PEASANT WOMEN ORGANISE FOR EMPOWERMENT: THE BANKURA EXPERIMENT

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Introduction

Organisations are accepted as an instrument to provide collective strength, or greater bargaining power, or to articulate the voice of an interest group. They may also be recognised as a constituency, to ensure representative of that section in local, national or inter-national deliberative bodies.

During the last fifteen years of the women and development debate, there has been a tendency to relegate these multiple roles to women NGOs. Such a belief overlooks the great diversity among women. Women are not a class or a category, but constitute a section within each category into which any population may be classified. Undoubtedly, there are some common problems that all women share, but *the problems unleashed by the processes of 'development' in different parts of the world have not affected all women in an equal manner, even in the same regional or cultural context.* The same processes have, too, often benefitted a minority, while adversely affecting the majority. Urbanisation, spread of education, improved health care, improved legal rights, access to professional and public employment and careers have enabled some women to achieve independence, reputation for creative work, even positions of great power. But such gains of a minority have not helped the large majority. On the other hand, the myth of gender equality helped to mask, for many decades, the declining status and marginalisation of the large majority of women.

Peasant women, in developing countries constitute the largest single group of this marginalised and deprived category. They are also different from other women in many ways. Their class association with agriculture which they helped to initiate (Chide, Kosambi-74, Swaminathan - 85) water resources which are vital for their economic and social roles, and forests as a source of food, fodder, fuel and livelihood gives them a very different attitude to these basic natural resources than is common among other women or even among men of their own class. They have an inborn (acquired over generations) conservationist approach to these basic resources, which cannot be expected among urban women, or even women from relatively affluent families in rural areas. The latter are not primary producers, gatherers or conveyors of these resources, but mainly processors and consumers.

It is the contention of this paper that an organisation of women or affluent rural women cannot fully represent the problems, interests, concerns or priorities of this poorest, most over-worked, invisible, deprived, exploited and unprotected group of working women in the world. *They need their own organisations, to help them break the*

barriers of inequality, invisibility and powerlessness, so that they can play an effective and meaningful role in development, not as victims or more beneficiaries, but as partners, even leaders.

This statement does not however, mean that national, regional or international organisations of women, cannot play any role in assisting peasant women's groups to acquire the voice that they need to influence and shape the process of development. Many of them have been doing so, especially at national or international levels. They have helped to articulate the plight of peasant women in different parts of the developing world, have demonstrated connections between food scarcity in particular regions - e.g. many African countries - and the neglect of peasant women in policies for agricultural and rural development (NAM'85, Bellaggio'85, Acharya'84), and fought for greater priority for peasant women in development strategies at all levels (UN-80,'85, WCARRD-79, ILO-85, Bellaggio-85, CWDS-85).

This role, of providing channel for communication - between peasant women, and the wider processes of development decision-making - to be fully effective, requires closeness of association, and a mutual sharing of knowledge/information and other resources. Logically, such an association should be easiest at the local level. Unfortunately, the contradiction or clash of interests, between women from different classes is much stronger at the local level, creating a distance which only exceptional and highly motivated persons can bridge.

This paper presents the experience of the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) - a research institute committed to women's equal participation in development - entering into such an association with groups of poor peasant women in Bankura District of the state of West Bengal. In the jargon of social sciences it is an experiment in action-research, but it has exerted so much influence on the minds and lives of all of us in the Centre - women and men alike - that we call it our learning laboratory. The story is of the women whom we went to help, but touches here and there on how they helped us. It is an Indian story, but its counterparts can be found in many corners of the world.

I

The need for organisations of rural workers was considered sufficiently critical to justify an additional ILO Convention (Convention 141. 1976), since the majority of workers in developing countries fall in this category. Research in problems of rural labour established that their vulnerability and levels of exploitation were far higher than urban industrial or service sector workers in the organised sector.

The roots of their vulnerability in a country like India lie in : -

(a) the limitations of natural resources against an exploding population;

(b) a skewed agrarian resource and power structure, which continues to persist inspite of policies for land reforms (ceilings on large land-holdings and redistribution of such surplus land to the landless peasantry), prescribed minimum wages, diversification of the rural economy and special assistance programmes aimed at groups below the poverty line;

(c) uneven development of irrigation and agricultural productivity across regions. The permanently irrigated, green revolution districts have multiple cropping and attract seasonally migrant labour from the less developed regions, preventing local labour from reaping the full advantage of the increasing employment opportunities; and

(d) the traditional hierarchical structure of rural society where cultural conventions and norms play a dominant role in human relations.

Added to these macro causes are special characteristics that make particular groups of rural labour even more vulnerable, unorganised and exploited. The majority of rural labour belong to India's historically disadvantaged groups, the scheduled castes, and the scheduled tribes, but to these must now be added the downwardly mobile sections of rural artisans. The obsolescence of their crafts, the loss of markets to mass produced goods from modern industry, and the increasing scarcity of raw materials have forced them to join, in increasing numbers, the ranks of the unemployed or under-employed rural labour, hovering on the verge of subsistence or below.

Women and adolescents constitute well over half of all these categories, and if we include child workers, the proportion exceeds two-thirds. Among child labour, girls constitute a majority. The historically disadvantaged position of women manifests itself in many ways. When schooling comes within reach of poorer households, the boys support their families. Despite laws to the contrary, most rural employers continue to pay lower wages to women, and very few women own homesteads, land or other productive resources in their own right. The advent of new technology and scientific knowledge to expand productivity, instead of benefitting them has in fact, reduced rural women's earning opportunities (CSWI -'75, Sharma -'86, Kalpagam -'85, Acharya-'87). One of the major reasons for escalation of the dimensions of poverty is this declining earning power of a section of members of poorer households, which have always survived on multiple earnings. (Banerjee - 1987, Mukhopadhya and Ghosh -'87, Mitra-'87, Krishnaraj -'87).

While women workers share all the vulnerabilities of men of their own class, they have added disadvantages which make them doubly more vulnerable. They have even less assets, most of them are illiterate and unaware of their rights - as workers or as women - and the seasonality of rural employment makes them even more dependent on their employers - as the source of work or loans in times without work. For women, such loans may represent a life and death choice for their children and themselves. The same compulsion also makes them work more for less

wages and forces many to accept sexual harassment from potential employers or their agents (Field interviews in Bankura).

While some form of sexual division of labour is prevalent in all rural societies, familial responsibility among poorer households rests entirely on women. The bread-winner -- home-maker division can at the most be applied to the upper strata of rural families. Among the poor, the main responsibility for keeping the family, and especially the children, alive is left to the women. She does this through her wage earning and household chores - cooking, washing, fetching water, food, fuel and fodder; rearing the children, live-stock, plants and trees which belong to the family, maintaining the house by regular plastering (with mud and cowdung), caring for the old and sick members, and a host of other jobs. Consequently, while an average less than 40% of men's earnings reach the family, 100% of women's earnings are utilised to provide nutrition, clothes, health care, and if possible, education to the children (Mencher and Sharadamoni - '83).

