

Participatory Impact Assessment



A Pilot Programme in South Asia

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Participatory Impact Assessment - A Pilot Programme in South Asia

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Preface

This report reflects the experience of four South Asian NGOs and their New Zealand partners that took part in a Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA) pilot programme during 2000/2001. The Voluntary Agencies Support Scheme (VASS) Project Selection Committee initiated the pilot programme in order to increase awareness among New Zealand NGOs and their partners of the importance of PIA.

This report draws out key issues and lessons from the pilot programme. It summarises findings from reports prepared by each of the South Asian partners on the case studies undertaken in India and Bangladesh as well as the workshops held at the beginning (in New Delhi) and end (in Auckland) of the process. The NGOs involved in the pilot programme were: Caritas Bangladesh and Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand; the Women's Development Resource Centre and Christian World Service; the Bridge Foundation and TEAR Fund New Zealand; and World Vision Banswara and World Vision New Zealand.

The PIA pilot programme was facilitated by the VASS evaluation consultants and the Society for Participatory research in Asia (PRIA). Rajesh Tandon PRIA's Director led the PIA workshops providing inspiration and guidance based on PRIA's long involvement in participatory research and development. Anju Dwivedi and Namrata Jaitli from PRIA assisted in running the workshops and facilitating the process in India and Bangladesh. An experienced development practitioner supported implementation of each of the case studies. These were: Enamul Huda (Caritas Bangladesh and Caritas New Zealand); Belinda Bennet (WDRC/CWS); M Kamal (The Bridge Foundation/TEAR Fund); and Anju Dwivedi (World Vision Banswara and World Vision New Zealand).

The VASS Project Selection Committee sincerely thanks all those who have been involved in making the PIA pilot programme so successful. In particular we thank the NGOs themselves for their willingness to participate in the programme, their enthusiasm and commitment to complete the work amidst other priorities and for sharing their experience and insights so that the wider NGO community can also benefit. Also, the pilot programme could not have been completed without the active participation of many women and men in the project communities who during this process reflected on and shared the positive and negative impact of projects on their lives. Through their participation many significant lessons have been learned by the NGOs involved, the VASS Project Selection Committee and the wider NGO community. We hope that this PIA pilot programme will strengthen the capacity of all involved to undertake more effective development work.

VASS Project Selection Committee
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Acronyms

ADP	Area Development Programme
APHD	Asian Partnership for Human Development
CIRW	Centre for Integral Rural Welfare
CWS	Christian World Service
GO	Government Organisation
IWDP	Integrated Women's Development Programme
KPA	Knowledge, Practice, Attitudes
MED	Micro-enterprise Development
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NZ	New Zealand
NZODA	New Zealand Official Development Assistance
PIA	Participatory Impact Assessment
PRIA	Society for Participatory Research in Asia
PSC	Project Selection Committee
SHG	Self-help group
STD	Sexually transmitted disease
TB	Tuberculosis
TBF	The Bridge Foundation
TEAR Fund	The Evangelical Alliance and Relief Fund
TMI	Tamil Nadu Women's Movement
VASS	Voluntary Agencies Support Scheme
VDC	Village Development Committee
WDRC	Women's Development Resource Centre

1 Introduction

During 2000 four South Asia NGOs and their New Zealand partners embarked on a one-year pilot programme to explore the theory and practice of participatory impact assessment (PIA).

The pilot was initiated and funded by the Voluntary Agency Support Scheme (VASS) of New Zealand's Official Development Assistance Programme (NZODA), which provides co-funding to NZ NGOs that are supporting programmes in developing countries that address poverty and injustice and promote sustainable development.

Four New Zealand NGOs (World Vision, Caritas, Christian World Service and Tear Fund) were interested in participating in the pilot and initiated discussions with partners in South Asia including World Vision, Area Development Programme Banswara (partner of World Vision), Women's Development Resource Centre, Madurai (partner of CWS), The Bridge Foundation, Bangalore (partner of Tear Fund) and Caritas Bangladesh (Partner of Caritas).

The most important criteria in selecting NGOs to be involved in the pilot programme was the level of interest and commitment to the process that could be demonstrated by both the New Zealand NGOs and their South Asian partners. A strong desire on the part of a partner to conduct a participatory impact assessment of some aspect of their work (rather than seeing this as an 'imposed' evaluation process) was considered critical to the success of the exercise.

The objectives of the impact assessment pilot programme were to strengthen the capacity of NZ NGOs and their partners to undertake participatory impact assessment and to demonstrate an approach that might be used by the VASS Project Selection Committee (PSC) to conduct impact assessment of VASS funded NGO work on an on-going basis.

The PIA pilot programme proved to be an exciting and stimulating process for all involved. It took a lot of time and effort and was not always straightforward but as a result of the commitment to the programme shown by the participating NGOs, many lessons were learnt. A wealth of information was generated by each of the case studies which has already influenced the projects themselves and the relationships between the NZ NGOs, their South Asian partners and the project communities. The richness of the experience cannot be fully captured in this report. However it attempts to provide a summary of the process, the key findings and the lessons learnt.

As there is not a lot of documented experience of PIA it is hoped this report will contribute to greater understanding of what it is and how it might be undertaken.

2 Why Participatory Impact Assessment

Participatory impact assessment is a different approach to conventional evaluation. This section summarises some of the theory and practice of PIA as highlighted in recent literature on the subject.

Impact assessment is about analysing and understanding change in a particular context. In relation to a development project it is about how the project affects its environment and vice versa. It addresses relationships within and between communities and with the implementing organisation in situations that are complex, constantly changing and which involve many different stakeholders and interests. As change is unpredictable and any intervention can have unexpected and unintended effects (positive or negative) impact assessment is not something that should be left until after a project is completed otherwise the potential to respond to the changing situation is lost and potentially negative impacts may be greater. Impact assessment should therefore be seen as a generic term for consideration of impacts at all stages of the project cycle including identification, design and implementation and completion.

Evaluation has evolved primarily as an accountability mechanism to demonstrate the achievement of results. It has generally been externally driven and undertaken by experts who gather and analyse information and draw conclusions. Such an approach has reinforced the power imbalance between the donor and the intended beneficiaries. It is based strongly on quantitative methods. A great deal of conventional development and evaluation has its origins in the belief that science and technology can solve all development problems. A more relativistic approach stresses flexibility, pluralism and the tension between different interests (Oakley Pratt and Clayton 1998).

Marsden and Oakley (1990) distinguish between evaluation based on the blueprint approach to development planning and a process approach. The blueprint approach specifies tangible outputs which can be measured using quantitative evaluation methods and from which judgements are made. Project interventions that place a greater emphasis on the social dimensions of development require a different evaluation approach. The process approach places greater emphasis on description, applies qualitative methodologies and is more interpretative.

Roche (1999) draws a distinction between traditional scientific methods of evaluation (eg use of statistics, surveys) which emphasise reliability and objectivity of information to gain credibility and approaches which place greater emphasis on qualitative data gathered through participatory processes (eg focus groups, interviews, ranking, comparing, mapping) where credibility comes from validating information in other ways. Both are concerned with avoiding bias.

A number of studies were undertaken during the 1990s to assess the effectiveness and impact of NGO development work (Smillie and Helmich 1993, Surr 1995, Riddell et. al. 1997; Oakley 1999). These highlight the difficulty of assessing impact when there has not been a culture of impact assessment within the NGOs nor a solid base of information

from which to draw conclusions about impacts. Few NGOs establish baseline data prior to commencement of projects, objectives are not always clear and indicators by which to monitor progress and impacts are not always identified. Beneficiary communities have rarely been involved in assessing the impacts of development initiatives.

One recent nine-country study (Roche 1999) covering NGO projects supported by Oxfam and Novib specifically sought to analyse project impacts. These case studies identified key elements of impact assessment including how impact assessment can deal with issues relating to the unequal power and participation of the various stakeholders, lessons about approaches and methods and the organisational context within which impact assessment takes place.

Some key issues highlighted in the literature on PIA are discussed briefly below.

Partnership

An increasing focus in the literature on NGOs is on the relationships between various stakeholders in development from official donors, developed country NGOs, partner country NGOs, community based organisations and community members. Much of this discussion focuses on accountability with traditional evaluation being concerned primarily with accountability upwards to the funders. Increasingly it is recognised that NGOs have multiple accountabilities; upwards to donors and downwards to the intended beneficiaries of their programmes and projects (Edwards & Hulme 1995, Tandon 1995).

In relation to impact assessment, Tandon (1990) discussed social development evaluation as having an important contribution to make to both partnership and participation. He identifies four key characteristics that could equally underpin PIA. *“It should:*

be educational - all involved should learn from participation in the impact assessment including community members, implementing agencies and donors

be developmental - impact assessment should contribute to revitalising the development initiative being studied and inspire, motivate and energise those involved

be empowering - it should be undertaken in such a way as to enhance the confidence of those involved rather than undermine them and contribute to a greater sense of purpose and commitment as well as faith in their ability to achieve results

attempt to clarify objectives and future strategies - evaluation should not be limited to an explanation of historical events but also clarify future directions, recognising the dynamic and continuous nature of development efforts.”

