from that of the household and away from the reach of their husbands. The meetings often take place away from individual households in a public space, such as a temple. Some *sangha*s which have been successful in their saving and use of their money, are also considering building a small place in which they can meet. Thus the *sangha*s provide legal, as well as literal space, in which the women can do something for themselves. In a society where the household is the most important unit of organization, and in which income is pooled but under the control of the male household head, this is an important innovation.

The *sangha* savings and access to credit are used for a variety of purposes. They can be drawn upon when women are in difficulties, providing a crucial source of security, when otherwise women would have gone to money-lenders who lend at high rates of interest. A group of women in Surashettykopar village explained that

We give loans to our members for many purposes - for education, agriculture, debt and health problems. For debt and health then the request for the loan is immediately sanctioned by the sangha.[38]

The money can also be used as the basis for investing in various IGAs, that are developed from the participatory planning processes with the help of IDS and BAIF. Sometimes these IGAs are carried out by individuals; sometimes the women pursue the activity as a group, receiving training and guidance from the NGO.

Figure 3: Women *sangha* members receiving training in soap-making

One of the most successful examples of a *sangha* IGA activity is the Bibi Fateema Begum *sangha* of Kotur village. This *sangha* is made up of 15 women, 13 Muslim women and 2 Hindu women. They have been producing *aggarbatti* - incense sticks - and have expanded their production significantly through the use of a series of loans from the bank, each time paying back the loan and then taking out a larger one, for the next phase of expansion. The women explained to me that they got the idea for making *aggarbatti*, from a long-running TV serial, that portrayed a woman struggling to make *aggarbatti*, going through various trials and tribulations but finally succeeding.[39] After saving 10 rupees each per week for a year, they discussed among themselves and decided that they would also like to try *aggarbatti*. IDS then arranged

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[38] Woman in group discussion, Surashettykopar, 27/08/04.
[39] The way in which they saw this first on TV says something about the nature of poverty in the PUI. People living in the PUI are connected to, and exposed to, forms of knowledge, technologies, and expenses, that exist in urban areas and beyond, at regional, national and international levels.

for some training and an exposure visit to another area where women were already engaged in *aggarbatti* production. At first the women took 500 rupees that they had saved to Hubli and bought all the necessary materials. Initially they made losses, but they persevered, and when I met them they told me that they were able to save about 2500 rupees in 2 months from their business. The women have not yet used any of these profits for themselves, but have ploughed all the money back into the business, and have started to employ people to work for them, in order to keep up their expansion.

Thus *sangha* membership not only provides a vital safety-net for women: it can also be a significant source of income. In discussions with the women *sangha* members, however, as well as the economic benefits, they also emphasised the social and educational benefits that they received from being a member of a *sangha*. A woman at a session in which training in soap production was being provided for a group of women in Mugad village commented:

You have given us this business and if it clicks we will have an extra roti every day. Earlier our husbands told us that we didn't know anything and they never allowed us to go out…We never used to come to the front to talk. The IDS Community Officers have taught us to sign our names. If you take us to the shop where we can sell our products then after that we can go on our own. We will also go to the panchayats and to the banks ourselves.[40]

On a different occasion, a Muslim woman in Mugad village commented on how *sangha* membership had brought her out of the household and into the company of other women. She also mentions the practice by which the responsibilities for *sangha* activities are shared between the women, so that no one person comes to dominate:

Before I stayed in the house. The only thing that I went out for was to take rotis to my husband in the fields. Now in the sangha everyone must take turns in being the senior member and going to the market.[41]

The concept of 'leaderless groups' was pioneered by IDS, to prevent certain women, usually of higher socio-economic or educational status, coming to dominate over others (see Sarin, 1996, 68).

In an interview with the women in Surashettykopar, the comments are similar, but they also emphasise the way in which the *sangha* allowed the women to spend time together despite the usual barriers of caste or religion:

Before we had a sangha, we fifteen people, we all went about our lives separately. We had no friendship or bond. But after we formed a sangha we had a bond. All castes, Muslims and Hindus, now we are all together. We start our meetings at 8pm on Wednesdays. If you are two minutes late then you pay a 2 rupees fine. If you are absent you pay a 5 rupees fine. The meeting does not take long but sometimes we stay talking until well into the night… Before the sangha had 16 members. One woman died and before she died she said 'please do not remove my name from the sangha'.

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[40] Mugad woman during group discussion, 22/8/04.
[41] Mugad women, individual interview, 25/8/04.

So every week her name is called…. In the sangha, the main thing is not the loans, it is the bonding. In marriage, now people help each other. In times of illness, now people help each other. So now there is a lot of love in the village and harmony. [42]

Time and again during the visits to the villages, the women emphasised the social benefits that they received through their *sangha* membership. For many of the women, it seems that their lives were based in, and mainly limited to, their own houses; and if they had problems, for example in marriage, it was difficult to know whom to turn to. The *sangha*s provide a social and supportive network.

It is also possible to identify an element of empowerment that comes with *sangha* membership that can be described as political empowerment. This refers to the sense of an increase in power and ability to influence, rather than a specific reference to involvement in formal political processes and decision-making, though it may include that. In one village, Channapur, the women in *sangha*s had also led a campaign against the selling of alcohol in their area, and managed to bring about a ban. It is evident that the women felt that they had gained the confidence to speak at public meetings, to write their own names, to go to the market, and even to approach their local *panchayat* council, and that they attributed this new confidence to their membership of the *sangha* which was supported by the research-for-development project. It has to be borne in mind that my visit to the area was short, and I was accompanied by project staff, so that it is possible that the women were trying to please us. But their accounts were convincing.

The closeness of the connection between many of the IGAs to NRM varies and is sometimes quite tenuous. Soap production and *aggarbatti* production, for example, use purchased chemicals and are not particularly environmentally friendly. But there is some evidence to suggest that the organization of the women into *sangha*s has led to their contributing to efforts to transform the PU environment. Women in a *sangha* in Kotur village explained to me proudly that they had contributed food and money to the tank desilting process. Women in another village contributed money to the replacement of a drainage culvert. In both of these cases, the women's work helped to ensure the wider availability of water used by animals (watered by men and women), by people in the household (generally collected by women), and by farmers (male and female).

Women in Surashettykopar had worked together in tree planting, and had helped to re-claim degraded hillsides. In this case, the group work was seen as a spiritual endeavour, and BAIF invited a *swami* to lead the day's celebrations and tree planting efforts. But in all cases, the women expressed that their *sangha* membership had enabled them to participate more visibly and proudly than they might have done before.

Overall, aside from the economic benefits, the *sangha*s provided a social network and led to the increased self-esteem and confidence for the women involved.

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[42] Woman in group discussion, Surashettykopar, 27/08/04.

2.1.9 Role of Community Officers

It became apparent during the course of this research that the people who work everyday with communities have a high degree of influence over who participates in projects and in the success or otherwise of those interventions. These people are known as Community Officers or 'COs'. They are paid employees of the project, and they work closely with the communities. The extent of their roles and responsibilities is not always recognised or researched in project reports.[43]

When examining the issues brought to light in a study of how gender issues are dealt with by a project, the extent and importance of their role is difficult to ignore. For example, because the criteria used by the project for identifying the poorest people were rather broad, the COs had to employ their own local knowledge, gained from living with the community for long periods, in order to ensure those who were needy are involved. Here, the willingness of COs to live among the communities for a long time reflects an impressive personal commitment to the project and to tackling poverty. Their presence and exposure among the communities provides them with opportunities for participant observation and most of them gain ethnographic and qualitative understandings of the communities among whom they live, which is invaluable to the project. Knowledge from participant observation is augmented by participatory exercises in wealth ranking and by use of existing statistics on land-holdings:

When we arrive in a village, first we approach the landless, the women, and the poor in their free time and first we try to understand their individual problems. The poor can be found because they are usually in their own area. So we have a meeting and carry out social mapping and everyone tells of each other in terms of the land, cattle and animals that they own, their source of income, number of children and education, and whether or not they are poor or not poor. Then this information is cross-checked with the village accountant who keeps records on land.[44]

When I asked if the public nature of the discussions of wealth meant that some people were reticent about admitting when they needed help, or if the discussions caused ill-feeling, I was told that there was rarely a problem:

The people who are poor from the beginning will not feel bad. They say 'I am a poor man'. Others who are rich from the beginning, they say 'I am a rich man'. It is those who have come down in life recently who are difficult to know and who are difficult to identify, and so we have to handle those very personally.[45]

The COs pride themselves on generating what the male COs described as a 'brotherly relationship' with the villagers, fostering trust so that the villagers feel that they can tell them their problems. They spend a lot of time visiting the households, talking to the different households individually in order to understand their needs and perspectives. It is easier for the female COs to talk to the women, and men to men, but even through time and through gaining the trust of a household, they argued that this could be overcome:

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[43] Harrison, E. A. 2002, is one study that draws attention to these dimensions.
[44] IDS Community Officers, 25/8/04.
[45] IDS Community Officers, 25/8/04.

The male COs do not talk directly to the women. They speak to the others in the house and then they talk to the women finally. In this way there should be no clash between the COs and the people. We [the COs] have to have a lot of patience and strength. If we go to a household we have to listen to their two-hour lecture for our two-minute business. By the end of the day we really have a headache![46]

Observation of the COs in the field showed that they have a good relationship with many of the people in the communities – both men and women – and that they had excellent local knowledge and the trust of the community. The number of people working on the ground, talking to people, explaining different project practices, and discussing their problems, is undoubtedly one of the great strengths of this project. IDS has a much higher proportion of female COs and other project officers, and this appears to have made the organization more sensitive to the need to include women in projects.

2.1.10 Social Change and Challenging Inequality

If some of the inequalities associated with the gendered nature of NRM and poverty are to be overcome, this means bringing about social change. The COs also have a role in encouraging people, reassuring them, and generating change in the community. As one BAIF officer explained:

Social change cannot take place in one day. We have to work individually with the people. Personal contact is the best way to change the society.[47]

IDS and BAIF have different approaches to working with *sangha*s. IDS, which is an organization that was founded by a woman and is currently headed by a woman, and which employs many women, focuses more on forming women's *sangha*s:

We have experience of working with men and women but the commitment of men and women is different. That of women is much higher. So when we work with men we have to take time to see how serious they are.[48]

The process of development is from bottom to top. Benefits will not percolate downwards from men to women, rich to poor literate to illiterate. If the work begins with women, men will automatically do it.[49]

Not only does this fit with their vision of working towards an equal society, free from poverty, but for IDS, they feel that it works better. They find women more reliable than men. They have formed *sangha*s with men, after men have seen the benefits that their wives have obtained. By forming *sangha*s with men and supporting the men's activities they have also prevented the men from becoming resentful of the women-only *sangha*s. The resentment that is expressed by men is a problem that is often cited for same-sex groups but here the IDS COs explain that by supporting men as well as

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[46] A female IDS Community Officer, 24/8/04.
[47] BAIF officer at PUI team meeting, 23/8/04.
[48] IDS COs, 24/8/04.
[49] IDS staff member, 25/8/04.

women, and having prolonged conversations with all the different members of a household, any resentment and tension is avoided.

Here, as in the discussion above about political empowerment of women and the extent to which it has enabled women to contribute to wider environmental change programmes, the downside of these developments is that they may ask women, who are already burdened heavily with work, to do more. Where the approach to field-based activities relies on trickle-down, the reliance on women's *sangha*s relies on a kind of trickle-up, which may have costs for the women involved.

In BAIF's case, they work with both men and women, but, like UAS, they have a bias towards field-based activities which means that they tend to look to men as the 'natural' partners. The Surashettykopar *sangha*, which was most impressive, shows that they can also work with women however. This *sangha* or *'shakti'* group was formed to help women who were destitute, many of them abandoned. Many research-for-development workers commented on how difficult it is to access and help poor and isolated women such as these. In the Surashettykopar case it had taken about seven years for the group to become established and to start to have a positive impact on the women's lives and the surrounding environment. It is clear that, where gender relations are concerned, change and development are processes that can not be expected to take place quickly.

2.1.10 Change - confrontational or incremental?

A final comment can be made on the approaches that were shared by UAS, IDS and BAIF on this project. All were disapproving of approaches to changing gender relations that they considered to be directly confrontational. By forming *sangha*s for men and for women based on mutual respect, they all hoped to *'shift the whole society up'*[50], rather than improve one group at the expense of another.

It is particularly interesting is that several of these organizations were happy to take a proactive approach to tackling other forms of institutionalised inequality, particularly those of caste and religion. They often included people of different castes and religions in one *sangha*, in the hope of overcoming some of the caste or religious prejudices. Some of the impacts of these proactive approaches have been seen already in some of the quotes above - in Surashettykopar the women commented on their new bonds with women of different faiths and castes. In the following quote, one of the female IDS COs explained how they encourage people of different castes to mix, but interestingly, the men and women remain separate:

Initially there was a problem because when we were working with people they first wanted to work with their own caste… But people have begun to see that this is not meant only for one caste… Initially people were angry and accused us and said that we are trying to spoil the culture and break the traditions. But now they are beginning to accept. In each sangha we try to make people overcome some of these distinctions and prejudices. We got each group to make food and we mixed it together and we got people to eat together. I ate with the women and my boss (a man) ate with the men.

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[50] PUI team meeting, 23/8/04.

And everyone found it a wonderful experience and said 'we never thought this was possible, but this is good'.[51]

The strength of feeling about the dangers inherent in more confrontational approaches to gender inequalities became apparent when the PUI team went for their own exposure visit to Mysore, to learn about the work of another NGO, Mahila Samarkiya Karnataka (MSK). MSK works much more proactively towards the political empowerment of women, promoting women's membership on *panchayat*s, and on village development committees. It has also set up a women's court and campaigns for women's rights.