Apart from differences in wages, and access to learning, the other great gender differential is in work-burden. A poor rural women's average work day ranges between 14 to 18 hours, while that of men in her family ranges between 8 to 10 hours. (Jain and Chand - '81, Mukhopadhyay and Ghosh - '87, Banerjee - '87).

Rural traditions and values also restrict women's lives, behaviour and work opportunities to a far greater extent than men's. Caste rules and taboos, religious norms, and communal or class values seek to confine women to a few limited types of work, roles, and opportunities for knowledge, social relations, and personal growth. In thirty such restrictions apply to men also, but men have increasingly escaped the rigour of these restrictions by migrating into regions or areas of work where the power of these taboos are weak or non-existent. Sharma - '84, Sharma, Jetley and Banerjee - '84).

Subordination, dependence, and the endless days of toil also result in isolation, and prevents growth of solidarity or consciousness as exploited workers. Organising rural workers in general is difficult, because of the intermittent and scattered nature of the work and their general helplessness. Organising women is far more difficult because of their additional social and psychological burdens. This gives rise to the illusion of women's 'backward consciousness', which ignores the constraints on their time and their psyche. One may argue that 'Consciousness gets transformed through participation in struggles'. True, but how can women sustain a struggle for better wages or working conditions, when even the loss of a single day's work may result in the death of a child? Men may participate more easily because the women shoulder the burden of keeping the children alive. (Mazumdar and Velayudhan - '83, Lalita and Tharu - '84, Banerjee - '87).

The most powerful weapon devised by the wider society today to continue women's subordination is the undervaluation and invisibility of women's work, by 'fuzzy' definitions, or its dismissal as 'supplementary', 'non-productive' or 'dispensable'.

> "In reality there are extraordinarily few areas where women's economic contribution could be dismissed as merely supplementary, or optional, or dispensable. But this myth has been very successfully practised increasingly over the ages in protean form to keep women under subjugation politically, economically and socially." (Mitra - 79).

Nowhere is the result of this subordination, or powerlessness more evident than in the *total absence of the collective voice or interest of women in development decisions.* (CSWI- '75, DAWN - '85, C.B. Bhatt - '85, Swaminathan - '85, Acharya -'84, ILO - '85, Face to Face - CWDS - '84, Aggarwal - '83).

In India, the constitutional and legal guarantees of gender equality, and provision for compulsory representation of women in rural elective bodies (panchayats) notwithstanding, women's participation in the decision-making process has remained ineffective, inadequate or non-existent (CSWI - '75, Manikyamba - '82, '89, D'Lima - '84). India has also proved that women's powerlessness or non-representation cannot be eliminated by having one or a few women at the top. Participation, to be effective, meaningful, self-sustaining, and articulative of the women's interest has to come from the grass-roots. *Organisations of poor women, of rural women workers, are thus a vital instrument, not only for equity, but to expand the base for women's participation in development.*

The Experiment

By 1980 the need to organise rural women workers, to eliminate their economic and social vulnerability was admitted by the UN system (Copenhagen Programme of Action), the Non-aligned Movement (Baghdad - 1979), and policy makers in India (Government of India, Sixth Five Year Plan '80-'85). The question was how and by whom? The suggestion by two government committees (Planning Commission/Department of Rural Development and Ministry of Agriculture, '77-'78 and '79-'80) that the government should do it was rejected by a group of national women's organisations (AIWC 1980), who argued that it could be done only by women NGOs or by trade unions.

But the record of trade unions on the rural workers' front, or in dealing with women's issues, was not very encouraging. Evidence was surfacing that while women participated with great militancy in most workers' struggles in both urban and rural areas, they seldom received any substantial benefits, or any position in the leadership. (Sharma and Velayudhan - '82, Sen - '82, Mitra-'82, CWDS - '84, Savara - '81, Jhabwala - '81).

The other question, however, received varied responses. Some tried to use adult education and consciousness-raising as the mobilising approach. (Sava Mandir , I.I.E., Pune Ankur, Astha). Others used health-care as the entry point (Jamkhyd Women's Centre, Bombay, Stree Shakti Sangathan, Hyderabad); while quite a few used credit as the magnet (SEWA, WWF, ANNAPURNA, 'Jain-'77 & '79, Dholakia - '83, Jeffers- '81, Chen - '83, Savara and Everett - '84). Income-generation was

accepted by many as an end in itself and built this as a central feature into some government programmes (Mahila Mandals, DWCRA, CSWB). But employment-generation as a stepping stone to organisational development remained only an abstract strategy, recommended by the two planning groups mentioned earlier.

Some members of the CAWD faculty who had been involved in these planning exercises wanted to try out a practical experiment, to test whether collective employment could be used as a catalyst to inculcate a sense collective strength and solidarity similar to that already demonstrated by groups such as SEWA or the Working Women's Forum.

The self-employed Women's Association (SEWA) at Ahmedabad, the Working Women's Forum (WWF) in Madras; the Annapurna Mahila Mandal in Bombay provided a model for organisations of poor women workers who had hitherto been completely unorganised. Their members were slum women working as independent self-employed persons at various trades like selling cooked food, old garments, flowers and garlands, vegetables etc. In Indian legal parlance, these organisations could not be trade unions as there was no employer. With the exception of SEWA at Ahmedabad, others had to register as societies.

Later they started promoting small workers' co-operatives. Their members came from the urban poor, who regarded themselves as labourers. These co-operatives adopted a combined strategy of collective struggle against economic or social injustice with constructive efforts to improve the productivity and knowledge of their members to reduce their economic and social vulnerability. Institutional credit at low rates of full interest prescribed by the Government for 'priority sectors' was used by the co-operatives to rescue women from exploitation by money lenders, wholesalers and various other middle-man.

Health programmes tried to reduce the vulnerability of women brought about by repeated pregnancies, abortions and malnourishment. Literacy, adult education and child care services were also gradually introduced. (Jain - '75 and '79, Chen - '83, Jaffers - '81, Brahme, Kelkar and Mhatre - '80, Velayudhan and Kelkar - '83).

Similar approaches to the problem had already been used by many other NGOs in the past. For example, the Central Social Welfare Board's initial design of women's extension projects had included a 3 part package (craft training for economic activity, literacy and maternity and child care) developed through the medium of a village level rural women's group, the Mahila Mandal (Sharma - '88, Gopalan - '79, Buch - '79). However, none of these earlier experiments had demonstrated the dynamism, the courage or the determination to struggle in defence of poor women's rights, of the new urban model groups like SEWA or WWF. Of course, these were initially organisations of urban poor women in large metropolitan cities which explained their large membership. Members of these organisations were mainly women who were used to struggling for survival without the protection of either their family or their community.