Participation and Power

Impact assessment needs to encompass as many stakeholders as possible. Tandon and others describe impact assessment as being a negotiation among different interests as opposed to a linear process of assessing inputs and outputs and drawing conclusions. It involves discussion and debate among different stakeholders. In this process particular

efforts need to be made to include those who are often excluded in particular women but also social groups who because of their status or other factors are marginalised in society. It is important to identify who the primary stakeholders (ie intended beneficiaries) are as opposed to other stakeholders. According to Oakley, Pratt and Clayton (1998)

“Evaluation needs to be seen as integral to the development process that helps rather than hinders community/group participation in this process and brings gender relations to the fore rather than ignore or deny their existence”. To counter the relative power of the donor or local NGO, it is important that the primary stakeholders have a high level of control over and investment in the process.

“Peoples perceptions and experiences must lie at the heart of efforts to evaluate qualitative change and project impact” (Oakley, Pratt and Clayton 1998). Analysis of NGO projects and efforts at evaluation including impact assessment highlight the reality that participation is often not as fundamental to projects as rhetoric might imply. While participation remains an ideal it is seldom as comprehensive as organisations would like. It remains one of the main challenges in development work. In part this reflects the difficulty organisations have had in applying participatory methods in project planning, monitoring and evaluation. Participation operates at different levels from informing, consulting, active involvement to different levels of taking responsibility. The aim is to develop approaches that provide the maximum amount of participation possible. Work on participatory rural appraisal (Chambers 1997) has provided a variety of approaches that can assist in participatory impact assessment.

PIA should not just be an ex-post assessment of impacts. It needs to occur during project identification, design and implementation. It then becomes integral to the project and when participation occurs through impact assessment it engages all stakeholders in a process of analysis of what is happening and what this means.

It is critical that women participate equally with men in impact assessments. In the past evaluation often done by men with men has tended to reinforce negative stereotypes and provide a false view of the reality of project interventions failing to identify differential gender impacts. This can be avoided if both women and men participate and gender issues are explicitly addressed in any impact assessments.

A Cost Effective Framework for Impact Assessment

Key concerns in developing effective impact assessment systems include the time and cost involved and the willingness of donors to develop monitoring and evaluation systems that continue long enough to get information about impacts, the relative weight given to qualitative as opposed to quantitative approaches, and the difficulty in drawing conclusions due to lack of adequate information (eg baseline data).

Efforts in the past to carry out impact assessments have been constrained by lack of consideration of potential impacts on women and men at the planning stage and failure to see impact assessment as critical at all stages of the project cycle and fully integrated into it. Monitoring of impacts needs to be participatory and gender sensitive. It should be

seen as a structured and continuous process for collecting, storing, analysing and using data and information. It may involve external inputs but should be an internal project responsibility. In order to implement effective impact assessment it is important to identify indicators with the full involvement of beneficiaries both women and men.

There is often a failure to make the collection of data relevant to those collecting it (eg staff of the implementing NGO) and other stakeholders. *“The key features of a qualitative system are that its updating should be built into staff and stakeholders’ daily activities, that it should be accessible and that it should not become a static exercise in information collection but rather a dynamic activity linked to project and institutional learning.”* (Oakley, Pratt and Clayton 1998)

Oakley, Pratt and Clayton (1998) also note that systems should be:

minimum but cost effective - intelligible to those involved and not onerous
designed to develop reflective and analytical capacities of those involved
able to feed in consistent, quality information for accountability and learning
emphasise decision making and analysis not collection of information and data
based on the assumption change may be unpredictable so evaluation cannot be based on predetermined expectations of likely outcomes
based on wide involvement, valuing contributions of various stakeholders and recognising gender diversity
recognise and emphasise monitoring as the most crucial aspect of PIA
acknowledge alternative sources of information and perceptions of locals not involved in the project.

The literature provides strong arguments for encouraging participatory impact assessment and identifies the benefits for donor agencies, partner organisations and communities if authentic people-centred development is to be achieved through external interventions. Based on the literature review, a framework for PIA should encompass the following:

the primary rationale is improvement in development practice aimed at greater sustainability of outcomes and benefits for intended beneficiaries
impact assessment should be seen as important at all stages of the project cycle including planning where the establishment of clear objectives and baseline data and indicators is important
impact assessment needs to be participatory and gender sensitive with the involvement of all stakeholders, particularly beneficiaries at all stages of the process
impact assessment needs to analyse and understand change in the particular context and the way in which the project affects its environment and vice versa
the inclusion of qualitative methods in impact assessment will improve understanding of impacts

impact assessment should be an integral part of project management systems for NGOs undertaking development assistance programmes

capacity building is an important component of impact assessment so that all stakeholders develop or extend their capacity to manage and monitor development initiatives on an on-going basis

incorporation of impact assessment in project management should enhance partnership.

3 The VASS PIA Pilot Programme

The South Asia VASS pilot participatory impact assessment programme was the first of a two-year programme (the second stage being undertaken in the Pacific). It aimed to build capacity among all involved in the process through developing an understanding of the philosophical and methodological approaches to impact assessment and learning lessons from undertaking a PIA. In order to enhance learning opportunities for NZ NGOs and their partners the programme was carried out in partnership with the Society for Participatory research in Asia (PRIA) an Indian organisation that has a long experience at participatory research and development.

Stages in the PIA Pilot Programme

Pilot programme design	Arising from a 1998 evaluation of the VASS, the VASS PSC contracted the VASS evaluation consultants to prepare a background paper on PIA and a design for a pilot programme (Clark & Quinn, 1999). This was approved by the PSC.
Identifying participants	The first step was identification of NZ NGOs and their partners in South Asia with a strong interest and commitment to participating in the impact assessment.
Workshop in Wellington, NZ	A two-day workshop on PIA was held in August 2000 in NZ for all interested NZ NGOs facilitated by PRIA. This was followed by a planning meeting between the four participating NZ NGOs, PRIA, the VASS consultants and PSC members. Visits were made by the PRIA Programme Coordinator and VASS consultants to the NZ NGOs involved to get a deeper understanding of their partnerships with the Indian and Bangladesh NGOs and their projects.
Identification of facilitators	Four facilitators with experience in participatory development were identified by PRIA to work with the NGO teams (both South Asian and NZ) in planning the PIA and to provide support for each of the South Asian NGOs during implementing of the PIA and analysing the results. The basic criteria for the selection of facilitators were a good understanding of participatory development, ability to communicate

with the local NGO and communities and an understanding of the local context.

Facilitator visits to South Asian NGOs	The facilitators visited the NGOs with which they were to work to confirm mutual acceptability and interest in working together, gain an understanding of the NGO, the project and the intended impact assessment and identify any issues or concerns that needed to be addressed at the Delhi workshop.
Delhi Workshop	A three-day workshop was held in Delhi in January 2001 facilitated by PRIA for the four South Asian NGOs (2-3 participants each), their NZ partners (2 participants each), the VASS Consultants (2) and South Asian facilitators (4). This workshop aimed to: • develop a common understanding of PIA - rationale, concepts, principles, methodologies, indicators • develop a framework for undertaking the PIA case study including the objectives and scope of the exercise, the data to be collected and appropriate methodologies to obtain it • plan the field planning visits with the Indian or Bangladesh NGO and their partner.
Planning the PIA with NGO staff and the community	Following the Delhi workshop each of the NZ and South Asian NGO teams and their local facilitator visited the relevant project sites for 5-9 days to plan the PIA with the NGO staff and the communities involved. This step involved building understanding of PIA with the NGO staff and the communities, further developing the objectives of the PIA, agreeing indicators and identifying appropriate participatory methods to collect and analyse data.
Implementation of the PIA	This took place over a four-month period. The South Asian NGO staff and communities were involved in data collection and analysis with support provided by the local facilitator as requested, particularly during the analysis stage. The South Asia NGO prepared a written report on their PIA.
Final Workshop	A two-day final workshop took place in New Zealand for the PIA teams at which the experience and lessons were shared. Following this a one-day seminar was held at which the participants in the South Asia pilot programme presented findings and lessons to a wider group on NZ NGOs and the four Pacific NGOs and their New Zealand partners who were commencing planning for Phase II of the PIA pilot programme.

4 Case Studies

4.1 Banswara Area Development Programme, World Vision, India

Background and Programme Objectives

World Vision's community development programmes in India are organised into a number of Area Development Programmes (ADPs). Each ADP includes a variety of sectoral activities integrated within a geographical area. In India, activities begin at the "block" level and radiate out to the district. In each ADP the community identifies needs and implements programme activities with World Vision acting as a catalyst mobilising resources and eliciting participation from key stakeholders. World Vision makes a commitment to support the ADP for 10-15 years.

The Banswara ADP was established in 1996, one of 19 in the North Zone of India. It is located in the Sajjangath block of Banswara district in the state of Rajasthan 160 kms from Udaipur. It is working among the Bhil tribal communities one of the most disadvantaged tribal groups in India and members of the Yadavs scheduled caste. The area is dry with the Bhil relying on limited rain fed agricultural activities – maize on sloping terrain and rice and some other crops on the flat areas. As it is difficult to grow sufficient food for the family and employment opportunities are limited there is seasonal migration to Gujarat where the Bhil work as unskilled day labourers.

The goal of the Banswara ADP is to improve the socio-economic condition of 3,889 household tribal families (29,058 population) through sustainable resource development and management in 30 villages of Sajjangarh Block Banswara District.

