Development Planning for and by Women: Over Five Decades of the Indian Experience

By

C.P. Sujaya and Devaki Jain

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DEVELOPMENT PLANNING FOR AND BY WOMEN: OVER FIVE DECADES OF THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

DOES THE MAHILA COMPONENT PLAN SHOW THE WAY?

By DEVAKI JAIN AND C.P.SUJAYA

This paper attempts to trace the contours of state-sponsored "planning for women" as it has evolved over the post-Independence period and to examine the extent to which the women themselves have been involved in the exercise.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first part tracks the planning experiments of the initial social welfare and community development era right up to the beginning of the Ninth Five-Year Plan, with the increasing emphasis being placed on women's plans, earmarking of resources for women and fixation of physical and financial targets for women beneficiaries.

The second part questions the rationale and the model of planning adopted by the state for women in the light of field realities.

The third part examines the extent to which the mahila component plan strategy announced in the Ninth Five-Year Plan, by itself, has the potential of giving women political power. It explores the need for the component plan to be yoked to the process of decentralisation and devolution of powers and functions to local government bodies so that planning and decision making at the local level can meaningfully involve the women.

The fourth part of the paper presents a case study of Kerala's PPC (People's Plan Campaign) where the concept of earmarking of local funds to women has been put into practice for the last four years. The positive and negative points of this experiment are then highlighted along with remedial suggestions.

The concluding part of the paper sums up the main issues arising from the experiences of planning and emphasises the need for planning to become a part of the restructuring of the economic polity.

PART 1-HOW "PLANNING FOR WOMEN" EVOLVED FROM THE FIRST TO THE BEGINNING OF THE NINTH FIVE YEAR PLAN

National planning systems in India have historically relegated women to the margins of the development resource allocation processes. This neglect applied as much to women as the ***"subject"*** or ***"target"*** of development planning as to women as the **"agent"** of development, to women's ***access to decision making*** and their ***participation*** in the ***management*** of development planning. Thus, on the one hand, women in the aggregate received a small piece of the development cake; and on the other, they had very little say on ***how*** the cake was apportioned and ***to whom***. This double bind in which women were placed was an index of their weak bargaining power and political invisibility.

Decisions were taken by men, who largely dominated the development administration, on behalf of both men and women, as to how and for whom public moneys were to be spent. Women did not have agency. Allocation of resources to women was largely made for activities which male decision-makers considered fit and appropriate for women.

It is not that women did not receive plan resources from the Government budgets. The early years of development planning after Independence saw allocation of funds to the "social sector", to "social welfare services" and to "Applied Nutrition" in the Community Development Programme, all of which catered to certain "perceived" needs of women in different situations [by policy planners].

I (1) "Social sector" and "Social Welfare Services"

The programmes under the category **"social welfare services"** were aimed at reaching a large number of "vulnerable" groups **which included women and children** along with orphans, the aged, the infirm, the beggars, the prostitutes, the physically disabled, the destitute and others. Dubey (1973) classified them under the

- socially underprivileged
- socially maladjusted
- physically and mentally handicapped, and,
- economically under privileged

sections of society to whose welfare and protection the State was committed. Amongst the category of women, therefore, widows, unmarried women, women "in moral danger", aged, infirm and destitute women and "fallen" women received more attention. Underlined in this typology was the absence of the male breadwinner, the lack of male protection and the familial support system.

The categories of programmes under the **"social sector"** were more numerous and wider ranging than **"social welfare services",** covering education, public health, medical services, housing, welfare of backward classes, labour, labour welfare etc. They included school feeding schemes and maternity and child welfare centres. Illiterate women, malnourished mothers, girls who dropped out from school, the groups socially and economically discriminated against by traditional caste and other societal norms, the economically deprived groups such as the homeless were covered under the social sector umbrella.

The First Five Year Plan allocated Rs. 340 crores to the Social Sector while a very small amount of Rs. 4 crores were allocated to Social Welfare Services. Women formed a significant part of the clientele of the social sector programmes.

I (2) Community Development Programme and women

The Community Development Programme (launched in 1951) concentrated on the rural areas and the rural population. The ambitious objective of this venture was, in the words of S.Gopal, the biographer of Pandit Nehru, "to change the whole face of rural India and to raise the level of the vast majority of our population". (Vina Mazumdar 1998)

In Nehru's own words, "I will not rest content unless every man, woman and child in this country has a fair deal and attains a minimum standard of living". *Speech at Sholapur, 30 April 1953 (Vina Mazumdar 1998)*

Within a few years of the start of the Community Development initiative, a women's "component" was started as an integral part of the programme. The Government kept on adding various activities from time to time to help the rural women. The basic underlying concept was the importance of home to the development of community. (Shanti Chakravarti,1977) They included nutrition education, food production, feeding of pre-school children, mahila mandals and nutrition to pregnant and nursing mothers. The women who received the

benefits of these programmes were the wives, the mothers, the daughter-in-laws, the daughters, in short, those who were members of the rural households. The sweep of the CD programme was therefore much wider than the earlier 'social welfare' programmes. The stress was on increasing the skills and knowledge base of these women **within the families**. The planners saw home science, food storage and preparation, child welfare, food processing, environment education, sanitation, etc. as important subjects for women because they were responsible for the welfare of the household members. The planners recognised the ***instrumental value*** of women in terms of their crucial roles in household welfare. At the same time the programme overlooked the economic ventures in which the village women were engaged in and failed to cater to these needs. (Indira Chakravarti, retired woman Deputy Director, Panchayat and Community Development, Assam 2000)

However, the Community Development Programme did create cadres of women extension workers such as the gram sewikas who were from rural and agricultural backgrounds and who developed personal contacts with the village women. (Indira Chakravarti 2000) The gram sevikas ran balwadis, organised meetings of women, and helped them with information, demonstrations on various topics to propagate a better way of life. There was less emphasis on food production and more on family life improvement. (Padmasini Asuri 2000)

Institutions of rural women such as the Mahila Mandals were also started during this programme at a later stage, for which the Mukhya Sevika's posts were created. It was at this time, as Padmasini says, that sewing machines were distributed to rural women, in the assumption that following this urban-oriented vocation, they would be able to increase their earnings! Other programmes such as Applied Nutrition, Associated Women Workers' Training Scheme, Farmers' Training and Education Scheme, etc. were introduced from time to time. But they did not succeed in strengthening the agency of women in any sustainable manner. Shanti Chakravarti observes that inadequate infrastructure was provided to the new extension agency, their coverage was insignificant, they had restricted mobility and technical supervision and guidance. (*Seminar on Women and Development, Anand, November 1977*)

In 1980, a country review of the role and participation of women in agriculture observed, "The review of major programmes for rural development reveals that the role and contribution of women were ignored in virtually in all the sectors and aspects of rural economy such as production,

processing and distribution".

The Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) observed that "though some member of the Mahila Mandals have acquired both interests and experience in developmental activities, their purely voluntary and non-representative status denied them recognition from local statutory self-governing institutions". Their effectiveness, however, varied sharply from state to state. Reviews and evaluations have commented on their vagueness of objectives and lack of resources.

Whether it was the social welfare or the components of the social sector schemes or the community development programmes, the quantum of resources actually reaching women was comparatively, very small. Decision making powers were not vested with women in any significant way. Yet these initiatives raised some very important issues related to women's roles, the need for education as an intervention to change women's lives and the importance of extending sustained support to cadres of women workers in the rural areas. Some of the women workers emerged as role models, in doing pioneering work, in spite of various impediments and challenges.

I (3) The setting up of the Central Social Welfare Board

The setting up of the Central Social Welfare Board (1953) was an experiment and an innovation of a very different kind. It gave women agency and enabled them to have a say in resource allocation, planning and implementation. For the first eleven years of its existence, (1953–1964) the Board was the sole, dedicated institutional planning and delivery system for women and children at the national level. It enjoyed a pre-eminent position under the leadership of Durgabai Deshmukh who managed to achieve an enviable level of co-ordination with the other contemporary development actors and institutions such as the community development effort, the social sector programmes, the handicrafts and handloom boards, etc. To enable it to carry out its enlarged role of co-ordinating social welfare activities with the other arms of Government, the Chairperson of the Board was included on the major Boards and National Committees set up by the Government such as All India Handicrafts Board, National Committee on Family Planning, National Committee on Adult Education, Working Group on Employment of Women, National Committee on Children, etc.

The Board was fully funded by the Government. The fund allocations made to the Board in 1954–55 were Rs. 63 lakhs. By 1985–86, it had increased to Rs. 16.27 crores.

Durgabai, who was sensitive to the roles, contributions and the multiple needs of women and had plenty of organisational drive, also encouraged institution building by and for women at the grass roots level, the building of leadership of women in order to foster social development and the creating and managing of institutions and mechanisms for the effective delivery of services to women and children though people's efforts. The Board was an influential and powerful organisation which, though situated outside the Government, functioned on behalf of the State with a degree of autonomy. This balance was fractured in the mid-sixties when the Ministry for Social Welfare and Security was set up to look after, among other subjects, social welfare. The Board had a broad mandate, consisting of-----

- assessment of the needs and requirements of social welfare organisations,
- co-ordination of Central and State Ministries funding social welfare activities,
- evaluation of the programmes and projects of aided agencies,
- promotion of social welfare organisations on a voluntary basis in places where none exist
- rendering financial aid to deserving organisations or institutions

Over the decades, the Board tended to concentrate its efforts and energy on only one of these objectives, namely, that of providing grants, to the exclusion of its promotional, catalytic, watch dog and co-ordinating roles. The Board did not also seize the opportunity of playing a decisive role in resource allocation and planning in the social welfare and social development sector, in spite of Durgabai's early initiatives in this regard. **This was certainly a case of an opportunity missed.**

We conclude by observing that Social welfare, Community Development, education, health and other basic needs--these were the components which helped the tentative contours of "plans for women" to take shape in the first two decades of development planning in India.