Was it possible to transplant this urban experience to rural areas? By 1980 both SEWA and WWF had decided to enter the rural sector. They soon discovered that it was not easy to mobilise large-scale protests. Community resistance was greater in rural areas, and winning public sympathy was not as easy as in the metropolitan cities. (Velayudhan and Mazumdar - '82, Dholakia - '83). It quickly became obvious that to achieve the same ends, new methodologies were called for.

The objectives of the Bankura project and its basic model were drawn from SEWA and WWF. To begin with, neither the organisations nor the employment to be generated were to be ends in themselves. They were merely to be the means of mobilising poor rural women to participate more effectively in the wider process of socio-political development, to wrest from society the rights, the dignity and the resources to which they were entitled for their own development, through collective action to increase their voice in development decisions that affected their lives.

The revised methodology available at that stage was reflected in the research proposal submitted by CWDS to ILO: research to do a situational analysis of the potential beneficiaries, and to identify possible areas for employment generation was listed as the first step, to lead to planning the activity with the basic components of an economic activity, support services and consciousness - raising. The other step was to identify a local NGO or an educational institution or a government agency which would accept the responsibility for supervision, training and nurturing the grass-root group through the initial stages. The idea was to involve members of the local supervisory group in the planning stage, along with the potential beneficiaries to promote a sense of participation. The role chosen for ourselves was that of an advisory and observant group, participant but not directly involved in implementation.

What happened in fact was very different. Even before our site selection could take place or the research begin, the Government of West Bengal invited the Director of the Centre for Women's Development Studies and one of its founders, Prof. Asok Mitra, to attend a Reorientation Camp for Migrant Women Agricultural Labourers at Jhilimili, a village in Ranibandh Block of Bankura District, in May 1980.

Ranibandh is part of the least developed region or Bankura with a large concentration of tribal population. Originally a part of the vast area known as *Junglemahal* (forest area), it used to be inhabited mainly by Santhals, a forest dwelling tribe. During the last three centuries other people penetrated and settled increasingly. Forests disappeared even more rapidly in the twentieth century, and soil erosion was faster on the hilly slopes. Even cultivable land became increasingly less productive and droughts were frequent. Over the last few decades, thousands of men, women and children had taken to seasonal migration to the green revolution districts of Hooghly and Burdwan for employment in agriculture (Banerjee - '87). The local bureaucracy believed that such migration gave them a taste of high living in the developed regions hence its popularity among women and children.

What came out in the Camp was markedly different. To the women going on *namal* (to the lowlands) was the last resort. To quote from the most authentic report on this Camp;

> "Their main grievance was against the forest policy of the Government. For the tribal women, forests provided the basic means of livelihood. They used to collect free of cost fruits, flowers or leaves of *Mahua*. Peasal, Kendu and other trees. They used to gather leaves and brushwood and other minor forest produce without paying any charges. But during the last three decades, gradually their customary rights had been abrogated. They were harassed, prosecuted, insulted - and above all were deprived of their supplemental income from forests" (Bandyopadhyay - '80).

They were all from landless or marginal peasant households. Locally they could get casual work, in agriculture or otherwise, for a maximum of 6-8 weeks. Deforestation had left them no option to *namal*.

All economic analysts have viewed labour migration as a lubricant as well as a consequence of economic growth. Incorporating a gender dimension into it however produces very different results. For a group of labour, each trek meant two to four weeks of work. The wages were the prescribed minimum of Rs. 8/- per day, paid partly in cash and partly in food-grains, fuel, salt and oil. So the group got enough to eat during those few days. But they had either to receive an advance from the recruiting agents before departure, which was deducted from their wages, or if they went on their own, borrow from local money-lenders at 380% annual interest to meet their immediate travel costs and buy food for the non-working old and sick people left behind. The recruited labour occasionally found temporary shelters at the work place, provided by the employers. The others had to search for work - walking from one village to another, and then put up their own shelters. The pace of work was set by the regular attached labour, and any women or adolescent who fell behind would be sacked on the spot but would have to wait till the end of the season to be paid along with the rest. Infant mortality, abortions and a gradual loss of health were common. Sexual molestation by the employer or his recruiting agent was a fact of life and a price that had often had to be paid when one needed work so desperately.

There were other prices too. Alienated from their traditional habitat and local brews made of *mahua*, and with cash in hand, the men spent much of their wages on other and more harmful and costly liquors. The net savings that a woman could bring home after a trek ranged between Rs. 30 to 70, much of which generally went to repay their debts. During their absence, because the old people left behind could not take adequate care, their few livestock disappeared, or their uninhabited houses collapsed during heavy rains. So they had to borrow again to repair homes, or replace other lost goods. The surviving children, trekking with their mothers three or four times a year, could never get to school. Nor did they ever acquire the forest lore and skills which had helped their grandparents and parents to survive in earlier

days. So their stock of knowledge, skills and future options became lesser than that of earlier generations. The disorganisation of their lives had also precipitated the destruction of other social norms. Eviction and desertion of wives and children by husbands had become widespread, wife-beating had increased and women could not get justice from the traditional caste/tribal councils. In any case, the councils had lost their influence over the younger men.

The women had only four demands - (a) restoration of their right of access to forest produce; (b) employment in their own area; (c) land and homesteads in their own right; and (d) protective measures for maternity and childcare as provided to factory workers.

The West Bengal Government decided to act. A joint decision of the Department of Land Revenue and Forests restored women's rights of free access to the forests for collection of minor forest produce and directed local authorities to employ only local labour in all types of work generated by the government. The district administration was instructed to allocate homestead land to women found to be homeless, and to identify possible ways of generating new employment for women within the region in order to reduce their dependence on seasonal migration. Panchayat (local representative councils) members were asked to land their support to assist women's groups to obtain local employment.

All these decisions emanated from West Bengal's Minister for Land Reform, Benoy Krishna Choudhury and his chief officer, the Land Reforms Commissioner, Dr. Bandyopadhyay, - both of whom had attended the Camp. The Minister, however, decided also to call in the Centre for Women's Development Studies to play two specific roles.

> "I will see that government supports all possible follow-up action. But the bureaucracy lacks imagination. You do your research right here, and tell us what can be done. These women are ready to organise, (they had said so during the camp) but they will need help. They have trained themselves to live with despair from childhood. They will need time to convince themselves that change is possible. You have to be with them through that time, to provide that hope, strength and belief in collective action."

The second role came out of his own philosophy, which he explained to us at a later date.

> "Money can only be a catalyst, not an agent of change. Change takes place when people's acceptance of a new idea transforms it into a movement. Unless people move, no change is possible."

The role he had visualised for CWDS was that of initiating some experiments through the women's groups. He could not be sure which one would succeed, or receive public acceptance.

Although our research confirmed all that the women had reported at the Camp, action to generate employment could not wait for proper planning. The graduates of the 1980 Camp took the initiative, and formed the first organisation in February 1981, with 64 members. By October of the same year, there were 2 other organisations. By 1982 the total membership ofd the three groups exceeded 400. Except for the first group, which included the women who had discussed the need for an organisation at the Camp the previous year, the concept of an organisation was still unclear to the majority of women. They had come together in the hope of getting local employment for themselves. The Jhilimili women, in fact, took the decision within the first month of the organisations's existence that they would no longer go on seasonal migration, so they turned away the recruiting agents who came with offers of advance payment.