The project hopes to achieve a number of positive outcomes described by World Vision as including:

- the communities are empowered and well organised in the effective utilisation and regeneration of the resources available within and outside the communities and their capacities are enhanced to manage their own sustainable development process with facilitation from the members of the ADP team
- decreased occurrence of seasonal diseases, water borne diseases and increased preventative measures in diseases like malaria, TB, STD/AIDs, polio, etc.
- reduced drop out rate among school children especially girls and increased enrolment of all children eligible to attend formal/informal education centres
- increased level of income and saving through the formation of SHGs by developing skills of the communities especially women
- improved infrastructure and community facilities within the target area for better living conditions
- safe drinking water and water for irrigation made available to 25 target villages at a reasonable distance
- health status and productivity of livestock increased due to animal husbandry intervention
- total agricultural production increased by 20% in 25 villages

- high standard of customer relation services maintained and better understanding among community people, ADP, donors regarding child sponsorship
- reduction in disparity of time use index and gender relations in 30 villages
- women organised and aware about their rights and available opportunities.

Partnership between Banswara ADP and World Vision New Zealand

World Vision New Zealand has had a long partnership with World Vision India dating back to the 1970's. Currently World Vision New Zealand supports 7 Area Development Programmes in India.

The Banswara Watershed Management Project in India is a 3-year VASS funded project and part of the Banswara Area Development Project that was approved in June 2000. The project focuses on developing community capacity in effective utilisation and management of land and water resources in the area. For its initial year much of the planned activities related to soil conservation techniques and practices including land levelling, ponds renovation, field bunds construction and provision of training to villagers.

PIA objectives

- to assess the impact of ADP interventions towards empowerment of Bhil tribal and yadav communities to own, control and manage resources with specific focus on integrated watershed management
- to analyse gender aspects of empowerment.

Who was Involved

The primary stakeholders were seen as World Vision ADP Banswara as the project sponsoring organisation and the communities who are involved in implementing the project and benefiting from it. Secondary stakeholders were World Vision New Zealand.

Representatives of the ADP Banswara team were involved in the Delhi workshop while all staff were involved in a planning workshop in Banswara that discussed the PIA concept, identification of objectives and indicators, data collection process and methods, and planning. They also planned how to introduce the idea of PIA to the communities and visited the communities and introduced the concept of PIA through role plays and discussion. Selected staff were involved in the core teams and trained village members in data collection methods.

The two communities expressing a willingness to be involved after the ideas were explained. They provided their time, expertise and ideas and were involved in finalising the indicators, developing the questionnaire, selection of core group members, translation of the questionnaire into Vagri (the local dialect), pre-testing the questionnaire, data collection and analysis. After the data analysis was completed, the findings were reported back to the community members. Community representatives on the core

groups were primarily responsible for organising and motivating the community to take part in the PIA exercises, focus group discussions and interviews. Efforts were made by the core group members to collect information in the early morning or in the evening at the suggestion of the community as these were the most suitable times.

At all stages, the community was encouraged to provide constructive and critical feedback on different aspects of the exercise.

The Planning Process

For comparative purposes two villages were selected. These were Choti Mandli where ADP activities had been undertaken for five years and Bhuradaud where ADP activities had only been operating for two years.

The process began with training for representatives of the Banswara ADP team and their NZ partner at the Delhi workshop where the World Vision team developed its PIA proposal. This was followed by a workshop for Banswara ADP staff in which all staff were involved in discussions on the PIA and its scope. They refined the focus of PIA and revisited the objectives and indicators identified in the Delhi workshop. Planning was done on how to introduce the concept of PIA to the communities and how to encourage their participation in the PIA. This was carried out through drama and folk music.

The next step included identification of a core group in each of the villages constituting ten men and women who were able to read and write and were regular participants in the meetings. They were identified from the Village Development Committee (VDC), Mahila Mandals (Women's Groups) and Self Help Groups (SHGs). A number of the Banswara ADP team were also involved in the core groups and were selected for their skills and competence, their ability to speak the local language, their ability to carry out PRAs and their ability to relate to both men and women. Efforts were made to ensure equal representation of women and people from the different hamlets in the village in the groups.

The indicators identified by the Banswara team were discussed with the core groups who agreed with them. However the team found that it was difficult for the core group members to look at the project holistically to understand empowerment indicators. All indicators were broken down into several questions to obtain information on empowerment. A questionnaire on Knowledge, Practice and Attitudes (KPA) was designed by the team to obtain information on some technical components of the project. This was undertaken to include those groups and people whom were not members of the key groups and so that some technical aspects of the project would be addressed.

Implementation of the PIA

After the preparation of all sets of tools, the process of data collection began in the two selected villages. The core group with support from the ADP team members held discussions with various groups in both the villages to gather data on indicators. Efforts

were made by the ADP team to build the capacities of the core group on methods. The core group members in the village collected information with the KPA survey questionnaire. During field-testing it was discovered that the survey questionnaire was completed incorrectly as there was some misinterpretation about some questions. However this was rectified by further strengthening the capacities of core group members.

Information collection was compiled almost on a daily basis. After preliminary compilation the data was put together by staff and presented back to the community. The community, core group and ADP team analysed the data and clarifications were provided which were incorporated in the report. The ADP team planned to present the findings to other ADPs in India later in the year.

Some aspects of the action plan developed during the planning meeting were delayed. The main reasons for this include other institutional responsibilities and demands on key staff, the timing of the exercise was not very appropriate as March-April is marked by festivals, migration and intensive work to cope with harsh summers and the feedback mechanisms internally among staff were weak.

Participatory Tools and Methods

These included drama/role plays, mobility mapping, Venn/Chapati diagrams, seasonality and time trends, focus groups discussions, interviews and a KPA (knowledge, practice and attitude) survey. Drama/folk songs were a particularly effective way of introducing the concept of PIA to the communities and generating discussion and interest. Through this process the purpose of PIA was explained and discussed and the importance of community participation including the equal participation of women to be highlighted.



Mobility Mapping at Choti Mandli

Key Findings on Project Impacts

A small number of indicators were identified to assess the impact of the project. These included increased dignity, increased participation in management and implementation and increased self-confidence, awareness and action.

The PIA identified attitudes and practices through feedback from community members using a number of participatory tools that demonstrated how the communities' situations had changed as a result of the project. Key findings included:

- a narrowing of the social distance between Yadavs and Bhils
- participation of women in community organisations and public meetings
- access to resources, greater mobility and engagement of community members, including women with Government agencies, institutions (eg banks) and NGOs
- villagers establishing and managing their own organisations and through these, having greater involvement in project planning and implementation
- greater maintenance of the water resources built
- involvement of Village Development Committees in conflict resolution
- willingness to try things and innovations (eg irrigation, new crops).

The process also identified some unintended consequences of the project including use of hybrid seeds meant that villagers have to buy seeds each year and use more fertiliser (chemicals rather than local products), the extra cropping has increased the workload of women and easier access to water led to increased liquor production and consumption nearer the villages with negative consequences.

Lessons from the PIA Process

A number of impacts from the process itself and lessons for undertaking PIA emerged. For example the PIA highlighted the need for further planning and more time introducing PIA to the community in order to build a climate of openness, trust and reflection. Nevertheless sufficient rapport was built with the community for them to see the process as beneficial and to be willing to participate.

The PIA demonstrated different methods for working in communities. The staff realised the positive benefits of techniques such as drama/folk songs to convey messages and that they could use these techniques. One role play on the impacts of liquor consumption led to a reduction in the consumption of liquor during the Holi festival. Use of Venn diagrams helped the community visualise and understand their situation better than words. However, there was a need for training for NGO staff and community members in undertaking PIA as the methods were new to many of them.

It was important for the success of the PIA to establish a core group in the community to do the PIA planning. This involved both men and women and helped make the process relevant and appropriate. The involvement of women at this point increased their participation throughout the implementation of the PIA. Through the core group the

community could indicate when the PIA should happen so that most community members could participate.

It was necessary to use the local language at all stages of the process. This required translation of the questionnaire to enable the local people to undertake the survey themselves. Staff competence in the local language enabled their input to be more effectively communicated and their understanding of the local cultures helped them to deal sensitively with situations that arose.

The staff and community were empowered through the process and able to demonstrate their abilities and skills. Such activities had been seen as the field of experts but World Vision staff and community members realised they themselves could monitor and evaluate their programme and gained confidence in their ability to do so. The process also built the communities stake in the programme, built a sense of ownership and helped villagers see the bigger picture and purpose of different activities.

Sharing of the findings of the PIA with the community meant that information gained could contribute to future planning with the community. The PIA had created awareness of some unintended consequences and helped the staff and community consider new strategies for future interventions.

An important outcome of the PIA process was that it overcame stereotypes held by World Vision staff. For example, the staff had inhibitions about involving women as they felt that cultural barriers and the historical exclusion of women meant that they could not involve them. The participation of women in the PIA with community support helped dispel these stereotypes and fears. The community recognised the importance of increased participation of women and the women realised they could contribute in a variety of roles potentially changing the power relationships between men and women.

The amount of work that would be involved in the PIA was not appreciated at the beginning. The ADP team members were keen at the beginning but felt pressured by other work priorities later on when day-to-day priorities tended to take precedence over the PIA. The lesson from this was that it is important to build PIA into ongoing processes. Nevertheless the Banswara ADP team was excited about the initiative and keen to discuss it with the wider World Vision organisation.