I (4) The logic of 'special programmes' for women

Why were special programmes for women thought to be necessary? On the one hand, Article 14 lays down equality before the law between men and women as a fundamental right. Article 15 abjures all discriminatory practices on the basis of sex. Yet in the very same Article, that is Article 15(3), the Constitution legitimised positive discrimination in favour of women and children "nothing shall prevent the State from making special provisions for women and children" Was it not the basic premise of the Constitution that these 'special provisions' were necessary for enabling women to successfully claim the fundamental right to equality?

The same logic appears in relation to the right to equality irrespective of caste. Article 15(1) prohibits discrimination on the basis of caste, but Article 15(4) empowers the State to make "special provisions" for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and socially and educationally backward classes.

In other words, it was accepted that women's historically disadvantaged position could not be converted to one of equality with men purely through the Constitutional–legal framework. Positive discrimination, affirmative action, special schemes, programmes, resources, all had to be added to strengthen and provide ballast to the legal framework of gender equality.

The provisions of Article 15(3) regarding positive discrimination in favour of women and children were added later to the Constitution through the First Constitutional Amendment in the early fifties. A judicial verdict of 1951 had pronounced preferential treatment to weaker sections as discriminatory. The Constitutional Amendment was then carried out to enable the Government to introduce special measures for the upliftment of women. This was in line with the strategy of the Government to use state intervention to confront institutionalised discrimination. (Vina Mazumdar 1998)

A suggestion for reservation of seats for women in elective bodies, for example, was proposed as long back as the Constituent Assembly was turned down by the women members of the Assembly on the grounds that it went against the

principle of equality of the sexes! We have certainly travelled a long way since!

But was equal attention paid to the identification of the roots of inequality and to attacking the structural infirmities and defects that had led to women being unequal partners in society? This is a question that must be asked and has been indeed asked from time to time by the women's movement.

I (5) The 1970's---The Committee on the Status of Women in India, the United Nations Decade for Women and New Research under Women's Studies

The publication of the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) (1974), the International Women's Year (1975) and the declaration of the International Women's Decade (1976–85) were the milestones of the seventies. The CSWI's report "Towards Equality", was commissioned by the Government. It served its purpose in raising the women's question in relation to the direction that planned development had taken in the first two post-Independence decades vis-à-vis the realisation of the promise of and commitment to gender equality that the framers of the Constitution had made to the women of India.

Empirical research conducted during this period had gone into areas hitherto untouched, such as women's work, intra-household disparities, satisfaction of basic needs, violence against women, women's health and survival, lack of legal protection and vulnerability to oppression and discrimination both in the private and public sphere.

A time-allocation study conducted in 1976–77 by Devaki Jain and Malini Chand (ISST, New Delhi) verified the hypothesis that female work participation rate was under enumerated because of the nature of female work and wages. The statistical invisibility of women's work has now become part of conventional wisdom. The study, which was done in 6 villages in Rajasthan and West Bengal, identified the various determinants of female labour supply, regrouped productive and non-productive activities against the conventional logic and defined gainful activity on the basis of evidence.

The hitherto unacknowledged economic contribution of poor women to the survival and welfare of their households was highlighted through these studies even as the anti-poverty programmes made their first appearance on the agenda of the national government.

The invisibility of poor women's work, their multiple and overlapping roles, their discontinuous engagements in the labour force and many other factors ensured that it would take another decade before the Government finally realised that addressing the household would not automatically reach programme benefits to the women in it. IRDP was launched in the mid-seventies and DWCRA in 1981--82

The information that emerged through research helped to foster a new understanding of women's roles and contributions which now broadened and deepened considerably from what it was in the fifties and sixties. Amidst the emerging debate and the search for answers to old as well as new questions, the responsibility of the state as the prime mover for social change was re-emphasised, even as the stark contrast between statements of gender equality and the structures in place through which women were to be empowered for social change became more and more apparent.

The "internationalisation" of the issue of women's status through the agency of the UN also helped in focusing attention on the structures within national governments which were responsible for ensuring the advancement of women. With the inception of the International Women's Decade, the 'national machinery' became an officially sanctioned and legitimate concept, the preoccupation with which has continued ever since.

I (6) The Gradual Emergence of "Plans for Women"

Along with this, the sanctity of formulating a ***'plan of action'*** for women was also globally acknowledged. It was first depicted in the **"World Plan of Action"** for women, which emerged from the first International Conference for Women in Mexico in 1975. The Government of India came out in 1976 with its own National Plan of Action for women, a 36 page document partly inspired by the World Plan of Action, partly based on the suggestions of the 1974 report of the CSWI and borrowing from certain parts of the approach to the Fifth Five Year Plan. The National Plan of Action consisted of five separate chapters on

1. Education,

2. Health, Family Planning and Nutrition,

3. Social Welfare,

4. Employment

5. Legislative Provisions.

There were certain dichotomies and contradictions in the Plan of Action which are indicative of the difficult transition that was being negotiated from viewing women as consumers of welfare and protective services or household nurturers to productive persons in their own right.

The National Plan of Action recommended setting up structures comprising of what the global discourse termed the 'National Machinery'. These were set up within the Government of India in the mid-seventies.

The National Committee on Women (headed by the Prime Minister) and the Women's Welfare and Development Bureau within the Department of Social Welfare. The National Committee then created a Steering Committee, which in turn constituted an inter-departmental committee consisting of representatives of most of the Ministries functioning in areas considered important for women.

Each of the five Chapters of the National Plan of Action contained a separate Action Plan, covering particular sectors. The National Plan of Action contained a large number of suggestions and recommendations In fact, one of the functions of the Steering Committee, which was the creation of the National Committee on women, (see box above) was to cull out the items requiring immediate attention and action from the National Plan of Action and indicate as to how these may be implemented. (It is another matter that the proceedings of the Steering Committee do not show any great pre-occupation of the Committee members with following up this particular theme).

What is important to note here is that, post-CSWI and post-Mexico World Conference on Women, the Government of India took the first tentative step to frame a document which was an aggregation of schemes, programmes, suggestions for reform, etc. which had several ingredients of a "component" approach. The reasons for its lack of sustainability were several. One was the failure to allocate resources on a matching and secure basis. In other words, the plan-design

exercise was not matched with a resource allocation process. The NPA stood outside the budgetary process of the Government of India and no effort was made to dovetail the two. Another reason was the lack of an accountability mechanism.

However, at this time, the demands for component plans and separate allocations for women's programmes were simultaneously being voiced from other locations.

- The Working Group on Employment of Women set up by the Planning Commission (chaired by Prof. Ashok Mitra, with Prof. Raj Krishna as the member-in-charge, Employment, Planning Commission) as a preparatory exercise to feed into the Sixth Five Year Plan produced a report that recommended **a special plan for women within every sectoral and area plan.** It recommended the delegation of responsibility of women's advancement to each of the Ministries implementing its own plan of action for women. No longer were women to be the responsibility or the constituency of only one or two Ministries. Henceforth women were the subject matter of all government agencies and formations.

- The National Committee on Women in its first (and only) meeting held in April 1978 passed a resolution that ***all departments should ensure that their plans and policies should not adversely affect the opportunities for women but should actively safeguard and support them. These special steps were to be documented and presented to Parliament.***

- The Steering Committee, (the creation of the National Committee on women) in its second meeting, decided that the Minister for Social Welfare would address a letter to his Cabinet colleagues on the need for

> "a deliberate policy to promote women's integration in all sectors of economic and social policy-----**in the development plans of every sector----.** I would therefore suggest that a beginning should be made in **all sectors of the Plan of your Ministry. *A reasonable percentage of allocation may be earmarked for programmes relating to women and may be separately monitored".*** (emphasis added)

Here is the germ of the component plan for women. It emerged from divergent locations, voiced by different sets of people, all within the broad category of spokespersons or

agencies for social development within the national government. The emphasis was three-fold.

⇒ one was the need to broad base the women's question, moving it away from its centre in social welfare to spread it out amongst many agencies within the government. This "burgeoning" was the reflection of the new internalisation (based on empirical data and research) of women's productive roles, their contribution, ***both actual and potential***, to national development.

⇒ the other was to allocate specific resources for women in each of these agencies from out of their existing budgets. This came out of the collective realisation by development agencies that in spite of the right to gender equality to women and prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex contained in the Constitution, women's traditional and accumulated handicaps effectively prevented them from enjoying these benefits without the weight of affirmative action. Thus, "gender neutral" strategies or mechanisms adopted by the state, such as budgeting and planning for the *families, households, communities* (or the general population) as a unit, had failed to reach the women in these categories.

⇒ the third was the insistence that each government agency should manage and monitor its own investments in women, that they had to own up to this responsibility themselves. This went counter to the conventional wisdom, which had ruled in the bureaucracy hitherto, that apportioned the field of development and administration into discrete jurisdictions amongst the various state agencies. Women as a cross cutting theme or subject were a new paradigm that had to be grappled with by the state structures.

In spite of these pronouncements by the organs of the State and by the influential working groups of the Planning Commission, the Component Plan for Women did not take any concrete, system-wide shape for the next two decades. There were some exceptions, however, where the idea of earmarking resources for women within a larger programme meant for the 'general population' did catch the imagination of the

political masters and the policy makers. These then took shape as directives in certain programmes, sectors and ministries. Prominent amongst them was the range of anti-poverty programmes, which were introduced in the seventies and eighties.

ANTI POVERTY PROGRAMMES AND WOMEN

The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) targeted ***families***, which meant, overwhelmingly, the male heads of families or other male members. But not the women. The number of women beneficiaries covered by IRDP, as per figures furnished by the Government itself, was infinitesimally small. Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was therefore started as a sub-scheme of the IRDP, solely for women (and children). It was launched in 1981-82 on pilot basis in a few blocks, later on taken up in all the states as a major programme for poor women. But in 1985, the Government also took a decision that one third of the IRDP beneficiaries shall be women. One third of the beneficiaries of TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth in Self-Employment) were also to be women. Jawahar Rozgar Yojana had also a stated preference for women. Most of these anti-poverty programmes have 30–40% of benefits reserved for women. The Indira Awas Yojana has a special component in which dwelling units are constructed for the poorest women-headed households.