Work had to be found immediately, and with the help of State officials and the Chairman of the Local Panchayat Samiti (the block level council), three different types of activities were initiated. Women from the Jhilimili group received an agency from the local Forest Cooperative (Large Sized Multipurpose Co-operative Societies or LAMPS) and *sal* seeds. This generated employment for over 200 women for 3 months. The organisation at Chendapathar started producing *sal* leaf plates and cups with the help of small machines. The third group at Bhurkura received as a gift from the local peasants seven acres of wasteland which they decided to convert into a plantation of *Asan* and *Arjun* trees on which *Tassar* worms could be reared once the trees had matured.

The agency from the LAMPS for collection of minor forest produce had been practically forced by the District Administration, and could not be renewed later because of resistance by the LAMPS management. The women welcomed the plate-making machines, but marketing of these products posed serious difficulties. The local market was still not ready for them. A market was developed in Calcutta, but very soon the women's organisations had to face competition from Calcutta based private manufacturers who could use power, pay exploitative wages and offer the product at lower prices. The enthusiasm and mobilisation that these two activities had generated, expanded the membership of both the Jhilimili and the Chendapathar organisations enormously, only to face problems of sustaining employment.

In contrast, the plantation at Bhurkura offered assured employment to a small group of women and provided an extra-ordinary demonstration effect. Between 1981-1988, 250 acres of wasteland was gifted to 12 women's organisations drawn from 3 villages in 3 blocks of Bankura district and one block from the neighbouring district of Purulia. Of this, 150 acres were planted by 1987. The other 100 acres will be planted before the monsoon in 1988. In 1987, 10 women's organisations generated about 36,000 person-days of direct employment mainly though these plantations. Such

activities included land preparation, nursery raising, planting and rearing of the trees, including watering through dry seasons, and in silkworm rearing in the older plantations. The care taken by the women in the rearing of the plants ensured a survival rate of 98% in contrast to 50% in plantations developed by the Forest or the Sericulture Departments. It also reduced the maturing period of the plants to two years though the expert had predicted three years as a minimum. Because of their high quality, the *tassar* cocoons produced by the three women's organisations on plantations begun between 1981 and 1985 have been bought by the Department of Sericulture for use as "seeds" elsewhere. The next stage will be the setting up by the Bhurkura organisation of a reeling centre in 1988 which may also undertake processing of all cocoons produced by the sister organisations.

Since 1983, the organisations have also adopted livestock rearing (goats, poultry, ducks and pigs) as ancillary activities, and trained several members to produce rope from a locally grown grass *babui* with the help of a machine developed by the Khadi and Village Industires.

Commission (KVIC). The grass is available locally, and making this rope by hand was a traditional activity of poor women undertaken during the non-agricultural seasons. A local market exists, but handmade rope cannot ensure more than a quarter day's wage for a full day's work. The machine makes this a paying proposition, but delays in delivering the machine by the KVIC has prevented expansion of this activity. In the meantime, a local market for the *sal* leaf plates and cups has gradually developed, mainly through the women's efforts, and two organisations are able to provide some employment through this activity.

Since 1986, the older organisations have initiated an informal system of interest-free credit to members to undertake various types of rice processing or trading activities which help to sustain them through periods when no direct employment is available. The loans are small (Rs. 200) and as the women repay in instalments, the organisations re-invest that amount in loans to other members.

Another activity initiated since 1986 is of storing a very popular forest produce, *Mahua* (used by tribal and other peasant groups as food and for brewing a traditional liquor). The organisations buy from members who collect these berries from the forest at the prevalent market rate, and sell it to them in the off seasons at lower than the market rate. The organisation takes a small margin to pay for its storage costs while the members gain by not having to pay the high market prices in the off seasons.

Since the first objective of the organisations is to provide employment to their members, the limitation of not having adequate direct employment for everyone through the entire year is resolved by a system of rotation. Most of the organisations have developed a rota system for employment in plantations or machines to ensure that all members get some days of work and no one from the group monopolises all the employment.

The membership of the 12 organisations, and the number of villages from which they are drawn vary. The first 3 organisations formed in 1981 are all multi-village groups. Their membership has expanded from 400 in 1981 to 950 in 1988. Most of the later organisations, formed since 1985, are single village groups, formed around a plot of wasteland gifted to them by local households. Membership of these groups is necessarily much smaller and ranges between 30-75. But the demonstration effect being produced by the success of the plantations indicates that these organisations may both expand their acreage as well as membership in the coming years.

Literacy classes, adult education and childcare services have been initiated to some extent. Most of the leaders have now become literate and are able to operate their own bank accounts and record their activities. Two of the leaders from the oldest organisation at Jhilimili have served for a full term of 5 years (1983-88) as members of their local Panchayat where they have emerged as genuine representatives of the poor women's problems and interests.

On their demand and in collaboration with the district administration, a workshop was organised in December 1985 for women members of other Panchayats in Ranibandh block and functionaries of the Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) (which was introduced in this block from 1983). The objective of the workshop was to help the participants to perceive their roles in their respective capacities (Panchayat members, ICDS functionaries and leaders of women's organisations), to articulate the problems that women face and provide them with necessary information. This helped them to realise their responsibilities, the resources available under various programmes and to develop greater sensitivity on women's issues. To quote from the report of this workshop - "it will not be too much to expect that the introvert members of the Panchayats will, with one or two more exposures, be able to assume their responsibilities with more courage and confidence". The workshop recommended repetition of such training, involving government officials and male leaders of Panchayats along with women to extend the sensitisation process (CWDS - '86).

Since 1986, this kind of a model was attempted at two workshops sponsored by the Government of India. The first was directed at government officials at different levels involved in rural development, especially the anti-poverty programmes including the special programme for the development of women and children; leaders of the Panchayati Raj institutions at the village, block and the district levels; bank officers (whose cooperation is essential for the successful implementation of the anti-poverty programmes); and some faculty members of State Training Institutes in rural development. The second was aimed at forest officers from the three contiguous States of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and selected leaders of Panchayat Samitis from Bankura.

In both the workshops, the leaders of the women's organisations functioned basically as trainers. Discussion was participatory but the issues were posed by the women. Apart from setting a new model and a strategy for the much needed sensitisation of decision-makers in women's issues, these workshops achieved

several concrete results. Various problems in implementation were identified and solutions worked out jointly by the leaders of Panchayats, bankers, administrators and the women. The workshops also helped to demonstrate that conscious and organised women have a different vision of development, especially in their choice of priorities, and in regard to ecological and environmental issues (CWDS - '87, '88).