A number of things affected the implementation of the PIA. Drought and shortage of food and water made it difficult for the community to participate fully as they were preoccupied with survival strategies. The timing of the PIA at a busy period for staff (and the community) in relation to project activities made it difficult for them to focus on the PIA work. With limited time it was difficult to involve the community in the articulation of indicators. As not all members of the core groups were literate the burden of the work fell on some of the group. Fewer numbers of women on the core group meant that more men implemented the KPA questionnaires and more respondents were men.

4.2 Integrated Women's Development Programme (IWDP), CARITAS Bangladesh

Caritas Bangladesh - Background and Programme Objectives

Caritas Bangladesh is a Catholic development organisation that is committed in its mission statement to “total human development by promoting human dignity and by creating an environment for development with the mobilisation of the powerless and the disadvantaged people”.

Caritas Bangladesh started its Integrated Women's Development Programme (IWDP) in 1992. The prime objective of this programme is empowerment of rural poor women and the establishment of gender equity in the society. The programme aims to support women in the programme area to find solutions to their own problems and to gain self-confidence, self-reliance and also social status. IWDP is formulated with a clear vision of positive discrimination in favour of women so that they can participate equally with men in leadership and capacity building. However men are not excluded from the process.

IWDP is being implemented in 7 Thanas (sub-districts) under 7 Caritas Regional Offices. During the first phase (1992-1995) micro/village level groups were organised. In the second phase (1995-98) more groups were formed for wider coverage and to establish semi-macro (Union and Thana) level networks known as Apex (Federation of People's Organisation) to create greater impact and solidarity. The third phase (1999-2002) was planned (1998-2001) to give emphasis to strengthening primary groups and people's organisations (Apex) to ensure sustainability. In total 2307 groups (1586 women, 721 men) with 42,223 members (29,024 women, 13,199 men) had been organised by mid 2001.

Partnership between Caritas Bangladesh and Caritas Aotearoa

Caritas Aotearoa and Caritas Bangladesh have cooperated to support community development work implemented by small local Bangladeshi (non-Caritas) NGOs and advocacy work for around 25 years through the Asia Partnership for Human Development (APHD). Since 1997 this has been complemented by bilateral support for two Caritas Bangladesh projects. These include a project aimed at empowerment of women and promoting women's leadership (IWDP) and the other providing non-formal education on land and legal issues.

Caritas Aotearoa was involved in an impact evaluation of the APHD country programme of Caritas Bangladesh in 1997. This was facilitated by a joint team from within and outside Bangladesh but relied mainly on focus group discussions rather than specific use of more analytical participatory tools.

PIA Objectives

The objectives of the PIA were:

- to develop knowledge and capacities of project staff on impact assessment of the programme
- to assess the impact of IWDP on the members (women) of the project area and lessons for further development of the programme in addressing the needs of the members/ community
- to develop practical tools for on-going participatory monitoring of the project impact.

Who was involved?

The PIA was carried out in two of the seven sub districts (thana) where the IWDP project is being implemented. Three groups in Khansama thana and two groups in Banaripara thana were the specific focus of the PIA.

Those involved in the PIA were primary group members of IWDP, Apex leaders, development allies/non-group members, Caritas Bangladesh field staff, Caritas Bangladesh directors, and Caritas partners (Caritas Aotearoa, CAFOD and Caritas Switzerland). Women constituted on average 60% of all the categories of stakeholders listed above and around 70% of the primary groups involved in the PIA.

The Planning Process

Following the Delhi workshop (attended by three Caritas Bangladesh and two Caritas Aotearoa programme staff) the first field planning and training session was held in Khansama thana.

The five days training programme began with an introduction to the process involving representatives of all key stakeholders and a discussion and validation of the overall goal of women's empowerment.

This discussion was very supportive of the programme and its goal and also produced wide-ranging discussion on aspects of the programme (eg literacy, income generation, non-formal education, action on domestic violence and early marriage) between the elites on the one hand and the group members and Apex (union) leaders on the other. The Apex leaders were very articulate and definite in their opinions,



Women in a PIA exercise

and able to defend these well. These issues provided the basis for identifying indicators for the PIA that were selected following a comprehensive process involving all stakeholders (see Section 6 for more detail on how this was done).

Implementation of the PIA

In each thana five teams of about four members each were formed to carry out the PIA exercises. Data was collected from 15 groups in Khansama and 10 groups in Banaripara. In addition central office staff carried out sessions with APEX leaders and elites/non group members. Each team prepared a report on their work.

At the central level a feedback workshop was organised to validate the collected information, share lessons and contribute to the framework and content of the final report (prepared by the Caritas central representatives). This workshop involved 65 participants including group members, APEX leaders, field staff of Khansama and Banaripara, all Women Development Officers and Field Officers of IWDP and selected Caritas regional and central Directors. At this meeting all findings in relation to each of the indicators were presented and discussed and through group work lessons from the PIA and actions to be taken were worked out.

Participatory Methods and Tools used

Staff of Caritas Bangladesh Aotearoa and the local consultant identified a number of participatory tools to assist in the collection of data in relation to each of the indicators. These are shown below.

Level	Indicators	Methods Applied
Individual	Awareness	VENN Diagram
	Savings	Preference Ranking
	Dignity of Women	VENN Diagram (before and after)
Family	Recognition of Women's Work	Situation Analysis (tasks by gender)
	Mobility	Mobility Mapping
	Decision Making in Household	Situation Analysis (before/after by gender)
Group	Unity	Focus Group Discussion
	Participation in Social Action	Identification, Voting, and Case Study
	Benefits of Loans	Mood Matrix
Apex/ Federation	Increased Leadership of Women	Situation Analysis
	Linkages/Access to NGO/ Government Services	Venn Diagram
	Capacity for Planning, Implementation and Decision making	Pie Chart

The various participatory tools used in the PIA are discussed in more detail in Section 5. Caritas Bangladesh found some of the participatory methods used to be more useful than others. Some were adapted following testing. For instance an initial intention to record

what men and women do in 24 hours was not found helpful as a means of recording how workloads had changed over the period of the project. This was therefore adapted to a “Before and After Situational Analysis” together with an analysis of the extent of participation of men and women in household work. The inclusion of a mood meter with voting on frequency of loans taken up allowed analysis of benefits of the loans as well as access to credit. The VENN (chapati) diagram was sometimes found to be a confusing tool (in relation to the relative size and placement of the chapati) for measuring and collecting information about the dignity of women and access to NGO/GO services. The participatory method of setting the indicators themselves was found to provide a useful opportunity to reflect on all stakeholders’ perceptions of the project.

Key Findings about the Programme Impact

The PIA found that there appear to have been considerable changes as a result of the IWDP. Women’s perception of their own worth, their physical and social mobility and their economic and political status (and men’s perception of these things) have changed markedly since the programme began and people at all levels of the programme were able to articulate and analyse these changes very effectively.

Khansama/Banaripara - It would appear that the programme has had a clear impact on the economic empowerment of women in both thana. At the political level, women appear to be more aware, achieving more change in their individual and family situation/status and undertaking a greater degree of social action in Khansama. This may reflect an earlier involvement of Khansama field staff and groups in a PRA study in 1997 that allowed them to refine their activities to better meet the needs of the people. Banaripara had not had this opportunity. In addition project sites in Banaripara are in more remote, riverine areas with difficult access.

Men/Women - Responses from men showed in general a marked level of agreement with those of women identifying and affirming changes in the roles and activities of women and their right to take decisions. In general men showed considerable support for the growing role of women and particularly in the decision-making area valued the greater discussion and interaction of husband and wife in household decisions with a resulting reduction in conflict.

Individual/Household Level - Empowerment at the individual level appeared to have taken place. Within the family and in society the position of women had also gained ground due to their greater economic savings and contribution to family income and changing attitudes of men and women.

Group/Village Level - The link between group unity and social action was identified by group members as very important and the group was often a key support to individual women and active in resolving family and village conflicts. Groups appear to organise their affairs democratically and have ensured that there is equitable access to credit. The groups and their leadership are active in improving the social conditions of their communities either through carrying out charitable or environmental works themselves or

lobbying for improved government services. There were also examples of group members taking action on specific issues of human and women's rights such as the action on equitable wages and marriage without dowry.

APEX Leadership Level - The findings here were less conclusive. There appears to be support for women's leadership both among the leaders themselves and among the local elites canvassed. There was recognition that skills in leadership and Apex management are improving and evidence of a growing role of the leadership in negotiating access to services for their communities. However the PIA identified a need for more training for Apex leaders who identified additional skills that they felt they needed.

Other issues - Some findings appeared to be contradictory. For example, while many groups identified that a key area for social action was opposition to the practice of giving dowry at the individual level one of the key benefits of having savings was precisely to enable families to give dowry. Despite the fact that the giving and taking of dowry is illegal it remains a widespread national problem deeply rooted in the society. Group members were aware of the issues around it and were trying to address it. There are instances of marriages taking place without dowry at the initiative of group members.

Many or all of the changes identified were seen as resulting from programme interventions. However the programme is only one element in the lives of these people. There are other factors influencing changes taking place in Bangladesh, such as the women's movement in general, access to television, the growth of NGO activity and micro-finance, the rise of literacy among young people and girls in particular. The study did not include an adequate control group either of un-organised villages or non-IWDP villages to determine fully the relative influence of the IWDP.

Lessons from the PIA Process

Caritas Bangladesh found the experience of undertaking the PIA of the IWDP a valuable and unique experience involving more in-depth study than is presently practiced in participatory evaluation. The experience has resulted in a decision to replicate the process for other Caritas projects.