In addition to the Ministry of Rural Development with its focus on women in poverty, many other agencies of the Government of India took up both 'women-specific' programme initiatives as well as strategies to benefit women in a targeted way through 'general' programmes. This trend picked up steadily through the Five-Year Plans. The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980---85) emphasised women as a specific development sector and a planning priority. The Seventh Plan (1985---90) identified and promoted 'beneficiary oriented programmes' with the objective of extending direct benefits to the women. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992–97) emphasised that the "benefits of development from different sectors should not bypass women". "Special Programmes are to be implemented to complement the general development programmes. ***The flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of education, health and employment are to be monitored vigilantly"***. By the nineties, the thrust on women's development had resulted in a perceptible increase in resources allocated in the budgets of certain Ministries and Departments under the broad rubric women's development. The approaches followed were mainly, two fold, one, special programmes for women, the 'women-only' programmes, and, two,

the quota or component approach, whereby a part of the total budgetary resources of general programmes were earmarked for women, or a specific percentage of beneficiaries were mandated to be women.

I (7) The Ninth Plan and the resurrection of the Component Plan for Women

The Report of the Working Group on Women's Development set up in January 1996 by the Planning Commission to help prepare for the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997---2001), while reviewing the programmes for women undertaken during the 8th Plan had this to say about the performance of programmes for women—

"Although many beneficiary oriented programmes have a portion of the targets earmarked for women, the experience so far has been that the share of the women in the funds of those schemes is not satisfactory. Keeping in view this fact, a separate women's component will be kept aside in funds of all these schemes to ensure the utilisation of that portion of funds for the women beneficiaries only. It is therefore proposed to earmark the women's component in every central and centrally sponsored scheme from the first year of the IX plan. The monitoring of these funds will be undertaken through the Indira Mahila Yojana. Similarly from the first year of the IX plan, a separate women's component will be insisted in the state plans as well. After the 73rd amendment to the Constitution, a large number of women are now being represented in the panchayati raj institutions. ***As the immediate consequential step in the process of power to the people, there is an urgent need to involve women in the decentralised planning process.*** *Indira Mahila Yojana will be an instrument in this direction and through this scheme, the women will be organised into groups, they will articulate their felt needs and prioritise these needs* ***which will subsequently become the district level women's sub-plan.*** *It is very urgent, therefore, that the Indira Mahila Yojana follows the Panchayat Raj process in every state immediately taken into consideration".* (emphasis added)

(Ninth Five Year Plan (1997–2001) Report of the Working Group on Women's Development, Department of WCD, 1996)

This recommendation of the Working Group is unique in one striking respect. It has yoked the component plan strategy with a crucial and dynamic concept, namely, that of decentralised planning.

Even before the Working Group's recommendations, the Department of Women and Child Development had requested the Planning Commission (in late 1995) to introduce a Mahila Plan component in the Ninth Plan. The Ninth Plan exercises were starting at the time, discussions on the draft Plan with the States/Union Territories and the Central Ministries and Departments would be taking place. This was the appropriate time to introduce new planning concepts and ideas and get them discussed in the working groups.

The suggestion from the Women's Department was that the Planning Commission should emphasise with all these agencies to identify ***'specific quantifiable Mahila Plan component in each scheme/programme'*** before they come for the meetings with the Planning Commission on the Ninth Plan. While certain programmes have already specific earmarking for women (such as IRDP and some of the other anti-poverty programmes), the Women's Department wanted the Planning Commission to consider earmarking of funds for women in other programmes and Ministries such as Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Wasteland Development, Employment, etc. It went on to suggest that the quantum, the percentages, the number of women beneficiaries and the benefits accruing should be specifically indicated in the Mahila Plan component. The responsibility for doing this should be vested in the concerned agencies of the Central and State Government. The Women's Department also wanted the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance to give incentives (by way of additional Central funds) to those States who would give emphasis to the Mahila Plan component 'by providing targets in excess of the prescribed minimum percentages'. The monitoring of the performance of the Mahila Plan component was suggested to be carried out by the Planning Commission and the Programme Implementation Department.

(Quotes from the letter dated 12-12-95 from Secretary WCD to the Member-Secretary, Planning Commission).

Expectedly, the internal notes of the Planning Commission showed their identification of the concept of the Mahila Plan component with that of the Special Component Plan (and also the Tribal Sub-Plan)[See subsequent part of the paper for these two]. While addressing the advisers of the various divisions within the Planning Commission, the Plan Co-ordination Division explained, "the Sub-Plan for women, as visualised, should be operative under all women related developmental sectors, both at Central and State levels, just as on the lines of Special Component Plan (SCP) for SC's and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) for ST's wherein a certain

percentage of both physical and financial targets are earmarked for the women".

(Note of the Planning Commission dated 20-5-96).

The Planning Commission took about a year to respond to the request of the Department of Women and Child Development. In October 1996, it sent a comprehensive communication to all Ministries and Departments of the Government of India sharing the general thinking in the Planning Commission on important issues related to the formulation of the Ninth Plan. The issues dealt with include---

- **plan priorities** (agriculture, rural development, rural infrastructure, seven basic minimum services, poverty alleviation, public sector reform)

- **delivery and implementation** (creation and strengthening of institutions of participatory development, involvement of panchayats, co-operatives, self help groups, workers' associations, partnership with the voluntary sector)

- **decentralisation** (need to devolve more 'social welfare measures' to the panchayats, encouraging local bodies to raise resources, greater autonomy to the States)

- **Continuation of existing schemes and new schemes** (need to review the entirety of ongoing schemes to retain only those which have impact, dropping of schemes and projects where only 5% of expenditure has been incurred even after 60% of the gestation period is over, high priority to be given to SC/ST welfare through adequate earmarking of schemes with direct benefit potential for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, under the Special Component Plan and the Tribal Sub-plan, etc.)

It is under this last section that we find a reference to the Mahila Plan component idea. "For the Ninth Plan, it may also be desirable to identify a women's component in the various schemes and programmes of the States and Central Ministries" observes the Member-Secretary.

The Ninth Plan began in 1997 and will go on to 2002. Information on follow-up action by the agencies involved in the Mahila Plan component is scarce and difficult to obtain. Informally, we learn that the earmarking of 'Mahila Plan components' by most of the Central Ministries has not yet actually taken place. As far as the States are concerned, similarly, we learn that Karnataka, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have taken certain steps to institutionalise the

Mahila Plan component in the State Plans. It is also not clear what kind of monitoring of the progress is taking place and what are the results of the monitoring, where the bottlenecks are, etc.

I (8) Some earlier initiatives in women's plans

Long before the Ninth Plan, the mechanism of "Action Plans for Women" had been tried in some states. Madhya Pradesh, for example was one of the early initiators.

Karnataka made an effort in 1993 to work towards an institutional model of planning for women. The objective was to identify those sectors where women's participation has been traditionally greater and to suggest strategies for development of women in these sectors. For a start, six broad sectors were identified. These were land and housing, agriculture and allied services, rural development, education, health, industry with focus on sericulture, KVIC, VISHWA, etc. The senior policy makers and administrators (including the Finance Department) then held department-wise discussions-----

"a) to identify schemes which would lead towards empowerment of women by recognising activities in which they participate and enabling them to have a controlling voice in such activities,

b) to facilitate diversification of production activities through training, skill upgradation, access to credit,

c) create a sustained programme for education and health"

The document prepared by the Government of Karnataka states the following—

"Women's development cannot be a programme of one department alone. Viewed thus, women would continue to be relegated to a separate stream, rather than being integrated into the mainstream of development and economy. Women's development can only succeed if all sectors of Government are adequately sensitive to the needs of women and focus their programmes on women".

One noticeable feature of the Karnataka model was that the recommendations made included policy changes, amendments to laws, improvement of procedures, increasing representation of women in committees, etc. and not only earmarking quantum of benefits to women or allocating percentages of the funds

to women or percentages of women beneficiaries. Both qualitative and quantitative aspects were included.

Government of Karnataka paper "Women's Development Programme 1993)

The "women in agriculture", "women in sericulture", "women in dairying", "women in fisheries" etc. genre of projects made their appearance in the seventies and eighties and have remained with us ever since. Most of these are still being funded externally, i.e., from outside the mainstream Ministry budget and plan. The group of Agriculture projects have been the earliest to be taken up (Karnataka,1983) This was followed by a number of other externally funded projects of similar nature in other states such as Tamilnadu, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, etc. In the Eighth Plan, the Ministry of Agriculture launched a pilot scheme of Women in Agriculture in 7 states in the country and this has now been continued in the Ninth Plan on an expanded basis. This initiative has meant that the Government plan funds for agriculture are being invested, for the first time, in a "women's component". There have been few evaluations of these projects from a focussed gender perspective. The available evaluations and reviews show that the focus is primarily on training for higher productivity and income. While highlighting the pioneering and innovative nature of these projects and stressing their positive impact in the Eighth Plan, improvement in access to technology and extension have been stressed as resulting in "empowerment" of the target group women. (Ministry of Agriculture) There is no reference in these evaluations to equity issues, legal literacy, ownership rights, land rights, titles, control and access issues, wages, mobilisation, gender issues within the state agencies, etc.