During 1984 and 1985, leaders of the three original organisations were trained in certain difficult aspects of management of their organisations, and enterprises and their relationships with the Government, Panchayat institutions and CWDS. The training was designed to equip the organisations with skills to take over the functions still being performed by CWDS. The training was organised by the participatory method, by defining the problems experienced by the three organisations, and discussing each in turn. The conceptual focus in four successive workshops shifted - from the purpose, role and operative procedures of the organisations, and ownership of the enterprises and assets to the need for efficiency in management to generate a surplus so that the enterprises could become eventually self-sustaining. The final workshop came back to the issue of accountability of the workers, the supervisors and the managers, i.e. the leaders of the group, to the general body of members.

The theme paper at the ILO Workshop on Organisations and Participation of Rural Women in Development (Madurai, India November '85) had raised two basic questions -

(a) how are the tensions between the efficiency of production/profit maximisation and group production/group funding/solidarity creation etc. Resolved in a concrete situation?;

(b) is it possible to maintain group cohesion and solidarity if economic activities undertaken by the group are perceived to be uneconomical? - (Jahan - '85).

The Bankura experience is summed up by our management consultant, who conducted the training workshops: -

> "The tensions between the short-term and the long term objectives could be resolved if the animators accept that such a situation can happen much earlier than the state is set for such tensions, plan for it through conscious and appropriate inputs of knowledge to the rural women's groups and make them aware of the multiple roles they play in their own organisations; those of the owner, the manager and the worker."

It is also possible to maintain group cohesion and solidarity even if current activities undertaken by the group are perceived to be uneconomical. This is provided that a

third condition (over and above early realisation and planning for conflicts) in the form of organisations being formed around certain tangible assets is fulfilled by changing the orientation from employment) through proper utilisation of assets owned by the rural women's organisations collectively. By this means it is easier to handle conflicts of efficiency vs income, accountability vs solidarity, as well as handle failures more rationally. (Dasgupta - '85).

Since these training workshop, the women have emerged as a spearhead team of trainers, who can inspire and explain to new women's groups the purpose of forming an organisation, the problems and methods of holding an organisation together, of resolving tensions and conflicts, and of efficiency in management.

Coming together in repeated workshops and camps bred a sense of solidarity, the need for sharing responsibilities and for pooling certain common activities for better management. Above all, they realised and accepted that they must prepare for the eventual withdrawal of the Centre for Women's Development Studies from the scene. To this and, the four organisations jointly formed the Nari Bikash Sangha (Union for Women's Development), an open body which does not stand over them but provides a framework for joint action in 1986. Eight new organisations formed since 1987 have now joined the NBS, thus extending its membership beyond the Ranibandh Block to two other blocks of the Bankura district, and one block in the neighbouring district of Purulia.

The Nari Bikash Sangha initiates joint training activities, common marketing and the revolving credit system. Recently it has joined hands with the Ranibandh Panchayat Samiti to initiate an experiment in multi-purpose childcare centres in five villages, building on the foundation created by the Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS). Training, supervision and initial support for the childcare/child development/child education workers (who will be drawn from the members of the women's groups) will be the responsibility of Nari Bikash Sangha. The Panchayat samiti will mobilise support from the village community and the government to provide housing and food to the children and extend legitimacy and authority to the experiment as a community venture, recognising the primary role of the women's groups as partners and initiators of this experiment. A similar venture is also planned for adult education centres to be run by NBS in different villages for its member societies with the backing of the Panchayats and the government.

Appendices at the end of this paper present some idea of the growth and dimensions of this project since 1981, and the emerging process of a tripartite partnership - between the organisations of women workers, the locally elected Panchayat institutions and the Government - at the state and national levels. The role of the ILO, and its collaborator, the Centre for Women's Development Studies has been essentially that of catalysts.

III

The Outcome

The story of the Bankura women provides several lessons and raises many issues. First, it has demonstrated the validity of the strategy that employment generation can be a tremendous mobiliser of poor rural women. While all of them do need education, health and childcare services, an organisation which cannot meet their greatest need employment, can have only limited impact. The twin objectives - of employment generation and organisation building for collective empowerment, however, need to be constantly reiterated. They also raise many issues, some of which contain germs of possible conflicts and contradictions.

The experiments in employment generation throw up many lessons. Selecting activities for which the basic raw materials are available locally was a sound idea. But why did it work so well with wasteland plantation and fail with the collection and trading in minor forest produce? The answer may lie in the response of locally established power structures and their perception of the role of the women's organisations.

Large-Sized Multi-Purpose Co-operative Societies (LAMPS) were established by the West Bengal Government to rescue local workers from exploitation by private traders. But it was a structure imposed from above, not a development from below. Being organised as Co-operatives under bureaucratic control meant complicated procedures which were beyond the understanding of the illiterate or semi-illiterate workers. So, in spite of the provision for universal membership of persons belonging to the scheduled castes or tribes, membership and management remained confined to the elite groups of these communities. In 1981, they had virtually no woman as a member. By 1988, only 4% of the members were women.

The partnership between LAMPS and the fledgeling women's group at Jhilimili was forced by the district administration, which also informed the women of the actual price for *Kendu* leaves and *Sal* seeds that had been guaranteed by the State Government. The LAMPS management thus saw the women's group as a threat to their power, and refused to renew the partnership. Attempts were also made to break the growing solidarity of the women's groups, and to prevent their affiliation to the Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation.

The gifts of wasteland have come from poorer peasant households, whose women were being forced into seasonal migration. The men were not in a position to develop the lands, and viewed the gift to the women's groups as a stop that might benefit the entire family and the village. The legal implications of the land now being collectively owned by the organisation were perhaps not clear to them.

Secondly, wasteland development offered the possibility of expansion of the productive base of the area, and of reducing the problems of increasing aridity and declining productivity of land in general, without cutting into the already scarce employment opportunities in the region.

The third reason may sound controversial but there is a lesson here that is important for all who believe in collective action for change by exploited groups. All the lands gifted to the women's groups have come from tribal households. Would others have been equally ready to gift? Within the organisations also, the tribal women found it more natural land easy to place their faith in collective action, to share the limited employment, and extending help to sister groups. We have been *forced to conclude that the concept of a collectivity, to which one has obligations, is stronger among tribal than Hindu communities.*

But the inevitable question arises; why did the men not from their own groups not undertake similar projects? They could also have tried for similar support from the Government. We asked this question of several men (after the plantations came up). The answers were invariably the same. "The women thought it, and we were told that you (CWDS) will extend your help only to women's groups. Besides we (men) have too many conflicts among ourselves. Working together is difficult."

The perception of the women's effort by the local community, including the power structures, has also changed over the years. The women's leadership increased knowledge and confidence, and the "spread" effect of the benefits are receiving same appreciation, especially from younger people. Some Panchayat leaders are now prepared to view them as providing a grassroot infrastructure for better organisation and *supervision* of basic social services, in which the Panchayats' performance has been relatively poor (Sen - '88). The groups' assistance is being sought to identify more women beneficiaries of IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme) and DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) to meet the targets set by the National Government.