Caritas Bangladesh found that the process provided an opportunity to involve all stakeholders in sharing their perceptions of the impacts of the programme. The



Elites/Non-group members showing impacts created by IWDP through Venn diagram

techniques used enabled illiterate people to assess the impact of development interventions on their lives and livelihood using a wide range of indicators that complemented existing monitoring indicators and provided greater opportunity to measure qualitative impacts of the programme.

The techniques employed in the PIA (such as drawing pictures and diagrams) were simple to use and generated lively discussion. The process was found to increase the analytical skill and creativity of both the staff and group members involved. It also created a sense of ownership that will enhance the sustainability of the programme as well as enhancing its effectiveness by making programme interventions more closely aligned to peoples' needs.

To draw valid conclusions on the impact of the programme as a whole the team felt that it would be necessary to cover at least 10% of the existing groups. In addition at least two thirds of group members should be present when the PIA process is undertaken. There was a feeling that the process seemed to centre discussion and findings on more positive rather than negative or unintended impacts. One way that was considered to avoid this was to include discussion on changes people hoped to see in the next 5-10 years. It was also felt that it would be valuable to include some control group (eg to assess the socio-economic conditions of non-group members of similar status) to more accurately assess the impacts that could be attributed to the programme.

The team involved in facilitating the PIA felt that there was a need for additional staff if PIA was to be incorporated in the organisation as a regular exercise and additional training to develop their skills in facilitation and analysis. It was difficult to collect the right information if those facilitating were not skilled in the use of the tools. The process was found to be labour-intensive and expensive and was not cost effective for regular monitoring purposes. Despite this it was found to be a very effective and beneficial exercise to undertake periodically to gauge the impact of the programme from the assessment of the people whom it is intended to assist.

The team identified one of the shortcomings of this PIA exercise as being that the group members had no direct involvement in final report writing (although representatives of the groups were involved in the final workshop to discuss and validate findings from the PIA). The Caritas central team prepared the report based on the charts/diagrams drawn by the people and information, observations and comments of the people. There was no opportunity to share the final report with the people before presentation in the final workshop in New Zealand. However the draft report was shared with the primary stakeholders of Khansama and Banaripara after the New Zealand workshop for their feedback and suggestions before finalising the report.

4.3 The Bridge Foundation Micro-enterprise Development Programme

The Bridge Foundation - Background and Programme Objectives

The Bridge Foundation's (TBF) vision is to work with the poor in their struggle to attain social justice and economic security with human dignity and self-worth.

It has been engaged in promotion of micro-enterprise development programmes to help poor families in self-employment and employment generation activities since 1984. TBF identified the existence of widespread entrepreneurial qualities, skills and motivation among a large percentage of the poor and recognised that many such poor micro-entrepreneurs particularly women had proved successful in their micro-business ventures despite many impediments. To date TBF has assisted about 39,000 families with training, capacity building and support services. This has impacted on the lives of more than 100,000 people and their communities in about 1400 villages throughout South India.

The objectives of TBF are:

- to promote, assist and help in the creation of job opportunity through self-employment for the needy, the unemployed and the poorest section of the community
- to identify and locate unemployed persons and small and needy entrepreneurs, and to provide, impart, donate, contribute or obtain technical, financial and managerial skills, support and assistance for them
- to organise, encourage, conduct and participate in research and extension services, developmental programmes and training courses, for the adaptation and dissemination of technical knowledge, experience and skills appropriate to and compatible with conditions in the country with a view to alleviate deprivation, poverty and unemployment and with a particular emphasis on better utilization of local resources.

Partnership with Tear Fund New Zealand

The relationship between TEAR Fund NZ and TBF was established in the early 1990s.

☐ TBF was visited during a VASS Institutional Review of Tear Fund NZ review in 1996. Tear Fund New Zealand supports a number of TBF projects including empowerment of rural women in Tiruvanamalai, micro-enterprise development assistance to economically poor women in Dharmapuri, and economic development and self-reliance for semi-rural families in Vellore.

PIA Objectives

The objectives for the PIA were:

- to build capacity of the primary stakeholders so that they have an understanding of the process of PIA

- to strengthen TBF capacity in the methodology of PIA so that PIA becomes integrated and mainstreamed into project management systems
- to compare the impact on the community of TBF micro-enterprise development (MED) projects managed directly by TBF and other projects that are supported in partnership with a local NGO
- to compare the difference in impact of the MED programmes on men and women.

Who was involved

The agreed scope of the PIA was to compare two different types of MED interventions - one representing the direct interventions of TBF and the second interventions through its partner, the Centre for Integral Rural Welfare (CIRW). The self-help groups included in the PIA were three managed by TBF (two in Ugganvadi and one in Vijyapura) involving 46 women and formed in late 1999/early 2000 and three managed by CIRW (a women's group in Muthsandra, a women's group in Gowrenahali and a men's group in Surakajakanaha) involving 52 women and 31 men and formed in January 2000. All projects were based in rural areas.

Primary stakeholders were seen as members of the self help groups, TBF Head Office and field staff, the Centre for Integrated Rural Welfare and Tear Fund NZ.

The Planning Process

Following the Delhi workshop, attended by two TBF and two Tear Fund staff, a three-day workshop was held in Bangalore attended by 10 TBF and CIRW field staff who were to be involved in the PIA implementation, the two Tear Fund representatives and the PIA facilitator. The objectives of the workshop were to understand the philosophy and methodology of PIA, learn PIA methods and practice using the skills, finalise the PIA Action Plan and plan the PIA implementation strategy. The workshop also designed a village level implementation workshop.

In line with the TBF mission statement research parameters were finalised at the planning workshop in the areas of social justice, equality, human development and economic security.

Project impact was to be assessed through research and analysis into four areas. The first was the development and organisational integrity of the self-help groups and comparative analysis between the two groups (those managed directly by TBF and those managed by CIRW). These included self-awareness of the value and nature of self-help groups, confidence in self-management of the self-help groups, active participation, processes of decision-making and leadership development. The second was knowledge of and empowerment to act on human rights issues including issues of Dalit oppression and women's rights. The third was gender sensitivity of group members and actions relating to this. The fourth was assessment of economic security by measuring improvement in household income.

Implementation of the PIA

The TBF team faced some difficulties due to inadequate experience in implementing the PIA plan in the first village in which they worked with a CIRW managed SHG. The PIA facilitator joined the TBF team in the second village and demonstrated use of the participatory techniques. 25 women from a CIRW managed SHG participated actively in this workshop for two days and all planned activities were completed. The TBF team then implemented the planned activities with a CIRW men's group in a third village completing most of the planned exercises. In the final two villages, activities were only partially implemented with the three TBF managed female SHGs. This was felt to be perhaps due to the fact that the groups were only about one year old and were focussed primarily on savings and loan activities so did not have the wider orientation of the CIRW managed groups. The TBF team may have faced some difficulties in adapting the plan to suit this different situation.

Participatory Methods and tools used

The methodologies and tools used to collect information included socio-drama, role-play, group discussions, interviews, analysis of self-help group documentation and records, social mapping/trend analysis, case studies on basic rights and a time matrix.

Key Findings about the Project Impact

The PIA found that both the self-help groups that were directly managed by TBF and those managed by the intermediary NGO (CIRW) were developing self-management skills, including those of group decision-making and conflict resolution. The three CIRW managed groups showed growth in membership while there was not growth in membership in the three TBF managed groups. Attendance at CIRW managed groups was also higher, although these met only monthly compared with weekly meetings of the TBF groups. In the TBF managed self-help groups, group leaders managed the voluntary group savings accounts and loans from these savings accounts. However the TBF field staff managed MED loans. CIRW self-help group leaders managed savings, loans given from these savings and the MED loans. The difference in self-management between the two categories was considered to be a result of greater inputs by CIRW in terms of training and initial support for the groups.

All groups had elected formal leadership. However the PIA showed that informal leadership was also emerging in the groups. Participatory exercises showed that in two groups leaders played an appropriate leadership role in encouraging the active participation of members. In one male group the leader while explaining the task and getting members to work on it finally took decisions without consulting other members which was contrary to the expectation that decisions would be made collectively. All groups demonstrated an understanding of the importance of the group in relation to savings, opportunity for credit and the importance of group solidarity. However the CIRW groups demonstrated a higher level of group unity and a wider and more comprehensive understanding of broader social, economic and educational issues. This

included a sense of empowerment through self-employment and reduced dependence on moneylenders. These groups demonstrated a more developed sense of self-respect and ability to solve their own problems. This included not only increased self-employment (true for all groups) but also a greater ability to request and access government facilities and of self-reliance and problem solving. A greater number of children (and in particular girl children) in these groups were going to school. The difference in the two categories may again be explained by the broader inputs provided by CIRW which extended beyond the provision of credit to encouraging greater social and economic awareness and a sense of empowerment among group members.

The extent to which there had been improvement in the society's inclusion of dalits (who made up the target communities) was considered as an indicator of lessening oppression and injustice. Access to temples, schools, community drinking water, entry into higher caste houses and mixed caste eating were considered. Access to drinking water was not a problem for the CIRW group members. While it had previously been a problem in the TBF groups this had been overcome. All groups had experienced improvements in mixed caste eating. In the CIRW groups, access to higher caste houses had been limited but was now allowed. In one TBF group there had been no access previously but there was now limited access. There was no problem with access to either schools or temples for any of the groups. However this was seen as a poorly chosen indicator as schools are government run and secular with no restriction on caste grounds and as many of the dalit community are Christian access to temples was not an issue. It is likely that as dalit access to facilities is not directly addressed by the project, progress in this area is likely to have been as much due to other influences (eg exposure to TV, radio and newspaper, government and legal support, education, and dalit access to political or powerful positions) as to project impact.