In the Seventh Plan, the Department of Women and Child Development launched the STEP programme (Support to Training and Employment) in which informal sector women workers falling in the seven or eight "sheds" such as agriculture, small animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, handlooms, handicrafts, etc. are supported to avail of information and services to upgrade incomes and skills through the strategy of groups, such as co-operatives. Cumulatively, these sectors contain the largest number of women of the unorganised sector. The Annual Report of the Department of Women and Child Development (1998-99)shows that a total of 72 Projects have so far been launched, with a coverage of 4.16 lakhs women. (Out of this number, the majority of

women, 3.47 lakhs are covered by dairy projects) The women's organisations built up under this project were to be linked with and supported by the huge parastatals or public sector agencies, boards, commissions, etc. that exist in the line Ministries of each of the sectors. No evaluation is available to see the extent to which the interests of these informal sector workers have been "mainstreamed" in the line Ministries.

PART II—THE "EARMARKED FUNDS" APPROACH TO PLANNING FOR WOMEN---A CLOSER LOOK

II (1) "Top down" and centralised

So far, within the Government, the idea of the "plans for women" or the "component plan for women" or the "mahila component" had evolved and taken shape within the conventional milieu of centralised and top-down planning that has been the common feature of all Indian five year plans.

D.Bandhyopadyay (1999) quotes E.M.S.Namboodiripad's dissenting note to the Ashok Mehta Committee Report "Democracy at the Central and State levels, but bureaucracy at all lower levels---that is the essence of Indian polity as spelt out in the Constitution". D.B.says "prior to the 73rd Amendment, there was an almost non-accountable bureaucratic administration…..the officers were not accountable to those over whom they exercised power and authority"

The dominant feature of the component approach was the earmarking of resources for women at macro- or national or aggregate level, since that was where the plans were prepared and finalised. This was accompanied in most cases by allocation of "physical" targets to be achieved with the help of the earmarked funds. These targets were decided upon, right at the top, that is, at the central level. The effort was to ensure that women got a "fair" share of the development outlays in the plans/budgets each year by mandatory executive action at the policy, planning and programme levels. These interventions were assumed to satisfy the requirements of women both in terms of their needs and the requirements of "planning for women". But no effort was made to question the direction of planning itself. It was also assumed that women would have no problem in receiving these benefits through the same general delivery system. The implementation of these centrally planned programmes was done by a centrally directed

bureaucracy which, through the years, had proliferated from the capitals right down to the village in myriad forms.

Commenting on the generic failure of Indian planning in estimating people's initiative and response as a political force for change, a biographer of Nehru observes that "planning made them mere beneficiaries. And since the benefits that was due to them came through a line of intermediaries, even this largesse was imperfectly distributed by imperfect people in an imperfect way" (Dhavan and Paul 1992) This was all the more true of women as the "beneficiaries" of planning.

The earmarking of resources, the identification of plans, programmes and schemes for women, the designing of "quotas" for women within beneficiary oriented programmes aimed at both men and women, all these processes and activities were carried out in a centralised fashion, at the national level or at the state government levels. The prime mover was the government and its various organs. The influence of groups outside the government, the women's movement, the women's studies discipline, organisations of civil society, community based agencies, etc. on the process of designing state plans, programmes and schemes was marginal in so far as the directional issue went, though it was considerable in other substantive matters.

Consultations with some of these groups did take place with increasing frequency from the seventies and eighties onwards. But even they took place it was more to fulfil an obligation to "meet women's groups", for example, or to institute "participatory processes" or "to get feed back from the field" and less to have serious policy dialogues on the planning paradigms and processes. The government still played a pro-active role, the discussions were held at its instance, at times, locations and on occasions decided by it. Consultations with outside groups, however, did become a part of the state planning culture in so far as the plans related to women.

Secondly, these interactions did not directly involve the majority of the population, i.e. the poor women in the rural areas, [or the women in the urban slums] for whom these planning exercises were actually being carried out. Their voices, or the voices of their representatives, were not heard first-hand in these meetings. At the most, their needs and voices were heard at second hand, through the agency of the women's groups, most of which worked closely with them and were sensitive to their needs. At the same time, muted criticism was often voiced that the articulate urban or

semi-urban women who found their way to these meetings did not really represent the mass of rural women. But neither was any effort made to evolve a system of representation that would enable the vast majority of women in the country to feel satisfied that their views were being heard. The millions of poor rural and urban women had no agency in the planning process, had no legal and effective representation in the discourse.

II (2) The lack of attention to gender in planning

The "earmarked funds" experiments and initiatives quickly became part of the mainstream planning culture as far as women were concerned. But evaluations and impact assessments of women-targeted schemes carried out from outside the government had been throwing up evidence that their outreach to the poor, especially to the women, was very minimal. A number of weaknesses and defects were revealed in the studies—

* local functionaries approached their tasks mechanically, were more bound by procedures and targets rather than by the needs of the women "beneficiaries".

* acute lack of village level data, on households, on assets, income, etc. leading to wrong targeting.

* women did not find it easy to deal with male functionaries or with the largely male-oriented systems in place in the village.

* women found it difficult to organise themselves in collectives, such as co-operatives of workers etc., due to cumbersome procedures and lack of technical and official support. Mahila Mandals [the only ubiquitous form of women's organisations in the villages] suffered from a number of systemic faults and were not able to represent the needs of most needy rural women.

* Whether the earmarked benefits had the potential to change women's traditionally disadvantaged gendered position and what were the issues that these interventions were addressing did not receive much attention, as the priority was on reaching the benefits to them.

* crucial aspects of gender planning, such as redefinition of categories, reform of information systems, time

budgeting of women, area-wise [or "sector"-wise or "work-shed"-wise] design of programmes etc. were not part of the planning design. These gaps resulted in distortions in design, difficulties in measuring impact, etc. Lack of the planners' exposure to the emerging discipline of women's studies led to failure to expose inadequacies in concepts and definitions, to discover new tools of analysis, such as survey methodologies using time-use data, methods for measuring energy inputs and outputs of women, etc.

* lack of attention to gender and related aspects led to continued prevalence of sex-stereotyping, neglect of women's basic survival strategies in programme design and content.

* there was no delivery system for gender. The interventions were an add-on, grafted on the mainframe plan design.

* *(ISST, Bangalore)*

II (3) Absence of devolution to local governments

Decentralisation of both planning and implementation, which reduces the distance between the planners, implementers and the beneficiaries, was missing. So was local accountability. Local communities of women, or of the poor, were rarely aware of government plans. Local governments and local organisations were not involved in planning or implementing national programmes, except to a very peripheral extent, as for example, in the identification of beneficiaries in the anti-poverty programmes. No effective feed back was possible, as there was no space for it in the planning cycle. Mid-course corrections could not be done. This inhibited the process of adaptability to local conditions and exacerbated women's lack of awareness, absence of training and other facilities. Thus, the blue-print approach of many national programmes did not show sensitivity to state-by-state variations.

II (4) Representative bodies of women---lack of authority and neglect of "mobilisation" as a process

The persistence of many adverse features of this dominant planning paradigm over the last four decades had in fact, invited the ire of development specialists, activists, women's groups, social workers and many others. The failure to involve women's representative groups in planning became, in fact, a common critique of government programmes. The Indian women's movement along with the women's studies movement, had convincingly established the argument over

these years of centralised planning that "women, particularly from the poorer households, need their own organisation to help them break the barriers of inequality, invisibility and powerlessness and expand the base for participatory development" [Kumud Sharma] Beyond the Indian voices, at global level, the various international conferences convened by the different agencies of the UN were saying the same thing. [Mexico, Copenhagen, Nairobi, ESCAP, ILO, NAM, etc.]

These proponents of mobilisation posited the building up of organisations of women through mobilisation of groups at grass roots as a counter to the welfarist ideology that still dominated Government thinking in the planning and the delivery of services and programmes for women---namely, one which saw women as the 'beneficiary' or the 'target' rather than the 'active agent'. Groups of women, as opposed to individual women, had collective strength, bargaining power and the ability to articulate their views and their needs. They could build effective leadership, could facilitate participatory approaches to planning and implementation and could bring planning closer to the people. As far back as 1974, the CSWI Report "Towards Equality" had made recommendations for ensuring greater collective voice for women in local planning. The Committee had recommended the setting up of statutory all-women's panchayats to ensure greater collective participation by women in the political process. The Committee on Panchayati Raj structure (1977) had recommended village level women's organisations to improve the quality of planning at the local level.

The Mahila Mandals promoted by the Government in the fifties were seen to be comparatively ineffective in achieving these objectives (due to a variety of reasons).

A study carried out by ISST New Delhi in 1992 looked at mahila mandals, cooperatives and panchayats in tandem as institutions introduced in rural areas "for ensuring local participation in the task of socio-economic transformation". The study postulates the pre-conditions for mahila mandals to flourish as the increasing growth of panchayats and the decreasing control of official machinery over rural development programmes. It is only under such conditions that the planning and implementation of such programmes as are capable of being managed locally can be looked after by representative bodies of women supported by panchayats. The study found, after examining the position in two states, that such conditions were not fulfilled, rather, they were reversed. The role of panchayats was weakening and the bureaucratisation and control over even locally manageable

rural development programmes was increasing. The mahila mandals were almost never associated with the planning and design of locally manageable schemes, not even where a percentage of benefits is earmarked for women, as in IRDP and JRY, or even DWCRA which is an exclusive programme for women. Mahila Mandals are therefore handicapped for lack of information about formal structures, their scopes and functions. It is only when the supportive hand of an NGO is there that the study found the mahila mandals to be active and functional.

The Seventh Five-Year Plan (1980-85) urged that organisations of women be promoted to ensure the elimination of weaknesses in programme implementation. The "group approach" was recommended for improving the quality and access of government services.

DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) had in fact, incorporated the group approach in its design. But the 'art' of mobilisation of women, the gender ideology and commitment, the attention to "process" were missing in the programme design. Mobilisation of women, especially poor women, takes time. It cannot be made to order. As observed by a feminist-economist, poverty alleviation was a time consuming process, it is expensive. Its durable success depends on both external support and internal motivation. Above all, the poor must have the room to devise choices of their own. Within a tightly woven project format, with main emphasis on reaching earmarked benefits to women, "the group approach" could not be taken beyond a point to its intended conclusion. (Devaki Jain 1988)

In a recent interaction, Ela Bhatt (September 2000) made a distinction between the process of "mobilisation" and the process of building up an "organisation". This distinction is very often lost sight of, in the Government programmes, where the two are treated as one.

Yet the "group approach" did find its way to the government planning lexicon, with all its imperfections, by the mid-eighties, as evidenced by the Chapter in the Seventh Five-Year Plan document. Some of the government programmes that have been launched in the last two decades have incorporated this feature (STEP, CAPART's programme of organisation of beneficiaries, the Revised Programme of Action of the National Policy of Education [1992]). The Indira Mahila Yojana is based on the setting up of self-help groups at the sub-block level. The National Perspective Plan for Women (1988–2000), Shramshakti (1988) [The Report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal

Sector] both emphasised the importance of women's representative organisations in programmes for women.

Meanwhile, new Government initiatives such as the Women's Development Programme in Rajasthan in the early eighties and the Mahila Samakhya Projects in several states of the country in the late eighties and nineties [both of which used the mobilising of poor women as an article of faith] became very influential in propagating the success of this approach. The inputs and the thinking of women activists and researchers shaped these two initiatives, though both were launched by the Government. The implementation, monitoring, evaluation and measurement of impact of these programmes were also designed in a participatory, gender sensitive and equity-based way in which the women of the groups were central to planning.

Most often, there was a wide gap between the group approach as adopted by the Government and the mobilisation-conscientisation-awareness-raising efforts made by women's organisations. It was the difference between a strategy that depended on a top down implementation direction, on a target approach that saw women as needy and weak, but not strong enough to know how to organise themselves and ask for information and services and an approach that took women in the context of their power dynamics and encouraged them to think of their own self-determination and self-definition. The group approach in the state-sponsored programmes is taken up as part of the project design, where an organisation of women is needed as part of the delivery mechanism. The stage of mobilisation, where issues of concern to the women are identified and a slow process of building a collective identity is built up using empowerment strategies is missing here.

II (5) Lack of gender-sensitiveness in the implementation machinery

The lack of sensitivity on the part of the top administrators and bureaucrats, the middle level managers, the technical and specialised cadres, the extension staff in the field, the officials at the 'cutting edge' level, etc. was another adverse characteristic of the top down planning and delivery model. The strategy of "earmarked funds" for women did not change this environment. The "quota" for women meant that the same extension workers had to be in position in the field. Bias towards women was more pronounced in the case of poorer women, especially those of dalit and adivasi communities.

A Task Force was set up in 1985 by the Ministry of Rural Development to suggest ways of sensitisation of government officials in the wake of the government decision to earmark quotas for women in anti-poverty programmes. It expressed concern at the poor recognition of the issues concerning women's development at various levels of the administration. While on the one hand the Government was taking steps to increase the access to development resources by women, their effective implementation required a proper understanding of the specific issues involved as well as sensitivity towards the situation of women in a larger context. The Task Force made a number of important recommendations regarding training programmes for various levels of officials in rural development. These included pilot camps-cum-workshops in DWCRA districts, introducing new features such as participatory analysis of key issues, face-to-face dialogue with groups of rural women and formulation of action plans by the trainees.

Gender training programmes became part of training establishments' repertoire from the mid-eighties onwards and have subsequently been taken up on a regular basis in many State training institutions, but their effectiveness and even their consistency varies sharply across the country. More attention is paid to the planning, policy and mid-level officials and less on the "cutting edge" extension machinery in these training sessions. A common experience was that it was more difficult to change attitudes through training than to convey information or impart skills in gender analysis, especially when conventional methodology was used. In training institutions dealing with "technical" disciplines, the priority tends to be on dissemination of technology and technology applications, in the interest of making women "catch up". The training then becomes narrowly focussed and productivity or growth oriented in the technical sense. Equity issues, whether related to gender or class, legal literacy, ownership issues, land rights, titles, control and access problems, wage issues, mobilisation, overlapping hierarchies within the training situation, etc. do not get much attention and sometimes, are totally ignored.

II (6) Parallels with the Scheduled Caste Component Plan and the Tribal Sub-Plan experiences

The experience of the Special Component Plan for the Scheduled Castes since the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980–85) contains lessons for the present initiative to earmark resources for women through the mechanism of a component plan.

The parallels between the state responses to planning for women and planning for Scheduled Castes are indeed striking. Like women, the Constitution gives the highest priority to the development---educational, social and economic----of the members of the Scheduled Caste communities. A number of safeguards have been built into the Constitution to enable the members of these communities to catch up with the rest of the population. They include, but are not confined to, legal instruments for the removal of disabilities, for punishment of discriminatory acts of commission and omission and mandatory provisions for reservations in public services.

However, by the end of the seventies, it was apparent that these efforts were too meagre to make a significant impact on the socio-economic status of these communities. Low literacy levels, grinding poverty, landlessness and socially discriminatory practices such as untouchability persisted in these communities. Whatever benefits accrued, such as in reservations in public services, were cornered by what came to be termed later as the "creamy layer" of the target population.

The Planning Commission then initiated a major affirmative action programme. It first set up a Working Group with broad terms of reference to review the status of developmental programmes for Scheduled Castes/other weaker sections in their entirety and formulate concrete proposals for a new development perspective along with recommendations for effective administrative arrangements. A sub-Working Group was constituted exclusively for Scheduled Castes.

Based on the recommendations of the Working Group, the mechanism of the Special Component Plan was introduced in the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-85). The Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes launched by the Government in 1980 is designed to channelise the flow of benefits and financial outlays from the general sectors in the plans of all the States and the Central Ministries for the development of these communities. These flows were of three types, namely, flows from existing schemes, flows from reoriented/modified existing schemes and, finally, flows from new schemes. The SCP is essentially a strategy of earmarking benefits to the Scheduled Castes in physical and financial terms in the relevant sectors. In concrete terms, physical goals along with the financial outlays required to achieve these goals were to be spelt out in the SCP document. The responsibility for drawing up comprehensive programmes or plans, earmarking funds from the sectoral budgets, etc. was vested in the Ministries and Departments in the Government of India (for

the Central budget) and in the State administration (for the State budget). The Sixth Plan was able to invest an amount of Rs. 3533 crores under the Special Component Plan in 20 states and union territories as compared to a cumulative amount of Rs. 433 crores spent in the earlier five plans.

The Sub-Plan for tribals had been initiated even earlier. Unlike the Scheduled Caste Component plan, the Tribal Sub-Plan was mainly spatially based, choosing the geographically contiguous areas in which tribals resided.

In October 1999, the Planning Commission, on the basis of a review of the "special strategies" of the Scheduled Caste Component Plan and the Tribal Sub-Plan, both at Centre and State levels, owned that the plans have become routinised and suffer from qualitative and quantitative deficiencies. The Central Government has, as a consequence of this finding, set up Standing Tripartite Committees at Centre and State level to look into all policy-related matters and issues for effective implementation of these plans)

(*Letter from Member-Secretary Planning Commission in October 1999 conveying the decision to all state governments)

Commenting on the lessons learned from the earmarking resources for weaker sections without accompanying shifts in the established planning paradigm, Devaki Jain (1988) remarks—

"Intensive earmarked support for tribal populations [like women, identified as disadvantaged] by designing and executing tribal sub-plans which were area specific--had failed to decrease the immiserisation of the tribals--- examination of the process of planning and delivery of the programmes revealed that they were handed down from above to functionaries----issues of gender had to take a back seat to implementation-both in terms of the conceptual framework and of the mechanism of implementation. In short the method [top-down] by which the development scheme was designed and implemented, prevailed over the aims and objectives. This had little to do with ***who*** in government or ngo was doing the ***implementing,*** or for whom [men or women] or with the package being delivered.

Conclusion

The effort to move away from "exclusively women's" projects, resulted in locating an alternative planning format, one where women would be ensured a fair share of the benefits of

general infrastructure, local developmental opportunities and composite developmental programmes, with all linkages and inputs. These two formats have dominated the mainstream planning agenda ever since. The latter model was based on the assumption that women beneficiaries would find it as easy as the male beneficiaries to access the earmarked benefits. While emphasising the need to "mainstream" women into mainframe planning, the Department of Women and Child Development has continued to launch new programmes exclusively for women in subsequent five year plans, while at the same time, pursuing the case with other ministries to take women "on board".

PART III---LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE—THE WAY FORWARD

Part III (1) Can the COMPONENT PLAN for women be a stand-alone?

The several approaches used from time to time to integrate and institutionalise planning for women and development within the state systems have been described above. We see that there has always been a tendency to focus on the perceived needs of women, through special schemes, programmes and plans. The impetus for such pro-active planning came both from within the country—a welfare state, bound by Constitutional obligations to women's development and equality-and later on, after the internationalisation of the women's question, from the global forums, such as Mexico, Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing. The presence of the women's lobbies, the women's movement, the volag sector, the community-based organisations, the representative associations of women, the research disciplines such as the social sciences, women's studies, the educational institutions and other civil society organisations within the country had all influenced the thinking of the state to various degrees in the process of planning for women.

From a purely "welfare" preoccupation with "vulnerable" women, the canvas widened to include other broad constituencies, such as "rural women", "women workers", "poor women" and women seeking political power. Women were seen as instrumental in the reaching of socially acceptable national goals such as literacy, health, small families, protection of environment and many others. Programme interventions by the state attempted to involve women in these important sectors.