The Women's negative reaction to planting of *Eucalyptus* is also making an impact. At the Workshop on Women, Social Forestry and Wasteland Development, the Panchayat Samiti Chairman gave an assurance that they will reduce the planting of *Eucalyptus*.

The *sal* plate-making and rope-making activities, and the machines for making them have given the women's groups a lot of status. Interestingly enough, the competition they have faced is in the urban centres. Neither LAMPS nor the Panchayats have tried to instal these machines in Ranibandh block, though the situation may change now that a local market is developing.

Should one then conclude that the relative success of wasteland development is a continuation of rural society's perception of the sexual division of labour? But a similar division that existed in silkworm rearing ended after the discussion with the CWDS team.

In the sexual division of labour (unless it results in restrictions, disparity in wages and exploitation) necessarily a negative force in women's empowerment? From where do women get their different perceptions on particular development issues, like forests and trees, soil, water and other natural resources? The Bankura project

taught us that peasant women have a clearly distinct approach to plant life and the life-giving, life-sustaining role of trees and forest that is markedly different from the men in their own communities and of many forest officers. In the workshop on Women, Social Forestry and Wasteland Development, when forest officers were trying to extol the virtues of *Eucalyptus,* telling the women, that planting *Eucalyptus* will enable them to earn a handsome amount after a few years, one of the women retorted:

> "You think of trees as dead wood, which will bring in money when it is cut. We do not think of trees that way. Trees give us life - fruits for our children, leaves for our cattle, twigs for our kitchen, shade for all from the sun and the rain. Trees are like our limbs. Each time one is cut, our chances of survival is reduced. Yes, we have also cut trees for contractors when there was no other way we could feed our children, but it was like murdering a child .... we have watched our men cutting trees but we were too powerless to stop them."

Swaminathan argues that the 'agricultural revolution' will remain incomplete unless the knowledge and understanding of agricultural problems acquired by peasant women over generations is brought within the range of research and development in agriculture.

> "The greatest challenge before Research and Development institutions lies in motivating scientists and technologists to undertake the process of 'listening and learning' through collaboration with poor (rural) women while developing their research priorities and strategies. This will call for a learning revolution." (Swaminathan - '85).

A major lesson that we learnt through the Bankura experience was to depend on the women's existing skills and knowledge. They did not always pay attention to the 'training' by forest or sericulture experts. For example, they did not use the quantity of chemical fertilisers recommended by the experts. Instead they prepared organic manure from the shrubbery they had cleared from the land. They did not permit us to make the irrigation arrangements that we had included in the project proposal.

> "We have watered the trees through the first year. Then they got the rains. Why do you need to spend money on irrigation now? Who waters trees in the forest? Let us use that money to expand the plantation."

The women had planted grass between the rows of trees to use as fodder. The sericulture experts observed that this would weaken the trees. Another set of experts came three years later and said intercropping was essential to enrich the degraded soil.

Since their greatest skills are in the primary sector, activities connected with that sector made the process of confidence building easier. At the same time mastering new technology (like the plate machines) gave them a tremendous sense of excitement and achievement. After a certain stage, the demands for new knowledge of all kinds - from treatment of livestock to laws, to ideas about the bigger world outside their experience - became insatiable, making us wonder who propagated the myth about poor rural women's lack of motivation for education.

Such realisations made us question the role of animators and of consciousness-raising which have received such emphasis in strategies for participatory development, especially for organising women. We found the peasant women fully conscious of the reasons for their poverty and their subordination. What they were ignorant of are their new rights - as human beings, as workers, and as citizens, their rights and responsibilities to participate in all decisions within the family, the community, and the state, to influence the process of change and claim a share of state assistance for themselves. As they received such information, the impact on their minds was much greater than we had anticipated.

Yet the same women take years to get out of old patterns of thought of the sense of dependence in relation to employment. "You, or the Sarkar (Government) will *give* us work". Because they had been assetless, wage labour all their lives, their psychology was one of dependence. Changing this to the psychology of initiative/choice takes time and is painful. Success in this depends on the clarity of purpose and skills with which the mobilisers approach their task.

Analysing our own role becomes increasingly crucial. It was easier to start with the negatives. Unlike many other NGOs engaged in income generation for the poor, we did not *own* the enterprise, or its assets - they belonged to the organisations of workers. Yet we were designing and mobilising resources for projects, supervising, managing, keeping accounts, initiating all activities for some years. Because we had been made responsible by the ILO and the Government, too many of the women looked on us as the *giver* of employment. How could we reconcile this with our objective of empowering the women?
A workshop with our middle class, educated people engaged in participatory development with poor women brought a number of case studies of experiences. Out management consultant listened to the presentations by people who had been in this field for much longer than us, and prepared a rough model. Applying this to the Bankura project over the next two years, he made certain objections while training the women. A picture of the various stages emerged - of a process, of the changing states of mind and relationships. This is reproduced below in the following chart.

Stage	Subjective of Beneficiary	Expectation from NGO	Role of NGO
Coming	Looking for a patron whom they can trust	To aid the beneficiary in voicing its frustrations and giving legitimacy to the frustrations whenever possible .	Catalytic supportive animators
Forming a nuclous	Drawing strength and knowledge from *patron*	To teach the beneficiary the advantages of collective action, formalisation, documentation	Teacher Leader, Facilitator
Beginning of Activity	Expecting a viable means of income to be provided	To arrange activity, funds and provide continuity	Manager, Facilitator
Consolidation	Protecting and increasing income	Locating resources, ensuring continuity	Manager, Planner
Self-reliance	Gaining knowledge of skills, local self-governance	To provide skills administrative training	Partner, Trainer, Facilitator
Transfer of power	Gaining short and long term control over their own affairs	To provide training guidance and confidence for running the affairs of the enterprise	Trainer Mentor Animator
Sovereignty	Growth and extending benefits to greater number of people	To be available for consultation whenever it is necessary	Consultative conscience keeping animator

Note: Reproduced from Abhijit Dasgupta, Participatory Management by Rural Women's Organisations; Paper presented at Workshop on Organisation and Participation of Rural Women in Development - organised by ILO, Madurai, November 1985.

The model charts a path, but the issues that emerge in the last two stages of transition are highly complex. The first problem is that it calls for a highly conscious and analytical skill among the animators which is not easy to find. A human reaction to the women's situation growing into an involvement, attachment, admiration and commitment to their empowerment is perhaps easier. But a combination of such a personality with the highly analytical skill required by the model is for more difficult.

The second problem comes out of the social environment. Social hierarchy and patriarchy (or the social system that upholds the subordination of women through institutions, norms, values and beliefs are deeply interlinked, and thrive on each other's entrenched strength. As some women begin to emerge as leaders and managers of enterprises, attempts to co-opt them into the social hierarchy are inevitable. How are the women going to resist induction into the elite, with the consequent possibility of strengthening patriarchal values? This had happened to many leaders of workers", organisations and women activists before.