The extent to which women had been empowered as a result of the project was assessed through analysis of the extent to which women made decisions on how to spend income resulting from taking an MED loan, whether husbands assisted with housework, whether girl children were being educated and whether there was any domestic violence. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons data on all these indicators was not able to be collected from all groups. In three groups where data was collected decisions on the use of income was made by both women and their husbands. In one group women were doing both their traditional work and small businesses using MED loans, in two other groups around one-third of men were assisting with housework.

In the three groups for which data was available around three-quarters (and in one case 89%) of girl children were attending school. Wife beating was not an issue in one group but remained an issue for just under 20% in two others.

Through the use of a case study on abuse, three groups demonstrated awareness of their basic human rights and the implications of child marriage, second marriage and dowry. Awareness of how to deal with these issues was particularly developed in two female CIRW groups. The male CIRW group did not undertake the exercise and one TBF group did not understand the exercise.

In all groups those that had had loans showed improved economic security with regular savings and income.

Lessons from the PIA Process

Initial visits to the villages to explain the purpose of the PIA were important and highlighted the fact that the people wanted to be involved in assessing their own development. Group exercises assisted people to understand the concept of PIA and to participate enthusiastically. Training of TBF head office staff, field staff and CIRW staff was important to be able to carry out the PIA.

Self-help group members expressed the view that the PIA had helped them to understand that the self-help group they had formed had potential for purposes beyond their initial understanding of it being a vehicle for accessing credit only. Use of indicators such as participation, decision-making, leadership, basic rights, women's empowerment and gender equity broadened understanding of the function of self-help groups.

Some difficulties were encountered in implementing the PIA due initially to some reluctance on the part of senior TBF management, heavy rains and women's workloads. In some cases the PIA was hindered also by limited time for training of facilitators and for undertaking the exercises and difficulties faced by the facilitators in getting the group members to understand the exercises.

The PIA provided an introduction and increased awareness of participatory analytical and evaluation tools and methodologies for future field use. The PIA also created greater awareness of the need for closer partner relations for successful outcomes. The process provided an important opportunity for both partners to learn from each other and to work together cooperatively. Likewise there was an appreciation of the time and resources needed for successful participatory outcomes. Training of some staff in PIA techniques provided the opportunity for skills to be incorporated into on-going staff training and programme/project management processes.

In terms of the project the PIA allowed a greater understanding of the need for an integrated approach where MED is part of a cluster of cooperative and to a degree interdependent poverty alleviation strategies. It also highlighted the need for concise baseline data against which impact can be measured.

4.4 Women's Development Resource Centre, Madurai, India

WDRC - Background and Project Objectives

WDRC is a voluntary organisation established in 1991. It operates in Madurai and nearby districts with its specific focus being women's development and community development. From 1997 onwards WDRC has carried out its work among tribal communities (men and women) and among dalits in the Kodaikanal hill area.

WDRC emerged out of a realisation of the need to integrate a gender perspective in class and caste struggles and to organise grassroots women and empower them socially, economically, culturally and politically. WDRC has been working to enable rural women to gain control over their lives. WDRC mobilises women to fight for their basic rights, involves them in mainstream decision making processes and works to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

WDRC's main goal is the promotion of a grassroots women's movement in order to achieve women's rights and empowerment, to create a social order characterised by gender justice and to fight against social, economic, cultural and political oppression.

WDRC's objectives are to

- work towards strengthening the process of creating a grassroots women's movement through direct intervention and conscientisation of women
- promote credit and cooperative organisations for women's economic empowerment and poverty reduction through the formation of a Women Labourers' Bank
- create access for women to mainstream decision-making processes by involving them in political bodies especially in local bodies
- activate women into collective action in eliminating violence against women through the women's human rights forum of Women's Watch
- involving women in addressing gender-wise, sector-wise and specific issues of women through the women's movement and their Federations
- carrying out systematic study and research, documentation and publications
- undertaking problem-based campaigns, conferences, consultations and to participate in solidarity action with other like minded People's Movements and the Women's Movement
- accessing government social welfare programmes (eg housing, drinking water, street lighting, transport facility and security measures for destitute, widow and the aged)
- undertaking advocacy programmes and legal aid for action against atrocities and injustice.
- engaging in representation and lobbying at different levels to bring policy level changes and to bring amendments in the legal system
- facilitating the release of bonded labourers belonging to Tribal and Dalit communities and to undertake rehabilitation measures.

Partnership between WDRC and CWS

CWS has been in partnership with WDRC since 1994. Their initial support was quite small, but after the VASS Review of CWS in 1995 in which WDRC was one of the partner groups reviewed CWS negotiated a longer term funding arrangement with WDRC at an increased level. From the beginning of 1997 CWS has entered into a five year contract period with annual grants of \$35,000-\$45,000 including VASS subsidy.

WDRC has found that the periodical visits of CWS have served as a non-formal evaluation assisting programme planning and implementation. They have found that the interaction of CWS with WDRC staff has helped in capacity building and encouraged them to continue the struggle for women's empowerment.

PIA objectives

The primary objective of WDRC's involvement in the PIA was learning. They also saw this as providing an opportunity for

- reviewing and analysing WDRC interventions in its target communities
- involving the stakeholders in analysing changes and the impact and difference made in the lives of women at different levels
- integrating lessons into programmes and action
- evolving a future plan of action.

Who was Involved

WDRC decided to examine the impact on grassroots women of group organisation and leadership development by focusing on two village communities. These were Jakkampatti - a Dalit village in the plains area, Theni District and Pallangi Kombai, a tribal village in the Dindigul District in the Kodaikanal hills.

Primary Stakeholders involved included over 100 sangam members of the two village communities (men and women members in Pallangi Kombai village and women members in Jakkampatti village).

A large number of secondary stakeholders were involved including non-members of the sangam living in the same areas, members of nearby sangams, male trade union members, landowners and estate owners, youth, husbands of members and Government officials. Also involved were the staff of WDRC, the WDRC legal advisor, members of Tamil Nadu Women's Movement (TMI) and the Dalit and Tribal Women Federation, the President of the Women Labourers' Bank, the PIA facilitator, and representatives of CWS.

The Planning Process

After the Delhi workshop attended by three representatives of WDRC, the PIA facilitator and two representatives of CWS, a nine-day planning process was undertaken in the

project areas. This included visits to communities to be involved in the PIA process and various stakeholders including the Tribal and Dalit Women Federation, women and men of released bonded labourers, men and women from a forest produce collectors cooperative and collective farming cooperatives, members of the Tamil Nadu Women's Movement, the Women Labourers' Bank, the Women Development Cooperative Forum, the Women Housing Cooperative and trade unionists.

PIA planning and training meetings were held with WDRC staff and representatives of the two villages selected for PIA (Jakkampatti, Pallangi Kombai), the Tribal and Dalit Women Federation and members of TMI. The PIA facilitator conducted further staff training in March.

The WDRC staff divided themselves into two teams, one team to accompany the Pallangi Kombai women's sangam PIA process and the other to accompany the Jakkampatti women's sangam process.

Implementation of the PIA

The implementation of the PIA took place during March-April 2001. This began with training for the WDRC staff and women leaders. The training focused on the principles and concepts behind PIA and some methodologies for carrying out PIA. The field staff facilitated the process. Overall more than 95% of the women members from the two selected areas were involved in one way or other in the PIA.

Apart from the process with primary stakeholders a meeting was also held with secondary stakeholders. Landowners, husbands of sangam members, trade union leaders, other sangam members, and non-members from both Pallangi Kombai area and Jakkampatti area participated in this meeting. Separate focus group discussions were held for the secondary stakeholders from each of the two-study areas.

The PIA was largely implemented as planned although meetings planned with government officials did not happen in part due to forthcoming local elections.

The women involved in the project participated actively in meetings to analyse the findings from the PIA. They participated actively and played a major role in determining the outcomes of the study. The final report was completed by WDRC but discussed with the women and amended as a result of their input.

Throughout the PIA considerable attention was given to the involvement of women. Gender issues were addressed during the PIA by ensuring that women were involved at all stages of the process. Because women were a majority of those involved this gave them status. Staff created an environment to encourage the effective participation of women. Women were consulted and involved in planning convenient meeting times and places for meetings, women attended the meetings as a team, women were able to bring their children to meetings and training and facilities accommodated women's needs. In meetings the views of women were seen as important and men's views were accepted

only with the concurrence of women. The meetings demonstrated that women have come out of their traditional cultural bondage. They gave priority to attending the meetings and participated effectively. They questioned men about their views. When men participated they introduced themselves as husbands of the women members.

Participatory tools and methods used

Five different methods were used to undertake the PIA. These included ranking, social mapping, focus group discussions, interviews and role play. Most of the exercises worked well. One to one interactions helped individuals express their views openly. Social mapping was adapted to involve participants in role play enabling the women to enact the impact on them of the formation of the sangam and to “own” the process. This worked well. An exercise of voting using bindi to indicate priorities also worked well. Role play was found to be a suitable and easy tool for illiterate tribal and Dalit women to highlight their issues and their initiatives in seeking solutions. Group discussions created an environment for women to reflect on their status and the changes that have occurred and to learn from each other’s experience.