These initiatives, however, placed as they were within the prevailing planning and policy environment and context, exhibited the typical features of the mainstream top down Indian planning model in philosophy and practice. Having had

its roots in the welfare model, the idea of a paternalistic state having to think of the needs of the different groups of the population continued to be very strong. While action plans and component plans for women came to be hammered out with increasing refinement from the mid-seventies onwards, they all partook of the same planning ethos. ***Plans for women, in other words, could not strike out a pioneering path on their own, nor make a brave departure from the general direction of other mainstream planning exercises.***

The idea of the component plan, as we have seen, was first mooted in the mid-seventies, but was not taken on board by the Government in a generic sense. Earmarking of quotas for women, however, was made in many of the anti-poverty programmes from the eighties onwards. The component plan was revived in the context of the exercises done for the Ninth Five-Year Plan, as brought out in the earlier part of the paper. The content of the directions issued by the Planning Commission in its 1996 letter was to identify a women's component in existing schemes and programmes.

While the Working Group on Women's Development set up for the Ninth Five-Year Plan(1996) had emphasised the linking of the mahila component plan with decentralised planning, the directives and guidelines issued by the Planning Commission to all the Government of India Ministries, Departments, allied agencies, etc. regarding the component plan were deficient in this very important aspect. No mention was made of decentralised planning in the guidelines.

It would seem that the objective of recommending this kind of identification process to be undertaken by the governments is mainly to ensure that women get a fair share of the development cake in quantifiable terms. This anxiety arose from the hitherto poor utilisation of resources by women from state budgets and plans. Instead of adding on more and more "women-specific" schemes or schemes and programmes "only for women", the approach was to ensure that general developmental programmes catered for both men and women. This was impossible if no earmarking was done and no targets or specific outlays were fixed for women.

The fixation with figures and quantification, as we have noticed, is part of the conventional way of measuring progress or of evaluating satisfactory implementation in planning terms. The reality of poor, rural women's lives however, is indicative of many social, economic, cultural and environmental obstacles that prevent them from enjoying their due share of resources, services, facilities and benefits. Unless women are given opportunities to break

through these obstacles, are able to access information, technology, challenge unequal power relations through individual and collective empowerment strategies, the gains accruing from the earmarking of resources in plans and budgets cannot benefit them except marginally.

Apart from urging a system-wide earmarking of budget funds, the Working Group on Women's Development had also made a recommendation (quoted in the earlier part of this paper) that for women to be involved in the decentralised planning process, they should be organised into groups (through the agency of the Indira Mahila Yojana), that women should articulate and prioritise their needs and that this process should lead to a district level "women's sub-plan".

The Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) (recast) has been described as an integrated programme for women's development, which seeks to build an organisational base for women throughout the country. It aims to converge all the social development programmes and integrate sectoral allocations at the district level to address women's needs. The lowest rung of the organisational structure consists of Indira Mahila Kendras at the anganwadi level. These groups, along with other similar groups constituted under various health, education and other social development programmes, would federate at block level. The Indira Mahila Kendras are basically self help groups. They are expected to access various programmes implemented by the Rural Development, Urban Development, Education and Health sectors as well as others dealing with economic and production activities. The Women's Department conceives of Indira Mahila Yojana as an important constituent or conduit of the Mahila Component plan. However, this Yojana is still pending final clearance of the Government. In the meanwhile, activities had started in about 200 blocks some years ago and the Planning Commission has recently reviewed these. How far the agency of the IMY will be able to involve grass roots women in local decision making, only time will tell.

A joint evaluation report prepared by the Department of Women and Child Development and the Planning Commission in 1997-98 arrived at the following findings---

- though IMY has a potential to use women's groups as an instrument of women's empowerment, there are many operational problems such as lack of training, funding for income generation and convergence activity, lack of animators, etc.

- the absence of co-ordinating officers in the district and the failure to draw up district plans has affected the implementation.

Based on the findings of the joint evaluation, the Yojana was recast with new features, such as greater flexibility for women to form groups, participation of members of local panchayats and officials as facilitators, preparation of district plans by IMY which will reflect women's priorities, active involvement of NGO's to assist in group formation, devolution of planning powers for block level projects to the local administration, etc.

From the original 200 blocks, it was decided to expand IMY to 900 blocks in the Ninth Five-Year Plan.

The concern with quantification, with expenditure, with utilisation of funds within a prescribed time limit, with counting of beneficiaries, with reaching targets set at the beginning of the plan period and other easily measurable indices have been part of the stock in trade of government programmes. The component plan, by itself, is a further illustration of this methodology. By itself, without the help of strategies of empowerment, participation, mobilisation and sustained support, the component plan approach would not be able to counter the factors responsible for the unequal status of women.

The consensus that had evolved over two decades of active field mobilisation, grass roots research and interactions with the women was therefore that it was necessary but certainly not sufficient to earmark resources for women in the budgets and planning instruments and that in the effort to involve women in planning, it was necessary to involve them in local level planning as a part of political empowerment strategies.

The instrumentality of the component plan therefore, needs a set of empowerment and participation strategies to enable transfer of political power to women, to enable them to take charge of planning changes in their own lives. A basic requirement would seem to be the over-turning of the hierarchy of present day planning, of the top-down model. A window of opportunity has opened with the promise of ***devolution of powers and decentralisation of functions*** to the three-tiered panchayats at village and sub-district and district levels.

Strategic partnerships between elected women in panchayats, local community women's groups and those resource

organisations who are committed to women's political, economic and social empowerment would be another critical requirement. Such partnerships are already much in evidence. A large number of resource organisations are engaged in networking in different parts of the country, taking up a variety of activities in collaboration with women in the community and the elected women in the panchayats. Issues taken up include credit, capacity building, employment, shelter, savings and credit, communication of information and other innovations. Problems of violence, health, education, local corruption, lack of accountability of local governments, etc. are tackled through building a supportive environment which will allow institutional solutions to be handled by the women themselves.

Swayam Shikshan Prayog, a voluntary organisation based in Maharashtra, working in such a mode since 1995, has now built an alliance of women's collectives and elected women of the panchayats and claims that this has emerged as a new kind of leadership which "is changing the face of local governance", "transforming gram panchayats to become accountable and transparent—and building an informed and active constituency". The synergistic alliances between the community women and the elected representatives help ***mobilise communities to participate in local development***, improve access of all to infrastructural facilities, help eliminate middle-men and corruption and keep the community well-informed through regular interactions.

If we were to use such a multi-levelled and synergistic approach to women's involvement in local planning, the component plan would then not be a stand-alone, but would be an enabling mechanism to extend women's outreach to development resources and goals, defined in their own tongues.

PART III (2) How to Change the Direction of Planning?

The only significant change, post-independence, to have occurred in the planning prototype took place in 1993 with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments. This has found an echo in the report of the 9th Plan Working Group already referred to.

The Working Group's deliberations and approach were influenced by the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India. After these amendments became part of the Constitution in 1991 and were followed by new panchayat laws passed in each state, Indian development planning and administration, theoretically at least, could never be the

same. Twenty-nine different kinds of development and regulatory activities had now to be transferred to the panchayats as units of local government. This was a mandatory provision, not an optional one. The subjects included social sector priorities such as education, drinking water, women and child development, etc., economic priorities such as the anti-poverty programmes, production oriented activities such as agriculture and allied subjects, forestry, infrastructure such as community assets, etc.

The Working Group was clear that the component plan had to be hitched to decentralised planning if the promises made to the women were to be actualised. It was no longer enough for plans, programmes, allocations and schemes to be made in the Government offices at central or even state levels. They had to be made by women, where they were situated, where they were located. It was for the local bodies (including the urban bodies) to decide what are the kind of schemes that the women needed and demanded, how much funds were required to be allocated, how they were to be spent, how the monitoring was to be done.

With the move towards decentralised planning, fresh interest has been generated in planning not only ***for*** women, but also ***by*** women in the units of local governance. Article 40 of the Constitution had already envisaged panchayats as units of local government. But this provision remained on paper for long, not being legally enforceable. Though Panchayats have been in existence even before Independence, they 'were invariably denied any meaningful powers and authority and, worst of all, the elections were seldom held at 5-year intervals'. (Devaki Jain, UNDP)

The entry of elected women into the panchayats in large numbers in the mid-nineties onwards signalled the start of a complex, multi-faceted and politically nuanced process of power dynamics. By the time the first panchayat elections had been held in the states and the women had time to settle themselves in their new positions, the pattern of struggle became apparent. On the one hand, women have to fight the backlash that has been mounted against them, questioning their credentials, legitimacy, capability, motivation and sense of responsibility to occupy these offices. On the other hand, the process of devolution of powers from the two higher tiers of government, namely the State and the National Government, to the third tier of the panchayats has been, to say the least, long drawn out and laggard. There emerged a not-so-hidden agenda, on the part of the government, of unwillingness to share power with the panchayats as the grass roots units of governance, which is

continued to be played out in different manifestations and strategies.

Elected women have therefore to fight on several fronts at the same time. They have to fight for their own place in the sun in the panchayats vis-à-vis the patriarchal forces arraigned against them-- and, at the same time, they have to fight the political and bureaucratic state agencies for according a greater role in governance to the panchayats.

A senior bureaucrat reminded the participants of a recent workshop convened at Bangalore to debate on the theme of empowerment of elected women members of panchayats that for women to be truly empowered as members of PRI's, it is essential that the PRI's themselves must work well. Women's interests cannot be viewed in isolation from the functioning of the panchayats as a whole. He further said that those who do not believe in women's participation in panchayats or see it a problem are those who themselves do not believe in panchayats.

In spite of these tremendous odds, many of those who, from the outside, are working with panchayats have no hesitation in agreeing that the difference women are making to local government is becoming evident in new priorities and new values. Women are not merely participating in the panchayati raj process but they are questioning the system itself. (L.C.Jain)

The challenge is to build up elected women's capabilities through information, through legal awareness and supports at local level. The challenge is to build enabling mechanisms, which can initiate planning by women, that is, bottom up planning. The committees of the panchayat are examples of these mechanisms.