Theoretically, at least, the solution lies in projecting the *collective nature of the participation* of the exploited people, instead of emphasising or dwelling on individual participation. It is far more difficult for individuals to resist these subtle pressures and attractions. For an individual women it is even more difficult because the attractions, the appeals and pressures are likely to be supported by those whom she loves most - her own family.

The greatest lesson of the Bankura project is in the capacity of collective participation to transform or transcend women's narrow identities. The best description of this process comes from one of the women:

> "We were like frogs in a dark well. No one had thought of extending our minds. Our idea of *we* meant the family, or at the most, the village, or the caste in the village. When we became members of a multivillage, multicaste organisation, *we* suddenly expanded. Now it has become so much bigger - *we* are part of a network of organisations. This, plus the knowledge that we have equal rights, has been like a short of vitamin in our lives. We are stronger, and more determined today than ever before."

Taboos on inter-communal social relations, eating together, marriage choices, speaking in public, accepting leadership of a person considered to be lower in social status - seem to break down more easily when the women act together. They achieve this through various methods of persuasion. There are occasional confrontations and conflicts, but there is a grounds well of change.

This leads to the basic question: how does one ensure that this collective voice of women will be heard in the decision-making process in rural development? Employing women as agricultural or forest officers, extension workers or planners at

the top is the popular strategy but do such women have either the knowledge or the perspective of the peasant women that we are talking about? The CWDS is a social science research institute which uses research and communication as tools for action. The Bankura project has helped us to experience the 'learning revolution' advocated by Swaminathan. *We have learnt as much if not more from the women than we have been able to teach them.* It has also encouraged some of us to create opportunities for other educational institutions to experience this exciting process of learning from below. (UNESCO - 82, DU - '85, Government of India - '86).

Lastly, what are the policy impacts of the Bankura Project? Indian laws provide for compulsory participation of one or two women in the rural representative bodies like Panchayats, but all investigations indicate the indifference to and lack of awareness of these bodies of the issue of changing women's conditions and eliminating their subordination and powerlessness (CSWI - 1975, D'Lima - '83 & '84, CWDS - '85). The Committee on the Status of Women had recommended establishing separate Women's Panchayats with statutory powers and functions ensuring that the women representatives on the general Panchayats would be office bearers of the women's Panchayats. The Government has yet to take a decision on this recommendation.

However, the lessons from Bankura and few other rural action projects which concentrated on mobilising peasant women have been noted with great interest by some concerned people in the government. The approach paper to the Seventh Five Year Plan in its section on Rural Development emphasised the *need for organising poor rural women in socio-economic activities with the dual objective of giving them social strength and economic viability.* The Department of Rural Development in 1987 recommended to the Government of India the adoption of this collective model for *all* women assisted under the anti-poverty programmes instead of confining the model only to selected districts where the programme for the Development of Women and Children (DWCRA) was in operation. The Department of Women and Child Development introduced a new programme in Seventh Plan entitles Support to Training and on rural sectors like agriculture, forestry, sericulture, animal husbandry, dairy, village industries etc. The key elements of this programme are organisations of their rights and responsibilities. The Ministry of Labour also initiated a programme to strengthen organisations of producers, provision of support services and raising awareness of their rural women workers. All these programmes drew on the lessons of Bankura. The Ministry of Labour has, in fact provided substantial support for one of the major plantations taken up by one of the new organisations formed in Bankura in 1985.

The State Government, too drew its lessons. In 1983 when an ILO Mission visited the Bankura Project, it had a discussion with the State Minister for Land Reforms, Mr. Benoy Krishna Choudhury. In his opinion, the experiment of using wasteland as a basic asset to organise assetless women through employment generation had definitely received acceptance from the local community:

> "I have been involved with peasants all my life, I have never known them willingly parting with their lands. The fact that the women's groups are receiving wasteland as voluntary gifts from the men in the success of this project. But we must extend the model to a wider area so that it becomes a movement."

It was after this discussion that the women's cell of the Rural Employment Policies Branch, ILO, planned a new programme of wasteland development through rural women's organisations. In 1987, the programme was initiated in India. In the State of West Bengal, CWDS was made responsible for implementing it. The impact can already be seen in the rapid increase in the number of such organisations plantation, and acreage.

Since the majority of members in these organisations come from the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes, the Department of Scheduled Caste and Tribal Welfare of the State Government in 1986 introduced a new programme for assistance to grassroot women's groups from these communities to improve their economic situation.

During the Workshop on Women, Social Forestry and Wasteland Development, Bankura, in August 1987, three Chairman of the block-level Panchayat Samities made the following explicit recommendations which are now under the consideration of the government:

(a) inclusion of representatives of grassroot women's organisations in the Standing committees on Land Reforms and Forestry Reform which have been constituted at the block level within the State, *to represent the women's interest:*

(b) earmarking a share of funds in the budget line of all forestry programmes for the exclusive use by such women's groups.

Another outcome of this Workshop is the decision of the State Government to create a cell on women within the Forest Department and to request the assistance of CWDS and the Bankura women's groups in helping to develop a work plan for the cell, and project proposals involving women's groups in the districts of Purulia, Bankura and Medinipur.

The Draft Nations perspective Plan for Women (1988 to 2000 AD) also recommends the need to mobilise women in organised groups to articulate their demands as the first step to expand women's political participation. It also recommends reservation of 30% of seats in all Panchayati Raj bodies at the levels of the village, block and the district, for women.

Looking at the outcome of this project, we find clear indications of a growing awareness on the part of some sections within the Government and the leaders of local representative bodies that organised groups of women workers can represent a force in development. Firstly, they make it much easier for government agencies to

reach basic social services (child care, health care and family planning, education, literacy, legal awareness etc.) to the groups which have hitherto remained most difficult to reach. In special issues like those dealing with problems of ecological degradation, environmental pollution and checking local corruption) women can be powerful allies. Their readiness to undertake supervisory responsibilities of development programme to which they attach priority makes accountability to the beneficiary groups, and planning from below, feasible propositions.

Women workers' organisations, when empowered, are opposed have an opposition to cooption and hierarchy, two features that threaten women's participation in all workers organisations. Women and women's organisations should thus be viewed as allies, not threats. But they need to develop a distinct identify, in order to articulate gender-specific issues and interests, this will eventually affect, not merely patriarchy, but the very goals and processes of development itself.