Key Findings of Project Impact

The goal of undertaking PIA in WDRC was to analyse and measure the impact of grassroots women’s organisations on the empowerment of Dalit and tribal women, assisting them to fight against social, economic, cultural and political oppression of women.

The PIA showed that the WDRC programme had assisted the empowerment of Dalit women. For example, co-operation between sub-castes of Dalit women and their organisation into a housing co-operative had occurred. The women in two sangams in the village belonging to two bitterly divided sub-castes of Dalits had come together and collectively gained house titles in the women’s names. The PIA showed that there is economic power in creating small assets in women’s names and this economic power gives women the courage to speak out. They also realised the strength created by organising together. Mobility of women had also increased, demonstrated in increased meetings with officials and attendance at meetings. On seeing the achievement of Dalit women of Jakkampatti, the nearby sangam members expressed confidence and hope that they could achieve such progress in their village. Tribal women in Pallangi Kombai expressed how their empowerment has opened their eyes to the importance of education for their children. Their release from bonded labour and from the exploitation of landowners was felt to be a great achievement. Women were participating more actively in public life.

Lessons from the PIA process

The PIA process has strengthened the relationship among various stakeholders in the community, WDRC and Christian World Service. It has promoted learning and helped identify, review and analyse the effectiveness of the WDRC’s interventions. The process

has promoted the active involvement of people and helped analyse and understand changes created both by the NGO and by the stakeholders. It has created a realisation among the stakeholders and community that they can initiate effective and systematic efforts to promote social development and women's empowerment. It has enhanced the confidence of all stakeholders and created a sense of purpose and commitment as well as faith in their capability, skill and capacity to achieve the goal of WDRC. It has promoted an integrated approach and helped to bring gender relations and gender planning to the fore with the full co-operation of men. It has given women pride in bringing changes to women's lives in their poor communities and given them recognition by the community. It has enabled women to recognise their skills, ability and capacity to bring about women's empowerment and sensitised men and contributed to their collaboration with women to bring social change for the creation of a gender-just society.

WDRC has gained confidence about integrating PIA into their ongoing programmes as a practical way to involve stakeholders in reviewing the activities and interventions of the organisation. It has given them a deeper understanding of people's aspirations that will influence the next phase of their project. It has generated a great amount of energy and enthusiasm as it has affirmed their values and achievements.

For the community who are the primary stakeholders the PIA process helped them to take a closer look at their journey, their struggles and achievements. This has generated a tremendous amount of energy; and will help to ground the next phase of action in reality. The impact indicators that have emerged from the two communities have wider significance taking into consideration the plight of Dalit and tribal communities of India. The impacts are all the more significant, as the Dalit and tribal women are the poorest of the poor. The PIA process used appears to be replicable and has proven that lack of education or social backwardness is no bar to involving people in assessing the impact of development programmes on their lives. Members of WDRC suggested that PIA should be carried out in other sangams and planned to do this with impact assessment carried out before and after initiating every new programme.

Undertaking PIA was seen as a way to sustain the effort and capability of WDRC staff and promote accountability to target communities. It was considered important to train staff and the sangam members on PIA techniques and methodologies and in report writing.

5 Participatory Methods used in Data Collection

This section discusses briefly the wide range of participatory methods and tools used by the NGOs involved in the PIA case studies. These included drama/folk songs, role plays, focus group discussions, interviews, social mapping, trend analysis, case studies, time matrixes, ranking, Venn (chapatti) diagrams, preference ranking, situational analysis, mobility mapping, pie charts, mood matrix, seasonality and time trends and a knowledge, practice and attitudes (KPA) survey.

Two key lessons from the PIA case studies were the importance of thinking carefully about which method was appropriate to collect the data required and the need to adapt methods to the particular situation. In some cases methods were found to be inappropriate and were changed to suit.

A presentation by Rajesh Tandon at the PIA planning workshop in Delhi highlighted a number of issues relating to data collection and analysis. He highlighted three issues to think about in determining which methods and tools to use:

- how to ensure authentic information - there are a number of constraints to achieving this including fear and social desirability (ie people saying what is considered acceptable)
- the need to match tools with the information sources – creativity is needed to ensure that the tools used are the most appropriate to generate data in relation to the information sources and people who will be involved (eg consideration of use of a variety of interviews, focus group discussions, participatory tools and archival materials)
- triangulation - information gained from one source needs to be corroborated with information from other sources.

Rajesh highlighted the need to think about analysis before undertaking the collection of data. While many questions are interesting only a few are likely to be relevant to the key issues being considered. In data analysis, comparison can be made over time (eg change before and after the project), across groups (eg male/female or use of control groups) and/or against a norm, a standard or a benchmark. In relation to the latter, he noted that it is important to remember that values determine norms and different stakeholders may have different values. He noted that in analysing information multiple explanations need to be considered and a decision made as to which is the most plausible.

A further point made was that phenomena may have different causality and sometimes it is difficult to decide if the cause of something is related to the project inputs or some other factor. He suggested that one should look for a variety of explanations and that one way to do this is to change the level of analysis (eg from the individual, to the group, to the organisation, to the society) or to change the standpoint from which change is viewed.

A variety of methods used during the PIA Case Studies are described briefly below.

Drama/Role Play: Plays were used effectively by World Vision Banswara to introduce the concept of PIA to two project communities. This method enabled stimulating discussions and paved the way for collaboration with the communities in PIA. However World Vision found that this method was inappropriate in gathering data during the impact assessment, as it appeared to be ‘manipulative’. They felt that impact assessment needed to collect spontaneous information on how participants saw the project and changes within it. In presenting a drama, roles were allotted to actors and the facilitator unconsciously transferred expected results to the performers and to the audience.



**Introducing the Concept of PIA
through Drama/Role Play**



TBF used role plays to promote discussion on violence against women. Two volunteers were selected to play the role of husband and wife. They were asked to show through role play a situation concerning husband/wife relations before and after self help groups were formed. Some women actively engaged in the role plays. In the discussion it was realised that while wife beating remained an issue in some groups, in others it had decreased. This was found to be due to various factors and not primarily to the formation of self help groups.

WDRC used role play to assess the extent to which the project had helped to address issues such as domestic violence, exploitation by landowners, bonded labour issues by comparing the situation before and after formation of groups.

Seasonality and Time Trends: World Vision used this method in order to see the pattern of crops sown throughout the year. This was helpful in assessing the use of new crops varieties and the changes in crops sowed as a result of the project’s intervention. The use of new technologies such as the use of tractors and fertilisers was also noted.

Impact Flow Chart: This was used by Caritas to assess the extent to which awareness of issues such as education, health, income generation, legal rights, dowry and divorce had increased during the life of the project. A paper symbolising the group was placed in the

centre and pieces of paper with the issues represented on them were placed near or far from the centre depending on the degree of awareness developed.

Mobility Mapping: This method was used to assess changes in the mobility patterns of target communities. The main materials used were round pieces of coloured paper or in some places (especially with the women's groups) bangles. Two areas were demarcated on a large piece of paper. An inner circle depicted places inside the villages, while an outer circle depicted places outside villages. The group members were asked to nominate the places they were free to go inside the village and pieces of coloured paper or bangles depicting these areas were put inside the circle. This process was repeated by asking members of the group which places they went to outside the village and placing coloured pieces of paper or bangles in the outer circle. Different coloured paper or bangles were used to demonstrate inaccessible places in the circles. In the case of the World Vision PIA a before and after the project analysis of mobility showed a number of previously inaccessible places were now frequented by the target communities.

This method was also used by CARITAS to assess the mobility of women. Here the circles were drawn to depict the hamlet, village, union, upazila, district and other more distant places. Participants drew pictures of different places on each circle with one colour to show where they went before the project began and different colours to depict places where they began to visit following the project intervention.



Matrix Ranking and Scoring: This was used by Caritas to assess the most important benefit derived from savings and credit. Benefits were identified and listed and individually, women voted for the benefits considered most important to them. This was followed by discussion and analysis on the benefits of savings and credit.

Time Use Matrix: TBF used a time use matrix to assess women's workload. Daily activities undertaken by women and men were drawn on the board. It was found that women were working more than men, were paid less and were engaged in unskilled and unpaid work.

Listing and Prioritisation: This method was used by Caritas to determine which social actions most benefited the group. The participants listed all action and identified which were the important ones by putting dots beside them. A lot of discussion was generated on the actions that received the highest number of dots.

Venn/Chapati Diagrams: This method was used to assess changing patterns of social relationships. Venn/Chapati diagrams were used by CARITAS to assess the contacts and the relationships the group had built with different agencies. The participants were asked to nominate the Government offices and NGOs with whom they had established linkages. They were asked to re-size the pieces of paper according to the importance of the organisation. A symbol of the group was drawn in the middle of a big paper and the participants were asked to place the Venn diagrams near or far from this symbol for the group according to the frequency of contact. After completing the diagram they analysed the findings and changes that had occurred.

In the World Vision case study, two coloured papers were used to depict bhil (tribal) and yadav (scheduled caste) communities. Coloured papers were placed nearer, or further away from each depending on mixing of the two communities in relation to parameters such as access to education, water resources, eating together, sitting together, acceptance of food from each other and inter-community marriages. The difference in social relationships before and after World Vision's intervention was assessed in this way.