Although the PUI team were very impressed by the work of MSK, many were also sceptical about the sustainability of work that they viewed as confrontational. In an analysis which one of the (male) BAIF officers made after the visit, the approach and concerns of the PUI team are evident. I believe his analysis was partly tongue-in-cheek, but it expresses his doubts about approaches to, for example, direct campaigning for land rights for women. It is also interesting in what it says about the participatory nature of some efforts to work with gender relations. Where a participatory development project aims to challenge gender inequalities, his comments suggest that before participatory consultative exercises are commenced, a process of consciousness-raising and priming of beneficiaries often takes place.

Working with gender relations is a four stage process. The first stage is brain washing or brain teaching for men and women. This should be done separately [with men and women] and simultaneously. The second stage is social mobilization - organizing the people to work together. The third stage is economic - but we should keep in mind the drudgery element and make sure that we do not add to women's burden. The fourth stage is that of legal processes and protest. This should be turned to as a last resort, as a one-off. It is not sustainable.[52]

Although he was not specific, I believe he considered the legal or 'protest' stage unsustainable because he saw it as not necessarily being underpinned and supported by a change of heart on the part of men and women. As such he thought it was likely to lead to tensions and conflicts.[53] I am not advocating this view, but I believe it reflects the wider perception that work with NRs is concerned primarily with improving economic conditions, and that from this, social change (including change in gender relations) will follow. Interestingly, the visit with MSK had been arranged partly because the two projects felt that they had something to learn from each other. While MSK is strong on political empowerment, it feels it has been less successful in helping women to build up their economic strengths. This lends support to the conclusion that social and political processes are often difficult to marry with the environmental and the material world of NRM. Interestingly this mirrors the way in which the social concerns about livelihoods are sometimes difficult to integrate with the concerns of 'harder science' relating to NRM. Perhaps through more discussion and acknowledgement of some of these difficulties, more fruitful ways of forming

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[51] IDS Community Officers, 24/8/04. This method of breaking down caste and religious distinctions builds on the importance of food consumption practices in maintaining caste boundaries.
[52] BAIF officer, visit to MSK, 30/8/04.
[53] The alternative reading is, of course, that he was resistant to such kinds of change, that might bring about a more profound improvement in women's positions and rights.

partnerships between what are often seen as the discrete domains - the socio-political and scientific-technical - can be found.

2.2 Case 2: The Peri-Urban Interface of Kumasi, Ghana

2.2.1 Introduction

The second case examines the work of project R8090, in Kumasi, Ghana, otherwise known as '*Boafo Yɛ Na'* or 'Who Can Help the Peri-Urban Poor?' R8090 is an action research project working in the Peri-Urban Interface (PUI) of Kumasi, a city that has expanded rapidly in recent years and in 1993 had a population of c. 535,000 (Brook and Dávila, 2000).

R8090 builds on the findings of previous NRSP projects. The first of these collected baseline data on the peri-urban environment and developed a GIS user-interface for policy-makers and planners. R8090 is a direct development from R7995, or 'NaRMSIP' project, 'the Natural Resource Management Strategies Implementation Plans'. NaRMSIP carried out participatory planning exercises with communities in the peri-urban area with the aim of building capacity and enabling the poor to diversify their livelihoods. '*Boafo Yɛ Na*', a Twi phrase that means 'a helper is scarce', was the title chosen for the project. It was designed to implement some of these plans and to develop the planning process further.

Like the Indian peri-urban case study (Case 1 in this report), *Boafo Yɛ Na* is collaborative. The Ghanaian NGO, Centre for the Development of the People (CEDEP), works together with academics from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and also with academics from the Universities of London and Bangor. Some of the baseline data from previous projects is compared with data from Hubli-Dharwad in the book *The Peri-Urban Interface: A Tale of Two Cities* (2000) edited by Brook and Dávila.

Boafo Yɛ Na and its immediate antecedents drew on the sustainable livelihoods framework and aimed to contribute to better natural resource management (NRM) and to counteracting poverty. The final technical report of R7995 explains that its aims were based on

the assumption that when people are gainfully engaged in sustainable livelihood activities whether natural resource-based or not, the pressure on the natural resources would be reduced. [54]

The objectives of *Boafo Yɛ Na* included: reducing the number of households classified as poor from 60% to '*at least the pertaining national average figure, currently at 40%*'; increasing the number of poor households relying on natural resource-based livelihoods in the twelve selected communities from 300 in 2001 to 2400 in 2004. These objectives were to be achieved by providing new knowledge and skills particularly in relation to NR-based activities, by building capacity through training the community to make business plans and to be able to assess their viability. By providing a small amount of capital, the project would also enable people to implement some of their plans. By encouraging people in the community to work together in groups and/or networks, the project also hoped to be able to make links

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[54] Project R7995: Implementation Plans for Natural Resource Strategies for the Kumasi Peri-Urban Interface. (http://www.nrsp.co.uk/Nrspweb/ftr/R7995.htm accessed, 7/6/04).

with resource providers and decision-makers in the peri-urban environment (for example, banks, and municipal assemblies). Like the peri-urban project in India, therefore, the project had a 'new knowledge', technical component, and a social organizational and institutional component, that were intended to work in tandem.

The project works in twelve communities around Kumasi city. For this research four communities were visited: Asaago, Atafoa, Abrepo and Adagya. Abrepo and Atafoa are more centrally located compared to Kumasi (approximately 5 km from the centre). Adagya and Asaago are located further from the city (approximately 12 km from the centre).[55]

2.2.3   Gender Awareness: Research Intentions

The project literature expresses a commitment to paying attention to the participation of different groups in the research and development activities, including women, youth and new entrants to the peri-urban community. It also states that

The project will promote the inclusion of gender issues in discussions. All man made constructs of sex would be exposed and discussed. Stakeholders would be given the chance in taking the challenge of breaking some of these ideological constructs for the benefit of their institutions. A tenth of the projects' programmes would be concentrated on gender sensitisation and empowerment. Conscious efforts would be made to balance the participation of men and women, young and old in the activities.[56]

In the early research that collected baseline data on livelihoods in the PUI there is some gender disaggregation of the data which reveals a broad picture of the nature of men and women's activities and the way they have been changing. For example, in Table A, data presented by Dávila and Brook (2000) show that agriculture is still the largest single employer in the PUI. They also show that although agriculture is often assumed to be a male activity in Ghana, in this PUI it employs more women than men.

Table A: Occupation of respondents in eight villages of peri-urban Kumasi, 1997 (Brook and Dávila, 2000, 187).

Occupation	Women		Men		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1. Major Occupation						
Unemployed	59	18	24	15	83	17
Farming	130	41	47	29	177	37
Salary (teaching, civil servant)	2	0.5	10	6	12	2.5
Trader/business/hotel/restaurant	77	24	11	7	88	18
Construction/metal work	4	1.5	29	18	33	7
Student/pupil	28	9	9	6	37	8

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[55] The visit was facilitated by Korsi Ashong (R8090 Programme Manager) and Benedict Fosu Adjei of CEDEP. Interviews and group discussions with communities were carried out with the assistance of Joseph Yeboah Siaw and Dede Baako, who acted as translators.
[56] Proposal for R8090, 'Who Can Help the Peri-Urban Poor?' 2001.

Others, including artisans/craftspeople	20	6	30	19	50	10

2. Supplementary occupation						
None	315	98	156	97.5	147	98
Farming	3	1	3	2	6	1
Trader	1	0.5	0		1	0.2
Construction	0		1	0.5	1	0.2
Others	1	0.5	0		1	0.2
All respondents	320	100	160	100	480	100

In Table B, Brook and Dávila's 2000 data show how agricultural livelihoods have changed over a period of 26 years. It has declined for men and women, and although the average of women's involvement has declined significantly, women in the PUI are still more involved in agriculture than men.

Table B: Share of labour force in agriculture in selected peri-urban villages around Kumasi, 1970-1996

	Share of labour force in agriculture (%)						
	1. Female				**2. Male**		
Village (approx. distance to Kumasi centre	1970	1984	1996		1970	1984	1996
Akokoamong (13km)	56.3	55.8	30		32.2	30.6	28
Asaago (12km)	49.5	49.6	41		40	41	32
Atasamanso (7km)	33.3	29.2	6		20	18.1	4
Behenease (24km)	38.5	41.2	54		41.5	40.1	36
Emena (13km)	60.8	60.1	24		20.6	25.7	16
Esereso (13km)	47.5	45.2	14		35	34.5	8
Maase (13km)	59.1	58.7	34		19.3	22.3	20
Okyerekrom (15km)	38.1	36.8	27		18.4	17.2	21
Mean	47.9	47.1	28.8		28.4	28.7	20.6

The analysis of the data can be taken further to suggest the impact of proximity to the urban area on gendered labour patterns. The more distant the community is from the central urban area, the more likely men are to be involved in agriculture. Moving towards the centre, more women become involved in agriculture; very close to the centre, both men and women are less involved in agriculture. As the size and influence of the urban centre has grown, men have become less involved in agriculture, and women may have taken over many agricultural activities. Brook and Dávila (2000) comment that little known about the activities that men are engaged in, in place of agriculture.

2.2.3   Examples of the variability of gendered relations

From the field visits it was clear that access to paid employment in peri-urban Kumasi is highly gendered. In Abrepo and Atafoa, both men and women were engaged in construction work, but among the communities I visited, I was told that men were engaged more than women. When engaged in construction, women carried out less skilled work, carrying cement and water. However, the availability of this work was

highly variable and seasonal[57], and the community of Abrepo complained that there was a great shortage of these jobs at the time when I visited.[58] In Abrepo, of 13 women I interviewed, 3 had husbands who had had other kinds of job (two as drivers and one as a shoemaker), but they were currently unemployed.

In the more distant communities, although systematic data was not collected, the situation appeared better, as there was a higher proportion of men who had paid employment. In the group discussion, I was told that men went to work in sawmills in the area, and that they also worked as teachers, fitters, carpenters, drivers, masons and construction workers. Some women also had paid employment, or had received training and used the skill to obtain a livelihood. The most common skills were hairdressing and tailoring (one woman had received help from the project to assist in setting up her own hairdressing business). But the consensus was that there were many more opportunities for obtaining training for men than women, mainly through apprenticeships in Kumasi. The more opportunities for men than women can also be connected to the greater participation of men in formal schooling (in 1995, there was an enrolment rate of 46.2% for girls compared to 53.8% for boys at Primary School; the gender disparities increase at higher levels of education).[59]

Although systematic data on the amount of training and paid employment for men compared to women were not available, the research carried out here demonstrated that there were strongly held attitudes on the part of men and women that 'proper' work for men was either farming or paid employment of the kind described above. By comparison, the 'proper' work for women included a variety of activities, many of which, like trading, were considered comparatively 'petty'. Land was becoming increasingly unavailable, however, and the desired 'proper' jobs for men were also elusive. The preferred male livelihoods often failed to materialize. When this happens, it appeared that men rarely down-size their expectations: instead they would go seeking for work near and far, and sometimes they experienced prolonged periods of unemployment.

The different expectations of men and women, particularly regarding the scale of their respective activities, were entrenched and came up repeatedly in interviews with the PU communities. These expectations influenced how men and women responded to different livelihood opportunities and also to the way in which they experienced and responded to poverty. For example, the comments of different women in a discussion in Abrepo explain:

Poverty is difficult for both men and women, but it is worse for men because a woman can do something even for 2000 cedis [25p]

Men need large amounts of money before they can do anything. That's why they appear unemployed, and then they can take off and go anywhere.

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[57] The communities explained that many of the houses being built in peri-urban Kumasi are being built by Ghanaians working abroad. Work is carried out on the building projects when the owner has raised enough capital to proceed to the next stage of the project. The work is therefore very intermittent.
[58] This was not the case for Atafoa, however, showing how the situation varies even over a very short distance.
[59] Awumbila, 2001, 46.

A woman can buy something – even just water – and go and carry it on her head to sell, and call out to people to buy. A man can't do that.

My husband was a taxi driver, but now he has lost his job, and so I take care of everything. It is not easy for the men to get jobs, but the women, we can do trading.

In general the women are suffering more, because whenever the children need anything they come to them, and they cry for everything – for food, or for clothes or anything. So it is women who provide, as the men are often not around. At other times the men are around, but they don't give out their money.[60]

In Atafoa a man explained the situation regarding men and livelihoods:

We used to go to the forest for bamboo and we used to get sand and go for jobs but now these are all difficult. Now the only option is to join a driver as his mate – a 'plankee' – and you will receive something that you can use to eat at the end of the day.[61]

In Adagya a man who was working as a facilitator for *Boafo Yε Na*, explained how he found it difficult to get men to attend meetings or to become interested in the new options that were being provided by the project:

Men here don't like to participate in these things. If we call them they don't come. Some like drink. Others, if you call a meeting and don't give them 'minerals' [non-alcoholic fizzy drinks], then next time they won't come.[62]

Gender relations in this area are such that men are perceived as the main breadwinners. But in practice many of their main activities are failing to materialize. This causes many problems for men who may have to leave in search of work and may be exposed to the many hazards that may affect poor job-seekers. They may also suffer psychologically as they have failed to live up to the societal expectations of men as providers. In addition, it causes problems for women, many of whom become *de facto* female household heads, and have to support themselves and their children economically and emotionally.

In summary, the project was partially successful in examining the gendered dimensions of livelihood opportunities in the PUI. But most of the data available are quite generalized. They do not explore the dimensions of experience captured in the quotes of men and women above. They are not able, for example, to reveal a great deal about how changes in opportunities for men and women have impacted on gender relations in the household or the community, or why those changes in livelihood opportunities have impacted on men and women differently. They are not able to provide much information on what happens to men who do not find, or refuse to follow up, certain livelihood opportunities. It will be shown in subsequent sections how all of these dimensions of gender relations impacted on the way in which project activities were taken up by the communities with which *Boafo Yε Na* was working, and also how they affected the relative success of their activities. First, however, I

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[60] Abrepo, 29/10/04.
[61] Atafoa, 30/10/04.
[62] Community Level Facilitator (CLF), Adagya, 30/10/04.

examine the extent and ways in which the intersection between poverty and gender was considered by the project.