The scenario, as we take a look across India, is not very promising. Panchayats are still seen in most states as extension agencies, as bodies or organisations which will help the Government to discharge its developmental and regulatory functions more efficiently through the use of a better delivery system which is closer to the grass roots and to the people. In other words, they are deemed to work as extension agencies, rather than as people's representative organisations. Decisions, especially the major ones dealing with control of resources and shaping of policies, still rest with the old ruling classes. The Panchayat's political profile and genesis mandated in the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution is most often overlooked, especially at the lowest tier, where because the elections

are to be fought on non-party lines, the gram panchayats are seen as necessarily 'non-political'. The identification of the word 'political' with the political parties of the day has helped to create this false negative. As such, the panchayats, except in a few states, have not been involved meaningfully in the exercise of planning from the grass roots. At the most, they can nibble at the margin of the hand-me-down projects received from the state or national capitals in the form of programmes and schemes (their roles are limited to identification of beneficiaries for programmes designed elsewhere, to supervision of local works planned and constructed by offices who over whom the elected members have no authority or control, etc.)

According to the 1999 South Asia Human Development Report, some of the most basic features of a decentralised democracy should include guaranteed political autonomy and specific powers to local bodies in the state, including delivery of public services, natural resource management and law and order. Other essential features include providing local bodies with the power of tax collection up to a specified percentage and devolving a certain portion of national and state revenues to them.

The debate on the changes to be brought about in the power structure is long and never-ending. The issues are not simple nor is the environment static. "Power is not something people give away. It has to be negotiated and sometimes wrested from the powerful". (Devaki Jain 1999). But elected women have enough answers to most of the questions. They know what are the factors which impede them and what supports, inputs and services they need to go ahead. Among the former they included the following—

* inability to articulate

* lack of self esteem and confidence

* lack of information

* restricted physical mobility

* patriarchal controls

* double burden of work

* corrupt system

* lacunae n laws relating to PRI's

* no freedom for decision making

Among the latter, they listed---

* the need to organise and express solidarity

* the need for training and exposure

* right to information, education and economic independence

* more of women functionaries and officials at local levels

* gender sensitisation of elected male members and functionaries

* representation in all committees

* amendments in party politics to encourage women's entry into politics

(Asha Ramesh and Bharti Ali, undated)

In seeking to access these resources and services from outside, the elected women in the panchayats can readily call upon a large number of support organisations from various locations within civil society.

The women's movement has been one of the greatest proponents of women's empowerment through political participation and decision making. Since the introduction of the 73rd Amendment, many other organisations of civil society falling under the broad banner of social change, have also been engaged in a continuous process of helping the elected women in the panchayats to transform the existing political culture by promoting democratic freedom and the rights of the marginalised groups. There are numerous examples of local action initiated by the elected women in the panchayats with the help of voluntary organisations, educational institutions, activist groups, grass roots or community based organisations and even government programmes. When assessing the resources of women-in-panchayats, therefore, we should think of the synergistic combination of these elected women and the support organisations outside the panchayats as a continuing source of their potential strengths.

The example of Mahila Samakhya is only one of such efforts made in various parts of India to forge a link between women in the community and the elected women in the panchayats.

Through the formations of village level collectives of women, Mahila Samakhya provides a continuing source of support to the elected women. The sanghas, in fact, become a reference point for the elected women, as they can take all the issues relating to governance to these collectives. Validation and legitimacy are provided to the elected women through this agency. This ensures that the interests of poor women are watched over. The Swayam Shikshan Prayog works in Maharashtra, partnering with community women's groups and Panchayati Raj institutions. Again, this synergistic link helps the elected women to get into the gendered debate on credit, violence, health, education, etc. at the community level. These interactions also help the community women's groups by enhancing their knowledge and awareness about the electoral processes of local governance. There are countless other efforts of this type which are too numerous to be recounted here.

The short point that is being sought to be made here is that planning at the grass roots level can be entrusted to the elected women even at this rather fragile and indeterminate stage of the devolution of state powers and functions to the panchayats, in view of the availability of strong support organisations in the field. Perhaps women can lead the way, by transforming and transmuting the macro-level commitment of earmarked funds via the Component Plan through the nuts and bolts of local level planning to achievements on the ground.

PART IV---The Kerala Case Study (PEOPLE'S PLANNING CAMPAIGN)

Among the states which have progressed ahead vis-à-vis others in the devolution of powers, finances and functions to the panchayats are Kerala, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. The following is a case study based on a brief summation of the Kerala experience from a gender perspective. (Prepared by Aleyamma Vijayan of SAKHI, Trivandrum, 2000)

Kerala has gone a step further than the other states. Not only has it devolved 40% of the budget directly to the panchayats and urban local bodies, it has also earmarked 10% of these devolved funds for projects exclusively for women, that is, for projects which directly benefit women.

The macro-context in which the Government took these initiatives was the general environment of disillusionment with what came to be known as the Kerala model of development in the seventies. Though Kerala has a high human development index (HDI) notwithstanding its low per capita

income, as evidenced by high literacy levels, low birth rates, high life expectancy and low infant mortality, the State has been performing very poorly in its economic sectors, mainly agriculture and manufacturing. The adverse economic repercussions include economic stagnation, very high levels of unemployment and budget deficits. On the social arena, there was increasing incidence of violence against women and high/increasing suicide rates. There were also sharp regional and intra-district inequalities as well, which were leading to social tension.

Another disturbing feature of this most literate state in the country is the very poor participation of women in formal political institutions and processes. The highest percentage of women in the state assembly never exceeded 10%. The position of women in decision making in trade unions, political parties, service organisations was even worse.

A year after the elections under the new State Panchayati Raj Act took place in 1995, the Left Democratic Front Government was voted into power. It was decided to mount a campaign strategy to make the decentralisation process into a popular programme. The lead was taken by the Planning Board, where a cell was created to oversee the activities. Against 990 gram panchayats, 152 block panchayats and 14 district panchayats, 3954, 564 and 105 women respectively, won in the elections.

Local level planning was initiated in the wards, that is, at the sub-gram panchayat level. (Kerala panchayats had high population densities, average being above 25,000). The ward sabhas met mandatorily twice a year and arrived at a consensus on what their needs are and how the resources could be mobilised. With the help of expert committees at the panchayat level and development seminars, each gram panchayat prepared a development report which were then transformed into project proposals. These projects were then sent to the district planning committee for approval. The funds were directly passed on to the local bodies. A voluntary technical core team operated at each panchayat level, to ensure technical feasibility and financial viability of the projects.

The positive indicators of women's participation, based on four years' experiences with panchayati raj in Kerala, are as follows:

- ✓ Women participated in panchayati raj not only through their candidatures for elections, but as convenors of task forces, as key resource persons etc.

- ✓ Women attained a degree of visibility in the public arena that had not been there before.

- ✓ There was general acceptance and recognition of the roles played by the women and the work done by them.

- ✓ The Planning Board included topics and issues relating to women in the training schedules right from the beginning. The training handbooks brought out by the Planning Board contained directions to involve women in execution of development projects. A minimum 30% quota was prescribed for women's participation in the training programmes at all three levels.

- ✓ The Planning Board played a pro-active role in ensuring that the expenditure on women's projects did not fall below 10% from the second year onwards. The Board ensured this by placing an embargo on all sanctions by the District Planning Committees unless the expenditure on women's projects reached the minimum prescribed. The Board thus played the role of a watchdog to ensure women's interests.

- ✓ The Board prescribed a mandatory gender impact assessment when carrying out cost benefit analysis of all projects.

- ✓ Special efforts were put in to ensure good participation and involvement of women in the gram sabha meetings.

- ✓ A special effort was made to mobilise poor women through the agency of the anganwadi workers.

The negative indicators of the experience are as follows—

- ✓ In spite of all out efforts, the participation of women in the gram sabha never exceeded an average of 20%. The women who attended these meetings mostly belonged to the economically backward classes.

- ✓ In the Gram Sabha meetings, the women generally attended concentrated in the women's development group only, or the groups in charge of social inputs like water, sanitation, education, etc. in spite of the fact that there was no such restriction on their attendance.

- ✓ Lack of data on women inhibited the preparation of a comprehensive development report on women. This was in striking contrast to the reports written on the other sectors, where collection of data was successfully done, with full involvement of the members.

- ✓ Women's attendance in the training programmes was disappointingly low. There were many drop-outs.

- ✓ There was a lack of women resource persons, especially for training programmes at the lower levels.

- ✓ The preparation of projects for women suffered because of inadequate training on development and planning issues, lack of experts on gender and limited number of women volunteers. There was all round lack of familiarity with the basics of gender planning.

- ✓ In the first year of the campaign, the preparation of projects for women, against the earmarked component of 10% funds, was unsatisfactory. One view was that most of these projects could not be deemed to be women's projects. These projects included roads, bridges, sanitation, drinking water, minor irrigation and electricity. Others included beneficiary schemes such as animal husbandry, poultry etc., where, though the assets were in the women's names, there was no safeguard that the control or ownership was actually in women's hands.

- ✓ There were other systemic defects such as poor marketing, unsatisfactory health care cover for animals, etc.

- ✓ The elected women representatives carried a double and triple burden of responsibilities and work covering professional and household spheres. This greatly added to their stress. They had to face slander and criticism from families and outsiders. Many of them did not want to contest a second time for this reason.

Conclusions reached in the case study

In Aleyamma's words,

"The experiences of Kerala shows that attempts to bring about effective and good governance does not automatically address the question of gender inequality"

"If good governance is about equity and equality, gender and gender equity has to be major concerns in development"

"For example, it is important to analyse how needs are perceived, voiced and understood? How resources are generated and allocated? How the differences of power and privileges between men and women influence upon this process?"

"The last four years of experience makes it very clear that women as a group lack the social and economic and political power".

"The final control over resources and the decision making capacity is still with men. Many times in discussions, comparison is made between the scarce resources and whether it should be spent for drinking water or cycling for women!"