APPENDIX - I

Employment Generation Through Organisation (1981 to 1988: A Profile)

A.	**Spread of the Project**	**Ending 1981**	**Mid 1988**
	1. Geographical	One Block in one district	Four Blocks in two districts
	2. No. Of Organisations	3	12
	3. No. Of Villages	12	35
	4. Membership	400	1500
	5. Outreach from CWDS field Office	20 kms.	70 kms.
B.	**Assets Owned Collectively by the Women's Organisations**		
1.	**Plantations of Tasar Silk Host Plants**		
	(a) No.	1	21
	(b) Acreage	7	250
	(c) Host Plants (number)	8000	6,50,000
2.	Office huts & Worksheds	1	8
3.	Salplate Machines	1	18
4.	Babui Rope Machines	-	8
5.	Generators	-	2
6.	Sprayer Machines	-	4
C.	**Social and Economic Activities**		
1.	Number & Description	3	12
		(i) Tasar Plantation	(i) Tasar Plantation
		(ii) Salplate making	(ii) Salplate making
		(iii) Forest Produce Trading	(iii) Trade in Forest Produce (mahua)

(iv) Babui rope-making
(v) Livestock rearing - e.g. Goat, Pig, Duck Poultry.
(vi) Vegetable Cultivation
(vii) Food Processing through small credit.
(viii) Training in Salplate making and cocoon rearing.
(ix) Adult Education
(x) Small Savings
(xi) Child Care
(xii) Social Counselling

D. Consolidation, Management and Mobilisation

1981 - 3 organisations in search of employment generating activities only.

1982 - A joint camp of the three organisations.

1985 - One more organisation came into existence.

1986 - Establishment of Nari Bikash Sangha (Women's Development Association) as the apex body of the four organisations.

1987 - Six more organisations formed.

1988 - Two more organisations formed. Remaining organisations affiliated to the Nari Bikash Sangha.

Other Actions (1982 to 1988)

(i) Representation in the Panchayat body (Local Self Govt.)

(ii) Series of activity specific trainings.

(iii) Series of management trainings.

(iv) Acting as trainers for member-organisations, Government functionaries and other organisations.

(v) Representation on the National Commission on Self-employed Women, preparation of a report on the conditions of poor working women of the region, and holding a camp for the members of the above Commission in co-operation with the Govt. Of West Bengal.

(vi) Mobilisation of women in other villages of the region to form rural women's grassroot organisation and acquire community owned wasted land for Tasar Plantation activity.

(vii) Establishment of linkages with existing Govt. Programmes for poor women in other villages.

(viii) Camps, workshops, meetings.

(ix) Affiliation of two organisations to West Bengal Tribal Development Co-operative Corporations Ltd., and thereby becoming the only women's organisations as member of the WBTDCC Ltd.

(x) Bank accounts operated by 5 organisations.

(xi) Demonstration of keen interest in the election process of own organisation, Panchayat and State.

(xii) Demonstration of intense desire to maintain separate identity of rural women's organisations and to thwart any attempt of co-option by political parties or other workers' organisations affiliated to such political parties.

(xiii) Survey of impact of the organisations on members relating to seasonal migration, infant mortality and children's education.

(xiv) Participation in Social Forestry programme of the Forest Department.

(xv) Membership in local LAMPS.

(xvi) Preparation of bench mark data for each member of the 12 organisations.

E. Employment Generation

18,000 (all inclusive) by 1981 and
36,000 (only direct employment) by 1987 and

F. Resource Mobilisation (Over the years)

1.	Wasteland acquired by the organisations.			
	(a) Acreage	7		250
	(b) Appx. Value	Rs. 1,26,000	Rs.	45,00,000
2.	Credit received by two organisations	Nil	Rs.	52,000
3.	Grants received by or for the organisations from Panchayat Block, State, & Central Govts. and other non-ILO sources.	Rs. 1,00,000	Rs.	21,00,000
4.	Seedlings/polythene tubes, seeds etc. from the State Govt.	Rs. 2,000	Rs.	1,25,000
5.	ILO aid fund (includes support for economic, social and educational activities and technical consultancy but excludes the cost of 2 vehicles and 2 generators).	Nil	$	68,900

APPENDIX - II

Results of Survey undertaken by the Leaders of the Organisations in early 1986 to Evaluate the Impact of forming Organisation in 5 years (1981-85)

LITERACY

Name of the Organisation	Number of members	Total number of family members			Illiterate	Literate
		Total	Below 15 years	Above 15 years		
1.GMSUS, Chhenda Pathar	429	2248	817	1431	371	58
2.GMSUS,	114	612	234	378	87	27
3. GMSUS, Jhilimili,	230	1384	519	865	188	42
Total	773	4244	1570	2674	646	127

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Name of the	No. Of Children in the age-group 5-18		No. Of children of same age group reported to be currently attending school.	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. GMSUS, Chhenda Pathar	357	317	202 (57%)	118 (37%)
2. GMSUS, Bhurkura	103	103	63 (61%)	27 (26%)
3. GMSUS, Jhilimili	213	239	139 (65%)	124(52%)
Total	673	659	104 (60%)	269 (41%)

(GMSUS = **Gramin Mahila Sramik Unnayan Samities**
Rural Women Workers' Development Association)

INFANT MORTALITY

Name of the organisation	No. Of members' household surveyed	No. Of children aged 0-6 reported to the alive		No. Of Children aged 0-6 reported to have died during 1981-85.	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1. GMSUS, Chhendapathar	427	165	185	13	11
2.GMSUS, Bhurkura	108	33	42	-	3
3. GMSUS, Jhilimili	227	98	99	9	5

(GMSUS = *Gramin Mahila Sramik Unnayan Samities*
(Rural Women Workers' Development Association)

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GLOSSARY

Annapoorna: An association of Women in Bombay who make their living by providing low cost meals to industrial labour.

Arjun : *Terminalia arjuna*

Asan: *Terminalia tomentosa*

CSWB: Central Social Welfare Board

IIE: Is the Indian Institute of Education at Pune which has functioned as the Resource Centre on Adult and Non-functioned as the Resource Centre on Adult and Non-formal education for the state of Maharashtra since 1977.

Jamkhyd: Stands for Comprehensive Rural Health Care Centre at Jamkhyd, District Aurangabad, Maharashtra, Maharashtra.

Kendu: *Diospyros Melanoxylor*

LAMPS: Large-sized Multi Purpose Co-operatives Society established near forests easpecially in tribal areas by the Government on the recommendation of the BAWA Committee which examined problems of economic development of tribal groups.

Mahila Mandals: is organisations of village women promoted under the Community Development Programme by the Government since the mid fifties, DWCRA (Development of Women & Children in Rural Areas) initiated since 1983 under the anti-poverty programmes, Department of Rural Development, Government of India.

Namal: Literal meaning-lowlards in Bankura dialect, used for seasonal migration to South Bengal.

Panchayat: Elected local self government bodies at the village level. The Panchayat Samiti is the second tier at the Block level and the Zilla Parishad (third tier) at the District level. All the three together are referred to as Panchayati Raj Institutions and are statutory bodies created under Acts or State Legislatives.

Sal: *Shorea Robusta*

Seva Mandir: is an established NGO in Udaipur, Rajasthan, It has a women and development programme.

SEWA: Self Employed Women's Organisations

Tassar: A variety of silk produced from worms that grew wildly in the forest are in this region for over two thousand years.

WWF: Working Women's Forum.