2.2.4   Gender, Poverty and Community Level Facilitators

Poverty, as discussed in the literature review, is frequently gendered, but there is no straightforward equation between women and poverty. Some women may be better off than some men, and in any community there are likely to be women who are more and less poor. The gendered nature of poverty is also cross-cut by other indicators of social difference, for example, class, caste, ethnicity, marital status, occupation and age.

According to my discussions with the project team, there was no independent analysis of the community profile or of the poverty of those who were involved in project activities. The reasons given for this was generally the 'research fatigue' of the communities. After nearly a decade of research, the communities are tired of with answering questions. Such 'research fatigue' was commented on by the Indian case study also, pointing to wider difficulties in integrating the research and development components of a research-for-development project.

In the face of these difficulties, the project relied on community representatives to act as intermediaries between themselves and the community. These people are referred to as 'Community Level Facilitators' or 'CLFs', and the project presents their role as a virtue as much as a necessity. They are described in project plans, for example, as a *'novel strategy for working with communities'*, and as the *'eye'* and the *'catalysts'* of the project.[63] Their role is summarized as follows:

The CLFs were entrusted with the task of social development and community mobilisation. They were also to act as the interface between the communities on the one hand and CEDEP and the other stakeholders on the other. Rather than being mere agents for concepts, they were to become catalysts; assisting communities achieve the goals they have collectively defined for themselves. In helping communities to plan, implement and monitor actions, they are expected to be learning, documenting records of these lessons at every stage and trying out new ideas that will benefit the communities.[64]

The CLFs should also ensure that plans are livelihood based and use the natural resources available.

These positions are voluntary and receive no payment. The CLFs receive some training and are able to participate in the project's development activities, but, like other individuals, they can participate only in one activity. It is thought that the CLFs receive sufficient reward for their work by facilitating the improvement of their community.[65]

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[63] R8090 'Role of Community Level Facilitators and Other Stakeholders in Formulation and Implementation of NRM Plans'
[64] R8090 'Role of Community Level Facilitators and Other Stakeholders in Formulation and Implementation of NRM Plans', p16.
[65] Discussion with CEDEP team, 28/10/04.

The communities select people whom they feel can do the work of CLFs, and they are supposed to meet several criteria: residency in the community; be readily available to help the community; be able to read and write fairly well. Each community should have three CLFs, and they should be male and female. In addition, the CLFs have to be accepted democratically by the community. In practice, the people who have the skills and characteristics described above are few. Many of those with these qualities have held leadership positions in the community before. In the first round of CLFs appointed, the number of male CLFs was 27, compared to only 9 female CLFs. In some communities there were no female CLFs. The gendered breakdown of CLFs is significant. A study by the *Boafo Yɛ Na* team entitled, 'Role of Community Facilitators and Other Stakeholders in Formulation and Implementation in NRM Plans' (in draft form at time of this research), suggests that female CLFs work better with women and male CLFs work better with men. In addition, the report suggests that female CLFs who have received training as CLFs have gained in confidence and ability through the experience. In this way, the work with female CLFs could be seen to be contributing to improving the lives of women in the PUI.[66]

Figure 4: CLFs from Kumasi PUI with rabbit hutches

The CLFs play a strong role in determining who becomes a project participant. They hold meetings to inform the community of the opportunities that are available through the project and in this way the participants are, to some extent, self-selecting. But the CLFs also have the remit to make sure that the project is accessing the poorest in the community, and as such all monitoring and assessment of poverty has been devolved to them. The project relies on their local knowledge and integrity.

Instead of imposing an external indicator of poverty, the project brought together all the CLFs in a workshop in which they identified a set of criteria that they felt would help them to make sure they were accessing and encouraging the poorest to participate. Poverty was defined as the *'inability to afford the basic necessities of life,*

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[66] The preparation of the report on the 'Role of Community Level Facilitators' demonstrates an awareness of the need to monitor the role of these intermediaries more closely.

such as food and shelter and clothing' and the characteristics of the poor were identified as:

'Poorly fed: imbalanced diet, children malnourished, poor drinking water. Poorly sheltered: not protected against sun, rain, insects, wild animals, property etc. Not enough space for every family member, in secure sleeping place, poor homes. Poorly clothed: poor sandals, same clothes for every occasion, shares the same clothes with children, one sponge and towel for the whole family.'[67]

In addition 'the poor' were identified as those who could not provide basic health needs or basic education for their families.

The development and use of local indicators of poverty is excellent, but the influence of the CLFs in deciding who is included and excluded is more questionable. It asks a great deal of these unpaid volunteers, who must rely on their own impressions and knowledge of who is poor. There is little external monitoring of who is participating in the projects, or of their position in relation to others in the community. An assessment of the CLFs ability to access the poor concludes:

There are obvious signs that some of the beneficiaries of the project are indeed poor, as intended. The fears of the people, the utterances and behaviour of some of the beneficiaries show that many of the people the project is dealing with normally have little reserves, have limited access to natural resources, are socially excluded and have little confidence in themselves.[68]

But it is vital that there is more than casual observation and impression. For example, some investigation could usefully be made of the way in which poverty intersects with gender and other forms of social difference, such as marital status: are there female-headed households in this group? When asked about the proportion of female-headed households in the community and the number among their beneficiaries, the project team commented that *'we don't' really get down to these nitty-gritties'*.[69]

It is not enough to shift the responsibilities for monitoring these complex process to the CLFs, who do not have the capacity to examine the ways in which poverty among the beneficiaries is structured and represented, or the levels of poverty relative to the rest of the population. Their actions are likely to be constrained by the everyday obligations, desires and prejudices of life in a community. Discussions with the CEDEP project staff suggest that these matters do urgently need further examination. Like some of the other NRM and poverty alleviation programmes discussed here, they commented that they felt that sometimes they cannot reach the *'poorest of the poor'*:

We have two categories: we call them the welfare poor and the productive poor. The productive poor, with a little push they can make something. With the welfare poor it is more difficult but we still try to work with them.[70]

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[67] R8090 'Role of Community Level Facilitators and Other Stakeholders in Formulation and Implementation of NRM Plans', p39.
[68] R8090 'Role of Community Level Facilitators and Other Stakeholders in Formulation and Implementation of NRM Plans', p39.
[69] Discussion with CEDEP team, 1/11/04.
[70] Discussion with CEDEP team, 1/11/04.

This research showed some inadequacy in the project's monitoring of who is included in their NRM research-for-development projects, and of the way in which gender intersects with this poverty.

2.2.5   Project Development Activities

The project worked in 12 communities in peri-urban Kumasi. The activities supported by the project came under one of three kinds of 'action plans' (APs):

AP1: 'non-farm' natural resource-based livelihood activities
AP2: farm-based livelihood activities
AP3: processing of products from AP1 and AP2 above

Initially the communities showed a strong preference for 'AP2' and 'AP3', and according to the project this was because they were activities that were tried and tested. They included assistance for agricultural practices, and funds to encourage agricultural diversification or improvements, as well as funds for trading agricultural and other produce. Small businesses could also be supported under these headings. Credit was made available through the project in order to enable people to implement the business plans that were approved by the community.[71]

The project then introduced and supported activities under the heading 'AP1'. These activities aimed to fulfil the project's objectives of introducing new knowledge and skills in order to diversify livelihoods and counteract poverty, drawing on the non-farm NR base available to the communities. These new activities were explained to the communities in meetings, and individuals could volunteer to attend training in the different activities. Some credit and/or equipment were provided to the groups in order to help them establish these different new activities.

The new activities included:

- snail-rearing – rearing snails for sale or consumption;
- grasscutter rearing – grasscutters (a small animal, *Thryonomys swinderianus*) are reared for sale or consumption; their meat is considered a delicacy;
- mushroom production – for sale or consumption;
- 'alata' soap production – alata refers to a kind of soap that originated in Nigeria – the soap is made for home use and for sale;
- rabbit rearing – for sale or consumption. Rabbits do not sell for as high a price as grasscutters (one rabbit sells at approximately 50,000 *cedis*[72], compared to 200,000 *cedis* for one grasscutter).

Activities under the headings AP2 and AP3 tended to be carried out by individuals, but the activities under the heading of AP1 were carried out by groups. Those people who had attended training in an activity, and who had been given support in setting themselves up, were expected to continue the activity together and share any proceeds.

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[71] The project set up vetting committees among the communities to carry out this role.
[72] In 2004 1GBP was roughly equivalent to 8,000 Ghanaian *cedis*.

A general view of the gender division of labour in this region of Ghana leads to the expectation of a gendered pattern in the activities AP1, AP2 and AP3. In Ghana (see next case study), men are generally viewed as the main agricultural producers, cultivating subsistence crops like yams, cassavas and maize. Women cultivate cash crops such as groundnuts on land that their husbands have vacated. Women are engaged much more in the processing of farm crops and in trading. Thus it is possible that projects under the heading AP2 would be dominated by men, and projects under the heading AP3 would be dominated by women. (Although the same kind of data was not available for the Hubli-Dharwad projects, the discussions with the research team revealed a male bias in 'field-based' activities).

Table C: Breakdown of the gendered participation in different project activities (source: derived from CEDEP data).

VILLAGE	AP1 ♂ #	AP1 ♂ %	AP1 ♀ #	AP1 ♀ %	AP2 ♂ #	AP2 ♂ %	AP2 ♀ #	AP2 ♀ %	AP3 ♂ #	AP3 ♂ %	AP3 ♀ #	AP3 ♀ %	Not specified ♂ #	Not specified ♂ %	Not specified ♀ #	Not specified ♀ %	Total beneficiaries ♂ #	Total beneficiaries ♂ %	Total beneficiaries ♀ #	Total beneficiaries ♀ %	All #
Behenase	11	32	10	29	0	0	6	18	0	0	5	15	0	0	2	6	11	32	23	68	34
Ampebambe	11	26	9	21	12	28	10	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	23	53	20	47	43
Okyerekrom	15	43	6	17	2	6	0	0	0	0	3	9	0	0	9	26	17	49	18	51	35
Swedru	11	28	11	28	8	20	7	18	0	0	0	0	2	5	1	3	21	53	19	48	40
Asaago	12	23	10	19	3	6	1	2	0	0	15	28	0	0	12	23	15	28	38	72	53
Duasi	11	22	12	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	22	4	8	13	25	15	29	36	71	51
Apatrapa	10	36	6	21	1	4	0	0	0	0	11	39	0	0	0	0	11	39	17	61	28
Maase	14	36	9	23	0	0	1	3	2	5	0	0	7	18	6	15	23	59	16	41	39
Atafoa	4	13	14	45	1	3	0	0	0	0	12	39	0	0	0	0	5	16	26	84	31
Esereso	17	63	4	15	0	0	1	4	0	0	3	11	0	0	2	7	17	63	10	37	27
Abrepo	10	30	12	36	0	0	0	0	1	3	9	27	0	0	1	3	11	33	22	67	33
Adagya	15	31	9	19	4	8	5	10	0	0	15	31	0	0	0	0	19	40	29	60	48
Totals	**141**		**112**		**31**		**31**		**3**		**84**		**13**		**47**		**188**		**274**		**462**

These data are not complete; a number of individuals have received support for activities which are not specified in the data available, and this means that the points that can be drawn from the data are tentative, but certain conclusions can be offered:

The data does not show that there is a bias in farm-based activities (AP2) towards men. In communities where farm-based activities were supported, women as well as men often received support (for example, Swedru, Adagya). There, both men and women received assistance in farm-based activities in diversifying into okra production. This might have been expected considering the high involvement of women in agriculture in this area (see table B). However, AP2 activities received the smallest levels of support (in terms of numbers of beneficiaries), and was mostly in villages further from the urban centre (for example, Ampebambe, Swedru, Adagya).

The more expected pattern of the gendered dimensions of processing and trading (AP3) was strongly evident, however, as few men were involved in processing and trading compared to women. Discussions with women in the communities revealed that these were the activities that they preferred. Many of them had been involved in these activities before, but were able to make use of capital provided by the project either to restart or to expand their enterprises. Their activities included trading yams, fruits, eggs or onions, cooking food and selling, and running small stores. The only

complaint that women involved with these activities had about the project was that they could have used more credit to expand their enterprises further.

The project has, therefore, been able to engage women in its activities well. But there are still concerns about women doing more, while men are not getting involved. It is possible that, through the project, the women are adding to their work-loads through a combination of trading and farming. Far from a male bias in project activities, there is more of a female bias here. When asked why men did not get involved, men and women replied that generally men did not feel that the levels of credit offered by the project were high enough to justify their involvement. Those interviewed made comments similar to those discussed in an early section, that men only engage with projects that are large in scale, whereas women engage in more 'petty' activities. While these ideas go unchallenged, there is a danger that the project may be colluding with the process whereby women's activities are increasing, but also going unrecognised, while men hold out for 'proper jobs'.

When the AP1 activities were introduced, the number of men involved in project activities increased. 141 men participated in the livelihood training activities compared to 112 women. In the other activities (AP2 and AP3 and non-specific) receiving support there were 47 men and 162 women. Overall the number of female beneficiaries still outnumbered the number of male, but the number of male participants increased markedly at this stage. The gender distribution of participants in different livelihood improvement trading workshops can be seen in Table D:

Table D: Distribution of participants in livelihood training workshops (source: CEDEP).[73]

	Male	Female	Total
Grasscutter	41	10	51
Snail-rearing	27	29	56
Mushroom production	28	32	60
Alata soap production	25	30	55
Rabbit rearing	9	9	18
Totals	130	110	240

This data shows that there is a bias towards men being involved in grasscutter activities, but otherwise the gendered nature of participation is negligible. CEDEP explain the male bias in those who prefer grasscutting in terms of the historical involvement of men in hunting and bushmeat. Grasscutters are still hunted for their meat in the bushy areas around the city. Women whom I met in the different communities also explained to me that they did not like to be involved in grasscutter production because other women make fun of them when they go to cut grass for the animals.