"Many are aware of the issues of women but not of the potentials of gender-based planning and development".

"The experience in Kerala makes it very clear that just by decentralising power or allocating funds or putting certain mechanisms in place, gender equity cannot be addressed. Kerala has taken a step in the right direction but it needs conscious intervention to progress further. Patriarchy as a system has deep roots of society and sustained and long struggles, systematic intervention of all concerned persons, especially of women's organisations and movements only can bring lasting changes".

Part IV (2) Some questions and answers on the Kerala experience

What are the missing links (from the gender perspective) in the PPC (People's Plan Campaign) carried out in Kerala for the last four years? What are the conscious interventions that will have to be introduced to make the plan campaign stronger in gender articulation?

1. Lack of ownership of the programmes by women in their collective strength. Who defines what are the projects which 'directly benefit women'? The formal involvement of women at the policy making level is minimal. The Planning Board itself does not have any woman member. Political space is still to be occupied by women in spite of their presence in the panchayats in such large numbers.

2. Men are still the decision-makers. Women do not still enjoy political power. The women's projects are generally chosen by those in position of authority and deemed to be appropriate for women. In several places, where women made their choices, these were not

implemented. Women wanted mobile libraries, it was not agreed to. When choosing self-defence training, women wanted to go the whole way in karate, up to the black belt. This was not deemed necessary.

3. Gender planning is both political and technical. It is not enough to incorporate women's needs into existing planning disciplines without re-ordering the context and the rationale of the current planning tradition. Neither the political nor the technical dimension is in evidence in the Kerala context. Therefore, the question of what constitutes a "women's project" within the "women's component plan" is left wide open. As one of the elected women put it, the money in the component plan is spent without understanding the "problems, needs, potentials and limitations" of women locally. The money is spent on pre-determined projects, artificially termed as "women's projects" by tagging on the word "women" (women's cowshed, women's milch cattle).

4. ***How do we introduce gender into local level planning? How do we ensure that women's entry into political life has empowered them?***

Moving towards gender equality, as the 1995 UNDP HDR reminds us, is not a technocratic goal—it is a political process.

Moving towards gender equality, as the 1995 UNDP HDR reminds us, is not a technocratic goal—it is a political process.

HDR's have introduced some indices to help measure progress towards reaching gender equality. "These indices were useful since they gave an opportunity to develop more interesting ways of monitoring attempts towards equality than the usual breakdown of activities by sex and numbers in social indicators, such as literacy rates, infant mortality, etc." (Devaki Jain 1999) But in the context of the countries of the developing world, it is necessary to go beyond these indicators and include, instead, indicators linked to certain characteristics of poor countries. Key issues such as disparities, unequal opportunities, access, participation (as differentiated from membership only), poverty, etc. would be used to evolve a gender audit mechanism which in turn would lead to better implementation and monitoring of locally planned programmes and their impacts.

Gender planning has been defined as a transformative planning tradition, which has as its goal, the emancipation of women and their release from subordination. While it is not a theoretical construct, nor has any universally applicable

procedures or broad generalised assumptions, it does have components of planning practice, tools, methodologies, built on extensive research and literature on women and gender in the first and third worlds. (Carolyn Moser)

Some of the basic conceptual issues underlying gender planning tradition are the differentiation between sex and gender, between practical and strategic gender needs, between gender relations approach and women-in-development approach, etc. Many of the 'women's projects' taken up under the 10% component plan for women cater to women's practical gender needs, but do not take things further. Thus, increased income generation for women may be at the cost of their increased drudgery, without bringing in any space for questioning the perpetuation of unequal sexual division of labour. The case study shows that opportunities for increasing women's income have been identified in such a way that women can combine them with household responsibilities! Questions such as ownership, control, management of assets were also not always addressed. If strategic gender needs had been addressed, the projects would have worked on different assumptions, while taking the acknowledged need for increased income by the poor women as a starting point. Similarly, access to anganwadi centres by women was not ensured, though the construction of these centres was taken up under the women's component. Increased mobility for hitherto housebound women (through cycling) adds to women's self-confidence and power, which is a strategic gender need, but has been contrasted with the practical or basic need of drinking water by the general population. Above all, the fact that unspent money lying with the panchayats at the end of the year was mostly from the women's component plan is clinching evidence of the gap in the gender planning input in the PPC.

Another issue of concern is the finding that while their participation in the PPC has drained many of the elected women (especially the younger ones) of their energy and time, that they suffered from mental tensions, had to put up with double and triple burdens, the system itself has not responded to this adverse impact. It is clear that the gender relations aspect is unfavourable to women in panchayats and that the patriarchal forces have landed the women into a stressful situation. External support to the elected women has not been forthcoming.

On the whole, however, the trail blazed by Kerala by devolving finances to the panchayats and further earmarking a percentage of these funds to women's development is unique in the current history of post-1991 decentralised planning.

It combines the effort for effective decentralisation of planning to the panchayats with the effort to earmark resources for women through the Mahila plan component approach at the grass roots level. This strategy of combining the two elements will ultimately give more power to the women, place resources within their reach and ensure women's control over them for bringing political, social and economic change. But the absence of a gender strategy in the PPC is an inhibiting factor at present.

While the PPC women's "component" is closer to the people than the "Mahila component plan" introduced in the Ninth Plan by the Department of Women and Child Development and the Planning Commission, both need to bring women into power by correcting an unjust and unrepresentative system through sustaining the link between women and the political process.

CONCLUSION

The paper has attempted to describe the various efforts made in the last five decades to institutionalise planning for ad by women in India, "to give it a local habitation and a name" by evolving mechanisms which are effective and sustainable. We have experimented with programmes and schemes grouped under categories such as welfare, community development, anti-poverty, to Action Plans which comprise of a range of programmes covering different activities, to the component or earmarked model of planning, where a mandatory percentage is set aside for women in general programme budgets. There have also been initiatives such as Mahila Samakhya and the Women's Development Programme (Rajasthan) which have followed vastly different strategies but have been taken up under the Government budgets.

One feature of the scene traversed by this paper is that we have looked primarily at the one instrumentality of "schemes", "programmes", and "projects". Planning, in the state lexicon, must yield programmes and projects, and these invariably deal with discrete activities.

Even here, we have concentrated on certain sectors, which the state has prioritised, such as those with income earning potential or social welfare sectors. We have not discussed housing, environment, even health or education (and many more). But the instrumentality of the "project" or the "programme" would still dominate in these areas as well.

The "special provisions for women and children" in Article 15(3), which prevails even over the gender equality

provisions of the Constitution, is the fountain head of the "plans for women".

Hence, development planning 'for plans, programmes, schemes, projects' has been put under the microscope here.

Under the state aegis, planning is done in the sectoral mode. The format of plan documents, the demand for plan funds, their allocation and distribution, all follow a sectoral approach. The implementing structures such as departments, technical bodies, field cadres, monitoring systems, are also designed along sectoral divisions.

Planning for women, on the other hand, need "integrative strategies" (Moser) . This has been one never-ending search within the state systems, one that has yielded little good result. "Nodal agencies" or "national machinery" have been designated or set up to give chase to this ideal, but they have faced difficulties, which are of the nature of organisational barriers.

Within the state structures planning is more of a technical and administrative business. It is more management-managerial, techno-administrative, an exercise that has its own set of rules, jargon, its procedures, numbers, norms, guidelines, etc. It has its own internal logic and its justification. The links between it and the reality of women's lives are difficult to forge and preserve.

In other words, the milieu of planning is not woman-friendly. This refers to the whole milieu. The state efforts have been to find little oases, or corners, which will have a different ethos, within the gigantic apparatus of the state.

Yet, the state has persevered and gone ahead, may be haltingly and slowly, often repetitively and routinely. What is most urgent is for the planners to realise that planning is political and not merely "technical". That the "end-product" is not a set of operational plans, targets and numbers, but the emancipation of women and their release from subordination through their own strengthening, their collective efforts. Schemes, targets, numbers, etc. can be only a means to the end product. This can take place, not only through material changes in the condition of women, but through a shift in the balance of power between not only men and women, but between the powerful and the less powerful and more marginalised and the excluded of which women form a major part. In spite of all efforts, "patriarchy, as a system, still defines the relations between men and women in

society as well as the entire developmental process" (Nalini Nayak)

If the political roots of planning are to be restored, we need to shift the emphasis more to encouraging wider representation of women in all public institutions, community-based, representative, membership based, economic, social and others. Kerala, with its enviable social development indicators, has a very low participation of women not only in the State Legislative Assembly, but also in party structures, in trade unions, in professional associations, etc. This is a poser for those who equate literacy, awareness and political awareness with women's political strength and agency.

In Kerala, where the PPC has become synonymous with the political party in power, hence a potent electoral issue, questions are being posed about the future direction of people's planning. "How can the gains of the first phase of this campaign be consolidated to counter consumerism and its consequences----the people as a whole falling victims to the vagaries of the market place---apart from the evident objectification of women?" Hindu, 24th September 2000). This sentiment was echoed by an activist who recently spoke of the contrast between the Kerala Planning Board's emphasis on the primary and secondary sectors in the PPC (in the interest of building up employment avenues) while the global and market forces were decimating whatever opportunities for work were still available in the state.

We recall Gandhi's words that the real change in India will come when women begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation.

We also need to recognise planning for women as a specific planning approach. Too often, women's plans have been an add-on, a component, grafted on the mainframe. Issues such as elimination of stereo types, ownership, access and control, abolition of unjust division of labour based on sex, drudgery, removal of discrimination, measures against violence, etc. are the basic conceptual rationale, the gender interests, which are rarely taken into consideration when preparing plans for women according to the current planning tradition. The problems which the PPC women's

component faced in Kerala are an instance of how, even when decentralisation, devolution, women's components, were all present, the absence of knowledge of gender planning showed up in the type of activities planned for women.