In discussion with community participants in the projects it was clear that other tasks were also seen as gendered. Soap-making was seen as a more female activity, and

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[73] The figures in this table are slightly smaller than those in Table C. This could be a result of under-reporting, or of more people carrying out the activities classified as AP1 than were registered at the training workshops. It may also be that Table C includes other activities, such as beekeeping, that some people have received training in, but which are not reported in Table D.

snail-rearing was seen as male. It is interesting to see that the gendered nature of these activities was not reflected in the gender distribution of the participants in the training. In these and other activities, the extent of male and female involvement is comparable.

Figure 5: Male beneficiary feeding grasscutter

The increase in male participation in project activities, with the introduction of AP1 could be viewed sceptically. It could be interpreted that men become involved in these activities because of the free training and provision of set-up resources. Are men becoming involved now because they are trying to capture valuable resources and processes? An alternative interpretation sees the male involvement as a means through which men are starting to pursue new livelihood activities. Through this they may be able to contribute something to their own upkeep and that of their families, instead of holding out for the elusive 'proper' job. The latter interpretation would represent a considerable success for the project.

However, as shown in the next section, following up on what happens to the AP1 activities, suggests that some of the stereotypical views that limited male involvement in AP2 and AP3, have continued to limit the success of men's involvement in project activities.

2.2.6   Drop-Out Rates in AP1 Activities

The large number of people who 'dropped out' from their group activities was mentioned frequently in the visits to the communities. Table E looks at the numbers of people who dropped out from various activities in one village:

Table E: Drop-out rates from group activities for Adagya village

	Founding members		Number members at time of visit (2004)		Number of drop-outs	
	Men	Women	Men	women	Men	Women
Grasscutters	3	2	1	1	2	1
Mushrooms	5	1	1	1	4	0
Snails	2	3	1	1	1	2
Alata soap	4	1	2	1	2	0

Although the sample size in Table E is small, it reflects a pattern that was described to me in other villages: that men tend to drop out of activities more than women. The success represented by getting men involved in these activities is therefore limited by their failure to continue.

The first reason for the high drop-out rate is technical. Many of the activities have experienced problems. In the case of mushrooms and alata soap production the groups were successful when carrying out the activity with the assistance of the trainer, or with materials supplied directly by the project, but when left to themselves they experienced difficulties. In the case of alata soap production, they found that the oil that they were using did not work effectively, with the result that materials (and capital) were wasted. In these events, people became disillusioned and many dropped out.

In almost all the villages I visited, there had been problems with snails and grasscutters. The snails or grasscutters had either died, failed to reproduce (grasscutters), or not grown to the extent that was expected. This caused great disillusionment, as everyday these animals/molluscs must be watered and fed. A great deal of energy was being expended without any sign of any reward. Several people summarized the situation with the phrase '*Hwɛ bua da*', meaning *'we are just looking and starving'*, and said that their snails or grass-cutters were *'just eating money'*.[74] This is especially the case where the cocoyam leaves for the snails to eat could not be found locally and had to be purchased.

The lack of tangible results meant that both men and women often stopped supporting their group activity: drop-out rates were particularly high among men. Observation suggested that when women have invested either money or energy in the initiative they are loath to abandon it in the hope that it will provide a return at some stage in the future. One woman at Atafoa, who was the only person left in a group of five who had started keeping snails together, found that many of the initial stock died. She still continues to water and feed the remainder, however, because, as she explained: *'I can't just leave it to go to waste, as people have invested in it for over a year'*.[75]

An examination of the people who do not drop out of the groups finds that frequently one or two individuals emerge as dominant in the group, and that as others drop out they take more responsibility. The availability of space is important here as many of the activities (snail-rearing, mushroom cultivation, grasscutter rearing) require some

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[74] These comments were made particularly by Atafoa community (29/10/05), and Asaago community (30/10/04).
[75] Atafoa, 29/20/04.

space. Space is at a premium in the peri-urban interface, particularly among the more central communities. Access to space is connected to access to capital, and it is possible that men have more access to space (to a building or to land) where an activity can be carried out. Whoever provides the space often plays a more dominant role, as the activity is often literally on their doorstep. Thus men often provide the space, they often play a more dominant role, and when they play a dominant role they do not drop out. But men, as opposed to women, who play a non-dominant role, are likely not to continue to co-operate with the group when the results are not forthcoming.

Ideally, the membership, roles and responsibilities in the group are supposed to be equally distributed. But the evidence suggest some reversion to more stereotypical gender patterns. In snail-rearing for example, a group in Abrepo explained:

The man is responsible for keeping the shelter, the women for cleaning the environment and feeding.[76]

In one relatively successful grasscutter group, that consisted only of men, I asked if their success had anything to do with the fact that they were a single sex group. Is it because they had no women in their group? They answered

No it is not really that, it is because we are all interested. If there had been a woman in the group it would have been even better because she would have taken care of the cleaning of the hutches.[77]

In some of the other groups I encountered, the people who remained in the group were later found to be husband and wife, or brother and sister. They two were carrying out different tasks along much more stereotypically gendered lines. This situation may be satisfactory, as it builds on the complementarity of men and women's different labours; but it also means that any capacity for challenging and changing gender relations is lost.

2.2.7   Challenging unequal power relations and gender

The project can therefore be said to have helped many women by providing them with livelihood opportunities, but it has not had as much success with men. The stereotypical ideas of men as the main breadwinners has meant that women have often been left to pursue the livelihood opportunities provided by the PUI, such as trading, which appear, at face value, to be 'petty'. This may have led to an increase in women's burdens. Project R8090 can therefore be said to have had little success in challenging unequal gender relations, or what it refers to in its 2001 project proposal as *'breaking some of these ideological constructs'*.

The main way in which the project has tried to address the inequality in gender relations and to gain recognition for the work that women do, has been through the process of making participatory business plans. The household is helped to map together the different contributions that each member makes. The theory is that, by

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[76] Abrepo, 29/10/04.
[77] Asaago, 30/10/04.

showing that, although the women's income tends to be generated in smaller amounts, it is also often obtained more frequently than that of the men. Over time, it is not necessarily a less significant contribution. In this way, they have tried to draw attention to the way in which the man's 'traditional' once-a-year income from the agriculture is often more than equalled by the activities of others in the household, which are frequently misnamed 'petty'. An example of the kind of mapping exercise used by the project can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Diagram identifying income and expenditure of different members of the household as part of making business plan (source: CEDEP)
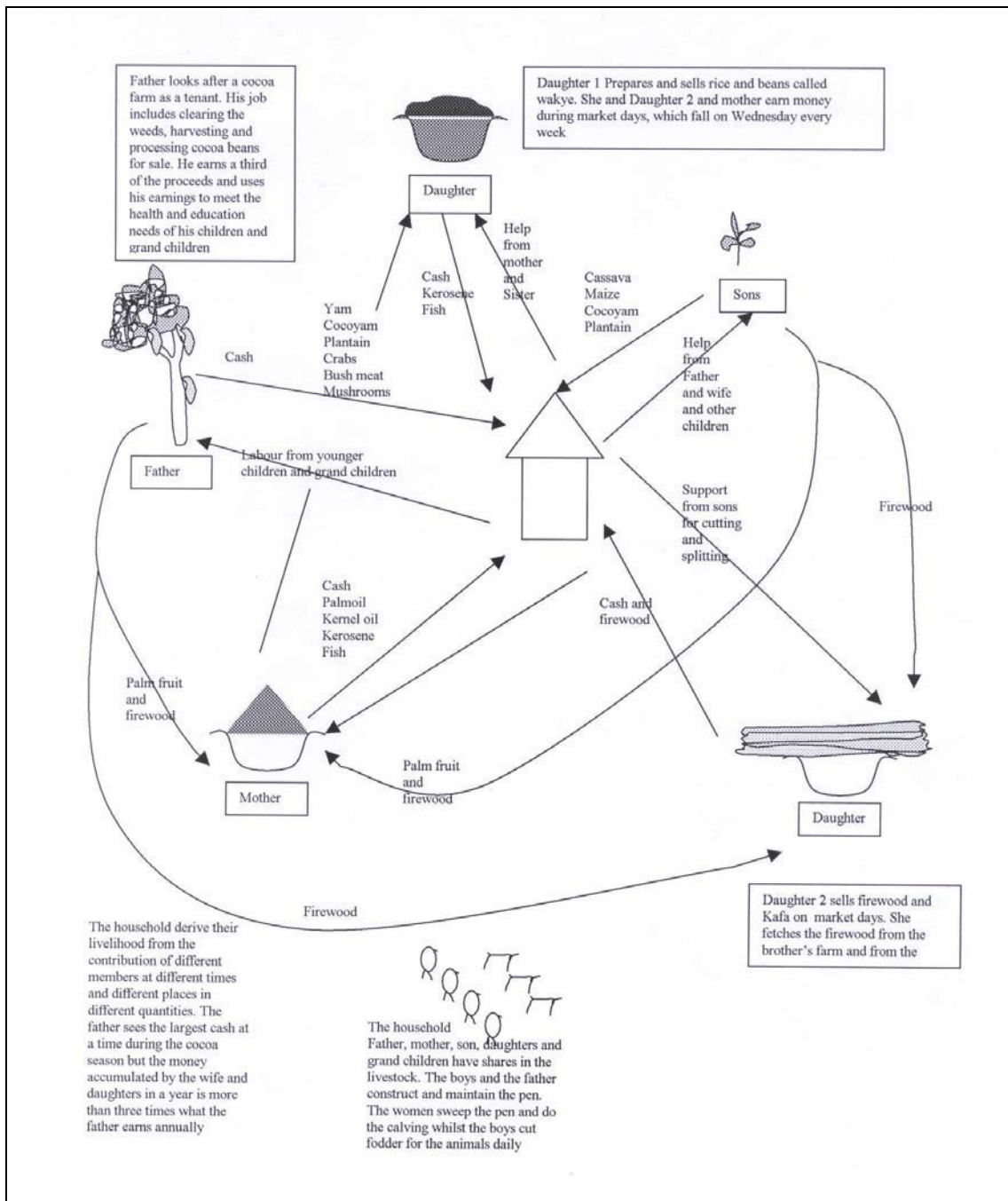
These activities attempt to address one of the most important dimensions (inequality of gender roles and lack of recognition of women's work) that are shaping poverty and NRM. But the business plans seem to be carried out as a 'one-off' in the process of working with beneficiaries. The plans are not well integrated into a more concerted effort to discuss gender roles, responsibilities and relations. As a result these thinking processes appear tokenistic and not to have fulfilled their potential.

For example, when I asked the CEDEP team about these activities further, they answered that they were interested in economic empowerment and they were quite adamant that their approach was not a rights-based approach. Such an approach, they added, would be beyond their remit, and very difficult in the Ghanaian cultural context.[78] This seemed to contradict some of the statements in the project documents, but it was not elaborated upon.

2.2.8 Political power, influence and networking

In terms of wider political empowerment, through the construction of networks of people involved in the same livelihood activity, the project is trying to foster a degree of institutional capacity building and is fostering links with more formal institutions such as banks. Both men and women in the communities seem on the whole to have grasped the nature of these developments and to see their usefulness, although it remains to be seen whether or not they are successful. So far no communities seem to have succeeded in independently obtaining a loan.

The project has also tried to develop the CLF's skills in approaching institutions, such as the District Assemblies or the chiefs, in order to put their needs forward in these forums. In no cases did it seem that this had led to a development of a political awareness or to a consciousness that they could apply to these bodies in order to secure access to resources or to improve policy-making, so that it took better care of their needs. These activities were only viewed instrumentally, as a means of accessing credit from, for example, the Poverty Alleviation Fund. While there is no further development of political awareness it seems unlikely that there will be any development of gender issues; nor will there be change in gendered power relations or gendered rights. This is despite the fact that the project has tried to promote gender awareness as an integral part of preparing the business plan.

The lack of development of political awareness and of an ability to promote their own cases in decision-making forums may also be related to the existing processes taking place in these forums. In Abrepo, those interviewed stated that there was an ongoing dispute between two chiefs, and so they did not want to go and talk to one or the other because it might be interpreted as taking sides. In Atafoa, those interviewed felt that the chief would not be sympathetic to their needs, as various people in the community had been in conflict with him. The project had not been able to address the challenges of capacity building in these contexts.

In both communities, there appeared to be a general feeling of powerlessness in relation to wider policy processes. When I asked the group if they felt that they could try to approach one of the power-holding institutions to ask for access to resources or

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[78] Interview with CEDEP team, 1/11/04.

other facilities, my question was met with scepticism. One woman explained: '*if we go to meetings we are talking only with our mouths; others are able to talk with their mouths and their pockets'.*

Given this situation, little progress seems to have been made in getting women to engage more with decision-making structures. In a context where men and women have little power, there is little sense that the people have rights to change the situation. This seems to be a factor in discouraging the development of a strong movement towards women's empowerment and women's rights.

There was no sense here among the women I met, or among the project staff, that the success of project initiatives, or women's engagement with policy-making structures, might have been improved if single-sex groups had been set up. Both project staff and the women seemed to find the idea inappropriate. Women in Ghana have quite a high degree of independence. They often control their own income and they have many opportunities to socialise with other women (and men) in the wider community. Many women I met, young and old, were members of associations that save money, but that also sing and dance on festive or ritual occasions. Most women in Ghana simply do not have as many incentives to form single sex development groups as the women in India. For the Indian women, *sangha* membership has brought a social and economic autonomy that many Ghanaian women already have. Gender relations in Ghana are also particularly complicated. There are women who have become very powerful, as traders, or through their male kin in the matrilineal societies. Research on powerful women in trading in Ghana has shown how senior women do not necessarily extend help and support to more junior ones (King, 1999). In comparison with India, such differentiation, compounded with a much poorer tradition of social and political organization at the grassroots, does not encourage women to form single sex organizations, or suggest that they might be an appropriate route to achieving gains for women.

2.3 Case 3: The Forest Agriculture Interface of Kintampo District, Ghana

2.3.1 Introduction

The third case examines research being carried out in the Forest Agriculture Interface (FAI) of Kintampo district in central Ghana. The research, entitled 'Decentralized Environmental Action Research' or DEAR project (NRSP code R8258), is an action research project collecting information on the nature and extent of different kinds of environmental change taking place in the Brong Ahafo region. By combining information on environmental change together with information on NR-based livelihoods, the project aims to contribute to improved policy-making and improved NRM by local communities.

More specifically, the project's aims are three-fold: first, to strengthen local policy-making processes, by getting farmers and grass-roots administrative structures involved in collecting information on their environments; second, to challenge some of the 'crisis narratives' that are being evoked and used to design policies, and which, it is argued by the project, have often been used to exclude less powerful groups from having access to, and being able to use and benefit from, natural resources; third, to help generate linkages within and between three 'levels' of administration, the District Administration, the District substructures (Area Councils), and Farmers. In this way the project aims to generate more informed and improved decentralized decision-making and governance.

The research is being carried out by academics based at the University of Legon, Accra, and at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London, and by a team of field researchers based in Kintampo town. The DEAR project differs somewhat from the other cases discussed here, in that the researchers are not working in partnership with an NGO dedicated to carrying out development activities designed by the project. The DEAR team has carried out some development activities (it helped one community diversify into ginger cultivation), but these activities are considered by the project team to have been of limited success. The project team views their priority to be research, and hopes that the new knowledge that is generated by the project will create awareness about environmental and governance issues, and to help to galvanize the community into taking an interest in policy-making processes. It is hoped that the result will be better decision-making and therefore improved livelihoods in future.

The work has focused on examining the environmental impacts of charcoal burning and bush burning, and has also studied changes that are taking place in yam cultivation patterns. The research combines technical approaches to understanding environmental change, including Satellite Imagery analysis and studies of regeneration rates, with the use of questionnaires to explore the social and institutional dimensions of these environmental changes. R8258 has built on the findings of earlier research projects in Brong Ahafo, notably R7957.[79]

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[79] The research visit to Kintampo was facilitated by Kojo Amanor, David Brown and the rest of the DEAR team. Interviews were carried out in villages with the assistance and translation of Dede Baako.

2.3.2 Gender Awareness: Research Intentions

In the scoping study on which the DEAR project was based, the research findings were often disaggregated in terms of the different activities and benefits of men and women, and previous work by the researchers demonstrates a sophisticated approach to, and understanding of, gender relations in Ghana, where the household in particular is a complex institution, and where some communities can be described as patrilineal, others matrilineal (see for example, R7957 Final Technical Report; Amanor, 2001). The DEAR Project Memorandum also summarizes many of the issues which influence women's access to and use of natural resources compared to men:

Within the different categories of the poor, women tend to suffer the most, having less access to prime land and less access to hired labour. They tend to produce fewer cash crops in different localities than men and larger quantities of lower value crops, whose primary importance is in provisioning the household. They have less access to development services and do not participate as much as men in community meetings since these are frequently timed to take place during the evening when they are busy with household tasks.[80]

The DEAR project has not shied away from confronting social inequality in respect to NRs. For example, in response to the question in the Project Memorandum, 'Are there any groups/parties who will be disadvantaged by the application of the research findings?' it states:

Those who presently benefit from the unsystematic way in which environmental decisions are taken, and the fact that they are rarely evidence-based, may well be affected (in their view adversely) by a more rational management system. However, the role of the project is not to intervene to resolve conflicts which arise in this way, but to support the democratic process to which the GoG [Government of Ghana] has pledged itself.[81]

In practice, the research has focused on the differences between 'migrants' and 'indigenes', and between 'youths' and 'elders', as the main axes of social difference which influence access, use and benefits from NRs. These axes have both emerged through the research as points at which there are tensions and conflicts over NRs. It is argued that better information about the activities and NR uses of these different groups will facilitate 'more rational' decision-making. In the analysis of these processes, the gendered nature of these groups is rarely made explicit, and it is assumed that men and women in each group share the same interests, constraints and experiences.

2.3.3 Gendered patterns of NRM and the visibility of women's activities

A further examination of the work of the DEAR research team can illuminate the reasons why women are often left out of NR research-for-development projects, and why their interests and experiences are not specifically explored. For example, the project focused on areas in which there is contestation between policy-making

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[80] R8258 Research and Development Funding Application and Project Memorandum Form, Jan 2003.
[81] R8258 Research and Development Funding Application and Project Memorandum Form, Jan 2003.

structures and local farmers (where 'farmers' include 'charcoal burners') over NRs. The areas of highest contestation are those which generate highest revenues, which are charcoal burning and yam cultivation. Both of these activities, like the formal administrative structures that the project is working with, have historically been dominated by men.

Women, for example, have not historically been involved in yam cultivation. An interview that the DEAR research team carried out with a local traditional authority demonstrates that this lack of involvement is often conflated with a lack of engagement with farming on the part of women:

How can women make farms? Women cannot farm. Farming is not an easy job therefore women do not do it. [Research Team: Are you sure women do not farm?] Oh yes, they do not farm on any significant basis. The small farms they make cannot really be called farms.[82]

The socially-constructed gender division of labour is such that women rarely clear land, or make the mounds necessary for yam cultivation. The majority of the women in Kintampo District who were interviewed for this research commented that the work was felt to be too physically demanding for women.[83] Despite this, many who were interviewed were hiring male labour to clear land and to make mounds and were planting yams. Thus although yams are still considered a male crop, many women are also involved in their cultivation.

Figure 7: Female yam traders in Kintampo market

Another reason why women are less visible than men in the debates about access to and use of natural resources is because of their comparative lack of access to land. In

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[82] Administrator responsible for stool lands, Kintampo, August, 2004.
[83] This can be contrasted with the situation in the PUI around Kumasi, where women occasionally do clear their own land and make mounds, and where this is thought to be something done out of necessity and far from impossible.

the Brong-Ahafo district the land is held by the community under the stewardship of the 'traditional authorities'. Indigenes have the right to use the land freely. Migrants have to ask for land in return for tribute. Within these groups, therefore, men and women (theoretically at least) have equal access to land, but in practice women's access to land is constrained. Among indigenes, for example, it is constrained, in one respect, by the level of access to labour to clear the land. Among the migrants, their access to land is constrained by how able a woman is to negotiate with the chief over access to land. In an interview, the chief for Mo area was asked if a woman who was unmarried, for example, could come and ask for land from the traditional authorities directly. His response was: '*If you are unmarried, then the (male) person you have come to live with must ask for you.*[84] This means that the women are dependent on their male kin, or friends, when it comes to gaining access to land.

In terms of charcoal production, there was great enthusiasm for it as a livelihood activity among the people that I met. As one woman explained *'people are moving into charcoal because it is "quick money"'*[85]. Another male charcoal burner explained that he had been making charcoal for about fifteen years now *'because of money. Charcoal makes money faster than farming'*[86]. But the number of men involved in charcoal production is much higher than that of women, and the scale of their production is much greater. There are constraints on women's charcoal production: they have other labour demands on their time, particularly because of their domestic responsibilities; large-scale production involves investing large amounts of capital (chainsaws have to be hired, petrol has to be bought to run the chainsaws, labourers have to be hired to help with the burning, there are costs of taking the charcoal to the machine to be broken up, the charcoal has to be packed and carried to be marketed). Credit is difficult for men and women to obtain in the region. Women who are involved in charcoal production tend to carry it out on a much smaller scale, for instance if they require money to pay for something particular, such as school fees or medical bills.[87] The male charcoal burner quoted above explained how some women are involved in charcoal production. They go the fields after he has finished his large-scale production, and collect the charcoal remnants left on the field and sell them. Other women pack the charcoal into sacks for the large-scale producers, and sew the sacks together. In return they receive a small share to sell themselves. The woman quoted above, who had only burned charcoal herself occasionally, had given it up because she was pregnant and unable to burn charcoal because it made her ill.

Thus the main NRM activities that the project was concerned with were constructed as, and to some extent were, male. But a focus on men alone leads to the danger of missing the ways in which women have been involved in charcoal and other NR usage, and may be becoming more so (see below).

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[84] Nana Agenda Mensah II, Akwamuhene of Mo Traditional Council, 25 October, 2004.

[85] Nkwanta Village, 24 October, 2004.

[86] Mansie village, 24 October, 2004.

[87] In research on women's involvement in NRM it is often asserted that women's activities are more oriented towards these kinds of necessities, whereas men are more profit oriented. Instead of accepting these claims at face value it would be good to carry out research on them to see the extent to which these 'naturalizing' views of different kinds of economic behaviour are really the case in a given context.

In addition, the policy-making, decision-making and administrative structures, and the farmers or charcoal burners associations that the project worked with, were also predominantly male. The dominance of men in these structures results from the higher levels of formal education and literacy among men. It also results from the way in which public meetings are constructed as the domain of men. Interviews highlighted the way in which the exclusive association of men with public office was maintained as much by women as it was enforced by men. Women who attend public meetings are thought to be *'wasting their time'*. One woman a member of the Council Assembly explained:

when a meeting is called, and people hear the drums calling them to a meeting, they expect their husbands to go and take the decision. They say 'oh Kojo [a man's name], you are the man, so you go and listen for me. Women would rather attend to their work, and to activities that will contribute to bringing them an income, than to go to a meeting that they think will not bring them anything. Also their neighbours will discourage them from going, and in the end, no women will go. [88]

Some of the women who did become involved in these formal decision-making and policy-making structures had been made the target of discouraging jokes and abuse. Some are single mothers (female-headed-households are common in the region), who told me that they were taunted by both men and women: *'if they had husbands, then they would be staying at home and cooking for them, and wouldn't have to go around like this.'* [89] Such forms of abuse have a powerful normalising effect, discouraging women from taking part in public life.

For these reasons, men are more prominent in many of the processes that are being studied by the DEAR project. The majority of visitors to the project office, the 'Community Information Centre' are also men (85% men to 15% women over 5 months in 2004). Thus, it is possible that the narrative that the DEAR research is examining, important though it is, will reflect a series of processes which are being carried out by men, and for men. These processes may be extremely important in influencing policy and policy outcomes, but the male bias in the make up of the groups begs question as to whether there are alternative narratives, experiences and processes taking place. These might reflect the interests, priorities and constraints on women, and also deserve attention as they might at some stage influence outcomes in relation to NRM and poverty.

2.3.4 Methodological Considerations

The difficulties of investigating both the male and female dimensions of the processes were exacerbated by some of the methods used by the project. This project has carried out questionnaire interviews in areas where it has been examining the resource use. It has used, in the main, a purposive sampling technique, in order to collate information on the practices, constraints, and views of members of the different groups. At first, there was a strong male bias in the questionnaires that were carried out, and the project is now in the process of remedying this by interviewing more women. This, it

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[88] Kintampo, 25 October, 2004.
[89] The same woman Council Assembly member as before, Kintampo, 25 October, 2004.

should be said, has been achieved by hiring a female researcher with experience in gender issues, rather than re-thinking the research strategy overall.[90]

Questions remain, however, about which men and women have been selected for the survey, and how they relate to the profile of the population more broadly. The size of the villages in which the team is working, and the sensitivity of this kind of research (which frequently generates expectations of development benefits), means that the team has found it difficult to carry out a more census-type survey which would enable them to say something more about the profile of their interviewees. This points to the possibility of a male bias in the way in which participants (or beneficiaries) are included in some NRM projects, which has also been seen in some of the other projects. When women are included there is often a lack of knowledge about *which* women are included. The possibility exists that because they are NR users, they can not by definition be the poorest (see the Indian case study).[91]

On a more positive note, despite the male bias in the formal administrative structures, the project has clearly worked very proactively with the few female members of these structures. They have included them in the research, trained them, and encouraged them to use the Community Information Centre. The women who had been involved had clearly enjoyed this involvement with the project, which appeared to have contributed to a sense of greater self-confidence. One woman, for example, had decided to return to school to finish her education.

The project has clearly been trying to remedy the lack of consideration for gender issues and has largely succeeded in this endeavour. It has also started to carry out more research on the activities carried out by women. This is revealing important alternative stories about NRM in the region. Research that considers the gendered dimensions of NRM has to do more than merely ensure that it is including men and women. It also needs to examine how the changing nature of gender relations are impacting on NRM and on how changes in NRM may be impacting on men and women differently, changing the gender relations in a society.

The DEAR project has found, for example, that there has been a decline in yam cultivation, and a simultaneous need for more money. This need has been generated largely by structural adjustment policies which mean that everything, from exercise books, pens and uniforms for school, to the rubber gloves, needles and medicines for health care, need to be paid for, often in advance.[92] These two processes are having a gendered impact as they influence men and women differently: men used to be seen as the main breadwinners, because their yam crop, which was harvested once a year, brought in a large amount of money at once. Women's incomes, by contrast, often trickled into the household, and although amounting to similar sums and making a

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[90] A finding of Magnus' (2003) study was that NRM projects often employ a female researcher to 'take care of' gender.

[91] In research on common pool natural resources, it is often assumed that the poorest in society are the main NR users and managers. In all the cases discussed here, there was so much competition for resources that the more powerless groups often failed to gain access to the NRs in question. This was the same, whether the resource tenure was privately or commonly held.

[92] An interview with a group of women explained how, if they are sick, then they have to purchase everything the doctor will need to treat a patient before he or she will even look at them. The women explained that because of this, unless they have money, they might as well stay away and 'die at home'.

significant contribution to the running of the household, they were not held in such high esteem (see also Kumasi case study).

The decline of the male prestige crop would have created a sense of vulnerability among men. It would also have created very real new economic vulnerabilities among them. Charcoal burning on the part of men must be seen within the broader changes of NR use and management. Where men are leaving farming and taking up charcoal burning, women may have to take more responsibility for cultivation and cultivate previously 'male' crops.

Other men have started to cultivate crops which were previously the domain of women, showing that not all men are pursuing the same NR strategies. All these changes have influenced any complementarities that may have existed between men and women on the fields. Women, for example, used to cultivate groundnuts on the land which their husbands had cleared and grown yams on the previous year. But as the financial return from yams has reduced (and also the expenses have increased) the men have started to cultivate other crops which compete with those of women. This also means that women no longer can rely on having access to the cleared land. For one woman, such male obstructiveness reflected not only wish for economic success, but also a rivalry with women:

Formerly there was a system where men planted yams and then women planted groundnuts. But now the men realise that women are making money so they cultivate cassavas on it. First they plant yams, then cassavas, then maize. Only then can the women plant groundnuts. By that time the land is still fertile, but there is a lot of spear grass that comes up quickly and competes with the groundnuts… Men grow yams but they don't make much money. Sometimes they make losses and the work is heavy. With groundnuts the work is light and the profits high, so men don't want women to do it.[93]

There was no sense that a woman could influence her husband in order to try to obtain access to the cleared land. When asked what a woman could do, given this situation, she said, *'you have to look for land elsewhere'*.[94]

It is well known that in the household in Ghana women and men do not pool resources (Whitehead, 1998). This does not mean that they do not co-operate together, both contribute to the costs of running the household, or work in ways which complement each other (such as the 'former' system, described above). But it does mean that there are well-defined and relatively independent areas of male and female activity, which may at times be at odds and the site of struggle.[95] Historically, men cultivated yams, and women cultivated other crops and were involved in trading. Some men are now developing their involvement in charcoal and other crops. Women are developing their involvement in trade. Those who are successful in these endeavours are able to cultivate food crops using hired labour. Those who are not successful may have to survive as labourers. During this research I met many women,

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[93] Woman, Asantekwa village, 22 October, 2004.
[94] Woman, Asantekwa village, 22 October, 2004.
[95] There may be struggles and complementarities in all kinds of households, but they are more easily observable in households which are non-pooling.

particularly young women, who had undoubtedly become very successful through trading and who were cultivating yams.

These dynamic processes require further investigation as they make up the NR context the project is researching, and they influence outcomes in terms of gender relations and poverty. Many young women who had become successful from trading complained that many of the household responsibilities were shifting to them. Whereas in the past, school fees and the costs of running the household had largely been the responsibility of the husband/father, many of the women were now taking over this responsibility. A group of female yam traders explained that as they have become more successful in their trading, they have become more independent. They complained that because of this their husbands had become more irresponsible and now they themselves have to pay school fees and medical bills. Some of their husbands had even stopped work. (At this point in the discussion, some older women in the group became angry and told the younger women *'to stop saying such terrible things in public'*. They felt that such personal domestic matters should be kept to themselves).

Men were also seeking alternative sources of income, including charcoal, but also travelling to Libya to find work, raise money. They hoped to come back and build a house or buy a car. Some had been successful in this endeavour; others have died along the way (the last part of the journey into Libya being highly dangerous).

The processes taking place in the Brong Ahafo therefore bore many similarities to those observed in the PU Kumasi. Women were becoming more engaged in agriculture and combining this with trading. Men were seeking alternative, high prestige jobs, but the reliability of these jobs was questionable. Women were left juggling diverse livelihood practices and keeping the home.

I met many women who were unmarried with children in the Brong Ahafo, and who had to support themselves. I also met married women who had become successful through trading and who had built their own houses, because *'you never know when your husband can bring another wife into his home'*[96] (this largely among the communities that are matrilineal). There is a culture of some independence between men and women. This is being exaggerated and changed by the current economic processes, which are both the result of, and contributing to, NRM. A further investigation of these processes might reveal that the people who are assumed to be the key actors with respect to NRM, the men, are part of a broader picture of processes which involve women more centrally too.

2.3.5   Challenging unequal power relations, group formation and gender

This project aimed to bring about positive change or 'development' by increasing the capacities of local level governance, by enabling policies to be built on information about the environmental processes taking place, and by encouraging people, ordinary farmers, to contribute to policy-making and decision-making through co-operation with these structures. A crisis had been reached relating to policies concerning charcoal burning, and more specifically, whether or not to ban it, as dangerous to the

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[96] Older women, Dawadawa village, 23 October, 2004.

environment. The project had collected information to suggest that charcoal burning is not as damaging as was thought, and had helped to strengthen the organization of charcoal burners so that they could argue for the right to continue their chosen livelihood.

Membership of the charcoal burners association is open to men and women, and it is assumed that it serves the interests of both groups equally. But men are in the majority in this group, and are the main charcoal producers. One member of the charcoal burners' association in Mansie village explained how women, who were always reluctant to participate in public meetings, may have become more afraid because the charcoal burning issue had become so tense and political. He said:

If women come to meetings they are afraid, for fear of being arrested or for speaking out. But we the men have learned that we will not be arrested, but still the women are afraid.[97]

Although as he continued, he said that women were beginning to attend more, his views demonstrate that more confrontational approaches to NRM decision-making can have hidden implications for more vulnerable groups, who may not feel confident enough to participate. Attention to these unpredicted and gendered impacts of interventions is crucial.

Under pressure to show a more direct contribution to tackling poverty in the Brong Ahafo region, the project diversified into more targeted development activities. R8258 formed groups in Mansie village in order to help people to access credit, to visit other areas, to learn different cultivation techniques, and to diversify from dependence on yams. Access to credit is thought to be a key constraint on men and women's ability to invest in NRM and/or diversify their livelihoods. It was also thought that groups would be able to work on each others' fields at a cheaper prices than the usual hired labour. The groups were gender and age-mixed, and they attempted to diversify into ginger cultivation and marketing. Another project working in the area, the Ghana Canada in Concert programme funded by CIDA, had also set up groups in Nkwanta and other villages, in order to help people gain access to credit, to new technologies and diversify their livelihoods. In Nkwanta they had become involved in groundnut oil processing and bee-keeping. The people involved in groups had also been involved in tree planting on individuals' land, and on common land (planting trees that would give shade in the village, for example). These groups were also mixed.

The DEAR project's groups were not very successful, and had largely been abandoned, mainly because the groups cultivated their ginger collectively. People in the groups felt that some members were contributing more effort than others, but would receive the same share of any produce or income. This undermined the whole practice. I asked one woman if would it have been successful if the men and women were in separate groups? She replied, *'I can't tell because both men and women were making problems in the group'.*[98] However, her husband, in a separate interview, complained that there were more men causing problems than women. This was

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[97] Mansie Village, 24 October, 2004
[98] Mansie Village, 24 October, 2004.

because the men were *'divided among themselves'* and because of *'the problem of envy',* while some of the women were still working together.[99]

In discussions with people who had been involved in groups it became clear that often people formed groups because this would attract interest and support from development organizations, or local government. It was not because they thought they could achieve something through being part of a group that they could not achieve as individuals. When I asked a woman in Nkwanta, why the people in the village decided to form groups she said, *'if you are not in a group the people would not give credit… People only joined for credit but now they are not enthusiastic because there is no credit'.* [100] Many had stopped participating in the group.

2.3.6 Men promoting women

In Mansie village, a male participant explained that most of the groups had failed, but he remarked that the women were *'still good and strong in the groups: now I intend to make a group with only [me and] women'.* [101] There was some evidence that men were encouraging the participation of women in groups, or in grass-roots administrative structures, because they felt that there was a vogue more generally for promoting women, and that men could exploit this for their own ends. In an interview with a woman who had become a member of the Unit Committee and the Area Council in the area, she described how she had failed to be elected in her own right, but then had been *'smuggled in'* to ensure some representation of women on these bodies. Two men in the same village described how it was good when she went to talk to the Area Council about issues that the village wanted because *'at times the approach a woman takes is different from that of a man, and it can be more successful'.* [102] I was very interested by this response, because I thought it might reflect an idea that a woman's approach could be different from a man's, and in some contexts might be more persuasive. But they elaborated that *'the policy-makers are listening more to the women because there are a lot of 'women's things' coming up, so when a woman goes they are listening more to them'.* [103]

These examples demonstrate that there is a promotion of women in administrative circles, but that this is often explicitly viewed by men as a strategy they can use to promote their own interests, rather than to address the real issues, needs and interests of women. Some men are paying lip-service to gender concerns as a strategy for achieving particular ends. Women's participation in administrative circles is not enough to ensure that women's interests will be addressed. Women's participation does not necessarily mean that gender inequalities will be challenged. The participation of women in groups and projects *may* bring benefits for women, but women's efforts and actions, and the project initiatives that are targeted at women, can be captured, co-opted and subverted by other groups.

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[99] Man, Mansie Village, 24 October, 2004.

[100] Naome Ofori, Nkwanta Village, 24 October, 2004.

[101] Mr Manu (husband of Gladys Asantewaa; interviewed separately), Mansie Village, 24 October, 2004.

[102] Discussion with male Unit Committee and Area Council members, Nkwanta Village, 24 October, 2004.

[103] Discussion with male Unit Committee and Area Council members, Nkwanta Village, 24 October, 2004.

Women in the Kintampo region also have a better reputation for paying back credit, and for being more 'stable' than men. Although the banks – the main credit organizations in Kintampo – had moved away from lending to groups, their figures demonstrate that women are more credit-worthy. A representative of the Ghana Commercial Bank explained *'men don't like to be bothered about repayment'*[104]. The Ghana Commercial Bank has also moved away from giving loans to small farmers, as it considers such farming too unpredictable. The Ghana Rural Bank still gives loans to small farmers, but has also found that *'women are more reliable in repayments'*[105]. Because of their perceived greater credit-worthiness, organizations may prefer to work with women because they see them as a safer prospect. The increasing involvement of women in the formal administrative structures, decision-making bodies, and development project activities, is again in danger of requiring more from women, without examining or redressing the nature of gender inequalities and the way in which they intersect with NRM and poverty.

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[104] Kintampo, 26/10/04.
[105] Ghana Rural Bank official, Kintampo, 26/10/04.

3   Discussion

In this section, I indicate some of the more general findings that emerge from the case studies. There are many findings here, and some of them have already been discussed, but there are four areas which can benefit from further exploration. The first refers to the way in which gender concerns are integrated into NRM research-for-development generally, and the nature of the gender bias that is evident in these case studies. The second is the reasons for that gender bias. The third examines the way in which local people are involved in research-for-development projects, and particularly to the issues surrounding the formation of same-sex or mixed-sex groups. The fourth refers to the role of community organizers.

3.1   'Natural partners' in NRM research-for-development projects?

In all of the cases that were studied, an awareness of the importance of gender issues was evident on the part of the key organizers and planners. All commented that gender was an important dimension influencing NRM and that the poverty they were concerned with was also gendered. Most expressed the desire to include in their work an element that was specifically focused on tackling gender inequality. In practice, however, the work fell short of this ideal, suggesting that the expressions of commitment were little more than lip-service, and/or that there were serious obstacles which prevent these good intentions from being translated into good practice.

In two of the three cases, where field-based activities or activities related to highly valued NRs were concerned, the projects worked more with men. In India, possession of tenure rights to land was equated with decision-making power and main responsibility for field-based activities. Men were thus seen as the 'natural partners' in NRM. By improving the productivity of farms by working with landed men, it was argued by the action researchers that the whole of society would 'shift up', and that everyone's livelihoods would be improved, including those of women.

In the forest agriculture interface surrounding Kintampo in Ghana, the project was involved in an area in which there was conflict and competition over a valuable natural resource product, charcoal. The project is also working mostly with men, by carrying out research into the environmental impact of charcoal burning, by arguing that the demonization of charcoal burners as the worst environmental degraders is unfair, and by organizing young charcoal burners into associations whose members could use the project's research to campaign for the right to burn charcoal. Women do not have such good access to credit, the ability or desire to use technologies like chainsaws, or the political experience or confidence to participate in the new associations to the same extent. They are therefore much less involved in charcoal burning and the project generally. The project hopes, however, that by contributing to better decision-making and policy-making overall, everyone in the community, including the women, will ultimately benefit from project activities.

The male bias was less evident in the Ghanaian peri-urban case. This project was more successful in its work with women than with men, at least in terms of numbers of people involved. The case does not necessarily challenge the finding that, *where NRs are concerned*, there is often a male bias in project activities. Instead, it further supports the point. In the densely-populated environment around Kumasi city, the

field-based NR activities were few. The majority of activities carried out by the project were 'income-generating' and built on new activities, instead of trying to improve the way in which existing right-holders used their NRs. In fact, in these projects, many of the activities seemed to have only a tenuous connection to NRM in the area. The logic of the project was that by providing alternative livelihoods, the exploitative and unsustainable use of the local NRs would diminish. By encouraging people to make limited use of local NRs, for example in collecting fodder for snails or grasscutters, action researchers hoped that a desire to protect the environment might be inculcated in local people. The success here appears to have been limited however: many project participants had to buy cocoyam leaves for their snails, and women did not want to cut fodder for grasscutters for fear of ridicule. The prevalence of women in this project would tend to affirm the association of women with non-NR activities and men with NR activities.

Similar income-generating activities (IGAs) were provided for women in India. In India, women became successfully involved in making incense or soap powder, or rearing buffaloes in the home. These (frequently non-NR related) activities were seen as 'balancing' the project, in the sense that while the field level activities were biased towards the landed and men, these were activities for others, particularly women. In the field-based activities the emphasis was on the implementation, usually by individuals, of techniques and knowledges. There was little attention paid to institutional or organizational matters. In the IGAs, there was a much stronger focus on the importance of the way in which people were organized, on group formation, and on making the processes participatory. It was here that discussions about challenging gender inequalities and changing society generally were carried out. Although men were members of their own IGA groups or *sanghas*, these groups were predominantly for, and made up of, women.

The gendered nature of these NRM research-for-development projects is clear. The field-based, production-oriented activities which involve the more scientific and agronomical dimensions of a project, and which are often carried out by individuals, are oriented more towards men. The village or home-based income-generating activities, which are combined with the institutional and social change dimensions, are focused more on women. This gendered division of activities is thought to be 'natural' and is taken for granted. Its impact is that women are excluded from benefiting from the main activities of the NR projects, and the work of organizing and working towards challenging gender inequalities is left to them. These NRM research-for-development projects have several similarities to the WID approach discussed in the introduction. Many of the critiques of WID, particularly the danger of adding to women's workloads, also apply here. At the same time, by recognising men as the main decision-makers in the household, as the main NR users, the projects have the potential to reinforce men's control and access to the most valuable NRs, and men's more powerful position.

The case studies have demonstrated that men are frequently assumed to be the 'natural partners' in NRM research-for-development because they are, in most cases, either the formally recognised tenure-holders or are carrying out the more visible NRM activities. Further investigation of the different situations has shown that women are often doing a large amount of work, even though it is not recognised by the wider community or valued as highly as the work of men. Women may also, through their

practical involvement in NRM, have a *de facto* influence over NRM decisions. When projects assume that it is men that they should be working with, they are in danger of continuing the process through which women's work is not recognised or valued.

Other research on the gendered nature of NRM has shown that tenure patterns and sets of rights are also more complex than first appears (Rocheleau and Edmunds, 1997). Men may have formally recognised rights to one kind of NR, for example, land, but these rights are often embedded within sets of rights to other NRs on or abutting that land, including rights to trees, fruit, firewood and fodder (Bruce, 1990). When a project recognises the main NR rights-holders, and does not examine what else is happening in a given situation, it can further the process whereby the rights to other NRs, often held by women or other groups, are diminished. By working with men only, it is likely that the position of women is undermined instead of being improved.

The case studies above have also shown that recognising men as the main NR users is problematic because it often relies on generalised ideas of what men and women do in a particular community, or country, and relies too much on cultural stereotypes about gendered practices. It was not uncommon to hear NRM research-for-development project activities justified in terms of, for example, 'because in India it is men, not women, who work the land', or 'in Ghana, man plant yams, women plant groundnuts'. What became apparent through this research is that the gendered patterns of NRM are a great deal more varied on the ground than these generalized cultural stereotypes suggest.

3.2   Whence the gender bias?

This research has identified several reasons for the bias in these projects. By identifying these reasons it is hoped that some of them can be addressed in the future.

The first reason is connected to a methodological issue. For some of these projects, the starting point for their work was a particular kind of natural resource, land or trees. The people who became involved in the NRM-focused activities were the recognised land-holders or tree users already. In Ghana and India, these resources were at a premium: they were valued highly and there was strong competition for them. The people who were using these resources were likely, therefore, by definition, to have the power to retain access to them, or the power to compete for them. The project in the forest agriculture interface in Ghana is doing well to help young men, many of whom do not have the rights of indigenous residents to the area, and who are in an inferior social position when compared to older people in their communities. But, in other cases, the people involved were far from the most powerless. Women are not included in these aspects of research-for-development projects because they lack the tenure rights or the ability to compete successfully for tenure and use rights to these valuable resources. By using the valuable natural resources as the projects' starting point, from which the community with which the project worked was defined, a structural bias towards the more powerful is introduced into the work. This structural bias is also a gender bias, as those who have formal access to these resources, or who are involved in the competitive struggles for these natural resources, are rarely women.

The collection of more baseline information on the different kinds of NR use and management that co-exist, and on how those using the most valuable NRs relate to others in the community, has the potential to improve and strengthen the research-for-development projects significantly.

A second reason for the bias in the NRM research-for-development projects relates to implicit assumptions about men and women's activities that are incorporated into NRM research-for-development projects. The different project activities for men and women use widely held and powerful gender stereotypes. These construct men as more individualistic, scientific, productive and as breadwinners, compared to women who are seen as more social and suited to co-operative group activities. The influence of these stereotypes was most clearly evident in the Indian case, where men were seen as more appropriately involved in field-based activities, whereas women were seen as being more appropriately involved in small-scale income-generating activities.

This gendered division of labour, and the implicit influence of these gender stereotypes, is exacerbated by the difficulty of integrating the 'harder' technical and scientific dimensions with the 'softer' social science dimensions of an NRM research-for-development project. The problems of integrating these dimensions were compounded where there was a clear division of labour between different project personnel into those responsible for scientific innovation or technical research monitoring and those responsible for monitoring social processes. Moreover, although there were men involved in working with the communities, who can therefore be said to be integrated into the social science dimensions of a project, the scientific parts of a project were dominated by men. Such a division of labour serves to further reinforce rather than challenge these gender stereotypes.

A third reason for the gender bias in the NRM research-for-development projects is that many project personnel commented that they found women more difficult to work with. Women were thought to be more suspicious of outsiders and of development projects. Sometimes women were loath to heed the advice of the project staff. They would not answer questions directly and 'talked in circles'. Instead of working through some of these issues (which might reflect alternative viewpoints, or a not unreasonable scepticism about a particular project), many project researchers preferred to work with men, whom they found to be 'more straightforward'.

A fourth reason that emerges from this research, is the difficulty of integrating the 'action' or 'development' with the 'research' dimensions of a project. The integration of these dimensions tends to be taken for granted and assumed to be desirable, but there is evidence here to suggest that it can add new difficulties and tensions. Communities that have received, or expected to receive development benefits often seem to became impatient with the project attempts to collect data. In the Kumasi case, this led to the abandonment of attempts to collect baseline data on the project beneficiaries altogether. The study so far has shown that an understanding of the gendered dimensions of NRM and poverty require that research pays attention to the invisible as well as the visible processes, and to the informal as well as the formal. It requires that the measures and indicators of poverty are finely graded. When research is shallow or hastily done, the gendered dimensions of the processes are not often made explicit, and there is not enough time to deal with the complex ways in which gender, NRM and poverty intersect. In contrast, in Kintampo, where the project brought few

direct benefits in terms of resources to the community, there seemed to be less impatience and a greater awareness of, interest in, and acceptance of, the nature and aims of the research.

The biases identified in these research-for-development projects are significant: they influence who was included in which activities, what is done, and the extent to which gender inequalities are reinforced or challenged. An awareness of the structural and attitudinal biases might lead to projects that can include men and women in different parts of a project more equally, and can ultimately benefit both men and women. In addition, a more rigorous gender analysis of the situations in which a project is working is necessary to see what is really happening in a given situation.

3.3 Who participates and how?

The section above points to the conclusion that gender-sensitive research-for-development needs to combine its gender analysis with assuring that men and women participate in the different kinds of activities of any project: men and women should be involved in field-based activities, and men and women should be involved in group-based income-generating activities. But questions remain about how the activities of men and women should be organized.

One of the most successful aspects of the cases described here was the achievements of the same-sex credit, savings and development groups in India. The success of these same-sex groups is interesting because it stands in contrast to much of the recent work in the field of gender and development that has been critical of same-sex groups in development. Harrison, for example, has written that *'there is a tendency to focus on [women's groups] as an important means towards poverty alleviation with little or no consideration of the gendered dynamicss surrounding, and indeed within, them* (Harrison, 1997, 122). The formation of women's groups in particular, has been seen in many places to result in heightened tensions between men and women. When the husbands see their wives organizing together and working with an outside group they become angry and resentful. As Chant put it, there is the *'potential emergence or aggravation of hostilities between men and women at the grassroots and to the blocking or sabotage of moves to enhance women's lives and livelihoods'* (Chant, 2000, 11). Such kind of behaviour was seen in the agroforestry project in Uganda (Vashee, 1997), discussed in the introduction.

Using sex as the criterion for group formation singles out only one form of social differentiation, which itself is cross-cut by other differences of class, age, race or ethnicity. Development organizations frequently assume that women in same-sex groups share the same interests and are socially co-operative (Harrison, 1997; Chant, 2000). In practice, women are differently situated, have different concerns and interests, and possesss differential abilities to take responsibilities and different needs. In addition, research by Harrison has shown how, contrary to expectations, 'women's groups' frequently have male members, and/or can be taken over and run by a man or men (Harrison, 1997).

In the current development moment, approaches that work with women only are also viewed more sceptically than they were before. The 'Gender and Development' (GAD) approaches have argued convincingly that if development that succeeds in

transforming gender relations is going to take place, then it needs not to rely on women only, but to work with men too. Not only are men sometimes vulnerable and in need of development assistance, but also gender relations will be successfully transformed only if men and women engage together in an effort to transform them. Thus, because of the problems that were identified with women's groups, and because of the rise of the GAD approach, women's groups appear somewhat old-fashioned, out-dated, and misconceived.

But the gains for women through the formation of same-sex groups seem indisputable in the Indian case. Other research in the Indian context has also commented on the value of same-sex groups. For example, Sarin (1996) in her review of Joint Forest Management (JFM) projects in India, concludes that

where both husbands and wives are members of a JFM group, wives may not be able to talk openly in front of their husbands in joint meetings, especially if their priorities are different from those of their husbands. In such situations, women may be able to articulate their priorities only through developing a women's group position' (Sarin, 1996, 69).

Thus for Sarin, women-only groups are vital because they *'create all women spaces for women to meet regularly to develop their leadership skills and self-confidence'* (Sarin, 1996, 69-70). She also discusses the way in which within women's groups it is possible for one or two women to become dominant, thus reducing the responsibilities and participation of others. She singles out IDS, one of the organizations studied in the peri-urban Indian context, for their approach, commenting that the concept of *'leaderless groups used by IDS',* in which women take it in turns to lead meetings and liaise with outside organizations, *'is a much more appropriate approach for empowering such groups as a whole'* (Sarin, 1996, 68).

The projects run by IDS in peri-uban India employed the principle of the leaderless group. As the more detailed description of the Indian case reveals, they also tried to avoid tensions that sometimes arise between a husband and wife when a woman joins a woman's group, by spending a good deal of time with every member of the household, talking to them about their problems and needs, and convincing them of the benefits of *sangha* membership. In cases where men had asked for their own groups, they had supported them.

For the IDS team interviewed for this research, the success of the *sangha*s was a result of women's greater commitment to group membership and to the initiatives that IDS introduced. This does not necessarily refer to some mythical 'natural' quality among women to be more committed or socially co-operative, of the kind criticized by Harrison (1997). It can also derive from the way that the women in this case obtained new social, political and economic benefits from the opportunities that were opened up by *sangha* membership.

An IDS staff member commented that projects that worked with men and relied on a trickle-down of benefits for women, such as the field level activities, were unlikely to have a positive wider impact on society, socially or economically. In contrast, the *sangha*s had transformational potential because:

The process of development is from bottom to top. Benefits will not percolate downwards from men to women, rich to poor literate to illiterate. If the work begins with women, men will automatically do it.[106]

Everyone involved in these projects was aware that such an approach relied on women, and asked more of them. They were anxious about adding to women's burdens. But they felt that some of these anxieties could be allayed because now men were starting to form their own groups. Many of the male beneficiaries I spoke to on this project commented that by forming *sangha*s *'now they would learn from the women'*. Through the formation of men and women's groups, both sexes can contribute to the challenges of improving livelihoods, NRM, and tackling inequalities. The Indian case study suggests, however, that work with men and women can still benefit from being, at some stages at least, carried out in different spaces.

The question that arises here is, can something be learnt from comparing the Indian and Ghanaian cases? Are the contexts so different that the lessons are not transferable?

In Ghana the groups which were all mixed-sex were comparatively unsuccessful. There were high drop-out rates, there was unequal work rates among members, gender stereotypes were reinforced in groups (with men managing and women cleaning grasscutter cages, for example). Generally, there was a tendency for men to come to dominate and take over the groups, and to hold the leadership roles. Where women were being encouraged by men to take a more prominent role, it was often apparent that men saw it as an expedient way to obtain resources or certain decisions which would benefit themselves.

Overall, the project groups performed poorly, and many groups had stopped functioning. By contrast, the support for individuals in their own small businesses had proved much more successful.

There was no sense among anyone I spoke to in Ghana, beneficiaries or project staff, that same-sex groups would have been more successful. On the contrary, the majority stressed that women's experiences and statuses varied so much that there was no shared experience or sense of solidarity that could be harnessed in same-sex groups. Others emphasised that many women were already members of wider networks with opportunities for socialising outside the home, and that they already had a strong degree of economic autonomy. Becoming a member of a women's group in Ghana did not, therefore, have the capacity to bring the same radical new benefits for women as it did in India.

But given the poor performance of the mixed groups, perhaps same sex groups might still have something to offer. Detailed ethnographic research by Solomon (2003) into same-sex groups in Tamale, an area to the north of the two Ghanaian case studies, suggests that in some circumstances same-sex groups can be successful. The words of one woman group member discussing the benefits of group membership are reminiscent of the comments of women in India (where *susu* is a type of rotating

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[106] IDS staff member, 25/8/04.

credit and saving group that is widespread and pre-dates the formation of the groups being discussed):

We learned about the other one's problems. ... You can't close your ears and eyes to another's worries. So when something happened, we would all assist. ... Sometimes with money, and sometimes by visiting them. ... The group wasn't only for susu. What is the use of money when you don't have a kind heart? Sometimes if many women were having problems with hunger, sickness, then we sometimes didn't even do susu for some time. But we still tried to help those in some ways. When their problems were over, we started the susu again (Solomon, 2003,72).

But not all of the groups studied by Solomon were successful. Her work is useful because it demonstrates that the value of structuring of groups on a same-sex or mixed-sex basis has to be seen within the broader question of how the formation of development groups takes place in local communities, and how the mechanisms of selection and exclusion operate.

For example, Solomon shows how the members of different groups were described by the associated development project as *'self-selecting'*, which was a catch-all phrase that covered a host of *ad hoc* processes. Community development workers played a key role in selecting members who they deemed to have the potential to *'be good group members'*, or people qualified because they were members of existing kin and other social networks. In such conditions, group formation was frequently a fraught process in which those excluded became a source of tension as much as who was included. For Solomon, the most successful groups were those whose members had been chosen openly and transparently by the wider community, according to ability and need. Unfortunately, such openness was the exception rather than the rule.

In the Ghanaian peri-urban case studied here, the group members *'self-selected'* themselves by volunteering for different training programmes, but there were not places on the training programmes for everyone. The reasons why a person had chosen to carry out a particular activity were obscure. It was the responsibility of the community level facilitators (CLFs) to make sure that the poorest people were the ones who participated, but this was not monitored, at least not in relation to others in a community who did not participate. As already recorded, when I asked about the number of female household heads in the groups, for example, I was told that *'we don't really get down to these nitty-gritties'*. The similar lack of knowledge about the relative profile of group members in the Indian case suggests that, although the initiatives appear very successful there, more information about who exactly makes up this category of 'poor women' is desirable. The community workers clearly play a similar role in group formation in India, and the reasons for selection of members is also opaque.

The insights from Solomon's work suggest that more attention needs to be paid to the processes on the ground. Research needs to be carried out into who is participating in activities and how those people relate to others in the community. Finer criteria of 'the poor' are also needed, as those used by these projects gave no information on marital status and its relation to NRM and poverty, although it is likely to have been a key factor influencing well-being and NRM. The findings also suggest that self-help credit and savings groups need to be analysed more critically and in their wider context.

However, the apparent success of the Indian case, and the lack of success so far among the Ghanaian case, suggests that same-sex groups (if they really are same-sex groups and are not hijacked by men as many other development initatives were in Ghana), although unfashionable, might have something to offer to development projects that aim to challenge inequalities. Further comparative research could fruitfully carried out in these two contexts.

3.4 The role of grassroots organizers

I was often introduced to Community Level Facilitators (or CLFs, in peri-urban Ghana) or Community Officers (or COs, in India) as the facilitators of the project and intermediaries between the community and the project,[107] but these terms underestimate the significance of their roles. The terms used by the peri-urban Ghanaian project, describing them as the *'eyes'* and *'catalysts'* of their work, captures much better their centrality in project activities. The importance of their role has been confirmed, as they have already been mentioned several times in this discussion of the research's main findings.

In peri-urban Ghana, for example, the CLFs were expected to help the communities *'to plan, implement, and monitor actions, [and] they are expected to be learning, documenting records of the lessons at every stage and trying out new ideas that will benefit the communities'.* It appears that they were involved in all project activities, from planning, to implementation, to monitoring. The COs in the Indian case did not play a smaller role. In both cases, the projects relied heavily on the community workers to identify the poor, through a combination of participatory rural appraisal exercises, consultations of land registries, and their local knowledge. In the Ghanaian case, the CLFs seem almost entirely to have been left to use their own subjective judgement in defining who is poor and who should participate. The significance of these judgements has been discussed in the previous section. What is surprising is that so much can be expected of people who, in the Ghanaian case at least, are unpaid volunteers. In both cases, there is an assumption that community workers are *'on the ground'*, and therefore *'know the people'*, and that they have good *'local knowledge'*. They can therefore *'take care of'* the messy matter of mobilising and monitoring the community. The previous sections have shown that the selection, mobilisation and monitoring of people, poverty or NRM are all highly complicated matters. They need to be carried out carefully and systematically. It is not that the community workers should not be involved, but that they do not have the capacity at present to cope adequately if these activities are devolved entirely to them.

The community workers evidently play a highly visible role in gender-sensitive development work, because it is community workers who engage in activities that they referred to as *'consciousness raising'*. As one community worker explained, *'personal contact is the best way to change the society'*. The community workers talk to people, and help to resolve conflicts between husbands and wives. In some of the case studies described here, they were even seen to act as role models. These projects were generally participatory, but it was clear that these community officers played a strong role in convincing communities of a particular kind of action, often before the

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[107] The DEAR project in the forest agriculture interface of Ghana did not employ community facilitators in the same way, as it did not have the same kind of action development component as the other two projects.

community consultation took place. For example, this was seen in a meeting in India where one community worker called to the women and told them that he would nag them or *'eat their heads'* until they agreed to the project's proposal.

The work of the community workers depends a great deal on the personality of the person involved. Their work is often glossed over, and their impact on the outcome of a project has not been sufficiently recognised. This work has confirmed that more attention needs to be paid to their role, and more recognition given to their work.[108]

A Final Note

Finally, during this research, action-researchers often admitted that they felt that gender issues were 'not relevant' to their work. One person commented that gender was not one of the criteria on the log-frame, *'so why should it emerge as a factor in the project's findings?'* Others commented that gender was *'beyond our remit'*, or *'too complex'* to be dealt with within the scope of the research. Some commented that gender is a cultural matter, and that they felt they could not intervene in such matters of *'tradition'* or culture.[109]

The present research has shown that gender concerns are far from irrelevant to NRM projects. Projects that focus only on what men do, or what men could do, are likely to miss the involvement of women in NRM, and potentially increase women's marginal position and lack of recognition for their input. Development interventions based on such research may have hidden and unintended consequences because they are based on research that does not fully understand the situation on the ground. The way gender issues intersect with NRM and poverty *is* complex and highly varying, but research needs to meet the challenge of engaging with that complexity. In addition, it is important to engage in research-for-development with a high degree of cultural sensitivity. But the need for cultural sensitivity should not be used as an excuse for drawing a veil over the gendered nature of NRM and poverty. Decisions about whether or not to get involved, or how to get involved in changing gender relations needs to be done with the participation of local people, but also with a full understanding of how gender relations intersect with NRM and poverty so that informed judgements can be made. In many cases, this knowledge is, at present, missing.

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[108] The project in Kumasi, Ghana, has made a step towards this with its draft report into CLFs.
[109] See also Magnus, 2003.

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are aimed at increasing the gender sensitivity of NRM research for development projects. Some, which have implications for the setting up of a research project, can be useful only for future projects, while others could be incorporated into current work. They can be seen as based either on highlighting and suggesting implementation of aspects of good practice isolated from the projects examined, or on suggestions for eliminating factors leading to bias.

1. A full and explicit examination the gender sensitivity of the research in question should be added as a requirement on the log-frame. This should be used to stimulate project personnel to engage with a full exploration of gender issues relevant to their particular project, rather than to give them a box-ticking exercise. Gender should be regarded, not as a subset of the broader issues, but as potentially affecting all areas of NRM and poverty. There is a need to be specific about how it affects all aspects of the research: the resulting awareness of any structural or attitudinal biases is likely to have a powerful effect on changing practice.

2. There was often evidence of a clear intention to demonstrate and incorporate gender awareness at the beginning of projects. It has been shown by Magnus (2003), and in this research, that there is often a gradual erosion of these good intentions. It is recommended that a system of checks at each stage of the process should be incorporated into the log-frame.

3. Where possible, gender issues should be considered by everyone working on, and involved in, a research-for-development project. Gender issues should not become the main responsibility of one person (as is often the case).

4. Generally, more effort needs to be given to integrating the technical and social science dimensions of these projects. The divisions between 'hard science' and 'soft social science'/institutional dimensions of the projects exacerbates gender biases. Better integration of these areas would help to break down the gendered associations of the different activities (men with 'science'; women with 'society') that has been seen to impact on the success of research methods and development activities.

5. It is necessary to collect more baseline, survey-type evidence than was available and not to rely on pre-existing, often over-generalized and inadequate information. This should particularly include information on gendered division of labour, on different kinds of NR use, rights and access, and management that co-exist, and on how those using the most valuable resources relate to others in the community. Other factors such as geographical distances, NR availability, livelihood opportunities, age, marital status, number of and status of children, caste and religion should be included. As well as NR use and management, information should be collected on the use of, and access to, markets, and on the control over, and use of, income. Some of the projects here relied on informal information gathering, participatory rural appraisal methods, or focus group discussions for collecting information. The present research has shown that these may provide valuable additional information, but often use too broad criteria and provide insufficient detail about NRM and poverty, or about how project participants

relate to the rest of the community. They need, therefore, to be augmented with more rigorous and systematic research methods.

6. In selecting participants for projects, it is necessary to avoid purposive sampling. This involves:
   a) the avoidance of using a single, valued NR as a starting point, which has the potential to create a male bias and to marginalize other NR rights owners
   b) the avoidance of preferentially selecting those with tenure rights and official decision making powers, as this also leads to a male bias
   c) comparing information on the profiles of the group membership with information on the profile of the population, e.g. the number of female heads of households

More careful selection of participants should obviate the need to use 'add-on' tactics, such as the adding in of a female research worker to restore the male/female balance.

7. Difficulties in collecting baseline/survey data were often linked with 'research fatigue'. This in turn was linked with extra difficulties associated with attempting to combine the research and the development components of a research-for-development project. 'Beneficiaries' became impatient with research activities, and, under pressure, some projects abandoned attempts to collect basic information. The study has found that when research is combined with development activities the research tends to be carried out hastily and to be shallow. The result is that there is insufficient understanding of the research process or of the potential research findings on the part of the communities involved. More openness and inclusion of local people with ongoing research (and not merely in terms of using participatory methods, but in discussions about the aims and objectives of research as a whole) is likely to improve matters.

8. NR practice and gender relations have been shown to change over a period: therefore it is necessary to continue to monitor them over time. There should also be a follow-up period aimed at eliciting the consequences of the processes implemented, e.g. unmanageable increases in the burden of work and responsibility on women, knock-on effects on other groups and on gender relations in the community, and effects of marketing and on income control. The need for such a follow-up needs to be taken into account in the time-span of a project.

9. The projects were found to rely very heavily on community workers. They are required to select participants, raise the consciousness of the projects in the participants and the community, galvanise the participants into action, monitor progress, resolve conflicts, and act as role models. They are expected to rely on local knowledge and their integrity is assumed. Only in India was this a paid role. It is assumed that for the unpaid workers, it is a sufficient reward for them to see the benefits of the projects for their community. It is well known that imposing a large work load and heavy responsibility on unpaid voluntary workers can lead to lack of motivation and resentment. It is recommended that:
   a) there should be a re-examination of the role of these workers
   b) workers should have adequate financial reward

c) their gender-awareness training should be continued and developed
d) they should receive further training in research methods, beyond the use of PRA techniques so that they can participate in systematic research and help to raise awareness about the value of such research (see point 7 above)
e) the introduction of more female workers should be incorporated whenever possible

10. The success of same sex groups, and the 'trickle-up' effect in the project in India, suggest that these should be reconsidered in other settings. The reasons given for not instituting them in Ghana were convincing, but some could have had their origin in local 'myths' or stereotypes. The Indian experience and other work from Ghana (eg. Solomon, 2003) suggests that if consideration is given to the way development groups are formed in the local community (particularly how participation and exclusion criteria operate), and incorporated into the project, then the chance of success is increased. With clear criteria for participation and monitoring to avoid exploitation of groups by men, a pilot study of same sex groups for women would be worth attempting. This would also provide an opportunity for further comparative research between India and Ghana.

11. There is a need to avoid inadvertent collusion with gender stereotypes. It is therefore recommended that :
    a) both men and women should be included in each type of work group (field-based/ 'scientific' and income generating) in order to minimise the separation of the two types of work
    b) the allocation of the responsibility for one specific group (e.g. field-based) to one individual and that for a different type of group (e.g. income-generating) to another individual should be avoided as this tends to compound the lack of integration and reinforces stereotyping. More involvement across groups is advocated
    c) long established stereotypical views should be sought out and not go unchallenged. (e.g. men become involved in schemes only if they offer high levels of credit)
    d) the uncritical acceptance of established but unproven developmental concepts (e.g . 'trickle-down' effect) should be avoided

12. Approaches such as the use of participatory business plans should be continued, in order to correct misapprehensions and to attribute accurate value to aspects of the projects (e.g. about women's work, which tends to be seen as making a petty contribution). The use of such plans has to be an ongoing process if its effect is to be sustained.

13. Disruption of expectations and covert sabotage of processes due to hidden factors (e.g. envy of men for women's success or reticence of women when proactive/confronting methods are used) are difficult to demonstrate and legislate for. However, some precautions can be recommended:

a) the preparation of other family members by providing information and explanation and by listening to their views
b) project activities should be developed to allow more than one member of a household to become involved in project activities
c) the involvement of non-official decision makers and workers and the hearing and incorporation of their views

14. It is necessary to avoid conflation of different categories when constituting groups and to avoid inappropriate homogenising of individuals within a particular group. E.g. the conflation of women with the 'landless', and the assumption that all types of the 'landless' have similar profiles (section 2.1.7).

15. Research-for-development that incorporates the views of, and meets the needs of, women as much as men, needs to find time to meet with women when it is convenient for them. It also needs to spend more time listening to their views, taking what they say seriously, and building up trust.

16. Some projects found that once trust had been established, women were more dependable project partners than men. Such projects risk adding to women's burdens. Projects need to strive to continue to involve men and women in activities (see point 11 above), even if it proves effective to work with men and women in same-sex groups (see point 10).

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