VENN Diagrams being prepared in Bhuradaud Village

A combination of social mapping and trend analysis was used by TBF to understand the impact of the project on dalit oppression, the degree of empowerment they had achieved and the changing social relationships of dalits with other castes (eg through assessment of access to and use of community facilities such as wells and temples). The participants were divided into small groups and were asked to draw the pictures on a chart showing

their distance from different social structures before the interventions and now. Along with this they were also asked to note the changing trends in the relationships of dalits with others.

In the WDRC case study, the use of pen and paper in social mapping was found to distance the women from the exercise as they were illiterate and the WDRC staff held the pen. So the method was adapted into a form of role play. Staff took the roles of husbands, tax collectors, the moneylender and the police, and were told by the group in the centre to move to a particular place in the room in relation to the group. This led to animated discussion as to why someone had been placed closer or further away.

Situation Analysis: Caritas used a variation of the time use matrix to assess the extent to which there had been change since the project interventions in women's workload. After listing all activities undertaken by women, participants were asked to indicate on the left hand column of the matrix who did these activities before joining the group (eg men, women or both). Then they were asked to indicate on the right hand column who was doing the activities currently (men, women or both). After all participants had completed these tasks, the whole matrix was presented to them and there was discussion on the changing nature of women's workloads. The activity showed some gradual sharing of responsibilities by the men and women particularly in relation to household work.

Vote and Mood Meter: Caritas used a vote and mood meter to assess participants'

reactions to loans. A matrix was prepared indicating on the horizontal axis the number of loans received and on the vertical axis three options – a happy, average or sad face. Participants were asked to put dots under the column of the number of loans received and how they felt about this according to the "mood" represented in the faces. Finally the participants explained why they were happy or sad with the loans received.



Assessing Benefit of Credit through Vote & Mood Meter

Pie Chart: In Caritas the APEX leaders were asked to find out what planning and monitoring activities women developed skills in. They identified the activities and showed them on a Pie Chart. Finally they explained the issues relating to each activity.

Score Causal Diagram: In the Caritas case study participants were asked to identify the sectors where women feel they have attained empowerment. Considering the scale of

women empowerment as 100 they were asked to distribute scores to the different sectors (eg education, health, environment) according to the achievement of the group. Finally they discussed different issues under each sector where women had benefited most.

Focus Group Discussion: This method was used by all the organisations to promote discussion on a variety of issues. Discussions were mostly semi-structured and gave space to the respondents to express their views, attitudes and feelings.



Focus Group Discussion at Bhuradaud Village in Yadav Hamlet

Interviews: One on one interviews were used in most of the case studies. In some cases, individual interviews followed focus group discussions where some group members were identified for interview. In some cases, secondary stakeholders were also interviewed. In TBF, interviews were carried out to understand the extent to which housework was shared, education of the girl child, physical abuse, self confidence, improvement in literacy, obtaining access to Government facilities, self employment, savings, assets, and regular income.

Knowledge, Practice and Attitude (KPA) Survey: A KPA survey was used by World Vision to assess knowledge, practice and attitudinal change among the wider communities in which the project was operating, although like other survey methods it relied on a sample. A sixteen-question survey was designed and tested before being undertaken by community members.

Simulation: TBF used a simulation to understand decision-making and conflict resolution in self help groups. Issues related to group decision-making in relation to the distribution of loans. Members were given different roles, including NGO worker, SHG leader, etc. Women actively participated in the simulation. The decision-making and conflict resolution process of the group as demonstrated through the simulation was analysed in

the debriefing and the relevance of what occurred to members own self help groups was discussed.

Game: In TBF, a group exercise was used to assess the development of leadership in the groups. The existing leaders of the self help groups were made the leaders of a team of seven members. The task given to the group was to make a strong, tall and beautiful house with locally available materials in 30 minutes. After the construction, the role of the leaders and the relationships between the leader and members were analysed. This analysis was then applied to the existing situation in their self help groups.

Case studies: Case studies were used by some of the NGOs to promote discussion on issues such as women, loans and domestic violence. In some TBF groups, women were divided into small groups and given a case study written in the local language. They were asked to discuss the case study and issues it raised. This led to a discussion about their knowledge about laws related to women, other gender issues and future action they could take.

6 Key Themes Emerging from the PIA Pilots

6.1 An Empowering Approach

The PIA pilot programme not only enabled the various stakeholders (donors, South Asian NGOs and community members) to assess the impact of the programmes, it was in itself an empowering process for all involved, particularly the primary stakeholders. Their active participation in the planning, implementation and analysis of information collected enabled the primary stakeholders to tell their stories in their own ways and to interpret what was discovered. This recognised and gave validity to their realities, struggles and achievements. It gave them confidence in their capability to address issues that affected their lives and to take greater control of them. This was particularly so for women whose views and perspectives were heard and acknowledged by men and those in powerful positions. It created positive energy for the programmes and a wider understanding among some community members about how the various components of the project related to them.

For the NGOs involved and their staff there was a realisation that through the use of participatory tools illiterate people were able to reflect on and analyse the impacts of the programme. The active involvement of the primary stakeholders in the process served to increase their ownership of the programmes and their commitment to determining future directions relevant to their needs and aspirations. This gave the NGOs confidence that their efforts would be sustainable as primary stakeholders would ensure the programmes addressed their needs. The Caritas report stated, *“The process creates a sense of ownership and enhances the sustainability as well as effectiveness of the project”*. It was also encouraging for the NGOs to find positive benefits for communities as a result of their programmes and to become aware of unintended consequences that needed addressing to enhance programme effectiveness.

For all involved the process developed new knowledge and skills that will influence how the NGOs and their staff work, what they do and the depth of relationships they have with partners in development.

6.2 Stakeholder Involvement

The process of PIA acknowledges that there are many groups and individuals involved in a project who may see it through different eyes. Each of the PIA case studies involved many primary and secondary stakeholders. These included project participants (men and women) in the areas selected for the PIA, other community members (in some cases other community organisations), government officials, the implementing NGO staff at field and central levels, the NZ partner NGO representatives and the NZ Government VASS representatives. The PIA process also involved and was assisted by the facilitation of PRIA and a local facilitator for each of the case studies.

Through undertaking the PIA several of the NGOs found that even within their organisation different stakeholders did not understand what PIA was about or see the

project in the same way. For example Board members, the CEO, middle management and field workers had different views about the projects as their position in the organisation, roles, experience and interest in the project was different. People within donor organisations also had different perspectives on the projects as they too have different roles to fulfil. At the community level there were also many different interests. The process of the PIA involved hearing the perspectives of as many stakeholders as possible acknowledging different realities, negotiating differences and accepting that not everything was negotiable. Through undertaking this process, ownership of the PIA was widened.

Wide stakeholder involvement in the planning of the PIA case studies was critical to building commitment to the process. Key aspects of this included clarification of the objectives of the PIAs and identification of indicators to measure impacts. The process followed in the pilot was for preliminary discussions to be held between the implementing NGO and their NZ partners about what the objectives and indicators might be. This defined their interest in participation. At the Delhi workshop these indicators were refined with assistance from PRIA and the facilitators. For some agencies there was some initial ambivalence in defining indicators too clearly prior to community consultation and involvement. However a major lesson from the Delhi workshop was the recognition that while primary stakeholders have a central role in the PIA process other stakeholders such as the local NGO and funding organisation have valid interests and concerns, that acknowledging different perspectives is important and that what happens is determined through discussion and negotiation taking into account the various interests.

So the process of setting objectives and indicators for the PIAs was an iterative one. After the Delhi workshop other NGO central office staff and field workers were involved in discussion and training with those who had attended the Delhi workshop and objectives and indicators were further refined. Discussions held with primary stakeholders identified their concerns and led to final agreement on objectives and indicators. The process of setting indicators was carried out in various ways. For WDRC planning meetings with all participating communities identified nine potential indicators. Women leaders from the groups together with WDRC staff were each given four bindi and asked to vote for which of the nine indicators they considered most important. The staff of WDRC were surprised at the outcome as some indicators they considered important did not receive a high number of votes. The Caritas process described on the next page illustrates how all stakeholders were actively involved in determining the indicators by which project impacts would be measured.

A significant area of discussion in the Delhi workshop and the workshop at the end of the PIA process in Auckland was the importance of involving communities in the analysis of information not just its collection. This was achieved more successfully in some cases than others where pressure of time and other commitments meant that there was inadequate time for reflection with the community prior to staff preparing the final report.

Indicator Setting – Caritas Bangladesh Case Study

A session was held with the group members and Apex leaders to identify all the indicators or “areas of change” which they considered relevant to women’s empowerment at the four levels of the Individual, Family/Household, Group/Village, and APEX/Union/Thana. This produced very clearly defined and comprehensive lists for each level.

A similar session was then held with the Caritas field staff of Khansama who, not party to the group members’ list, identified their own full list of key indicators.

The group members, and the field staff, were then asked, separately, to vote for their three most important indicators at each level. Each person had three votes and the tally for each indicator was counted. The three highest scores at each level were then selected. This process involved much debate and consideration, and the voting was thoughtful and decisive. Although some argued that all were important, the voting nevertheless gave rise to some clear choices.

Following this, both groups were then brought together, and their lists compared, together with the indicators proposed by Caritas Bangladesh and Caritas Aotearoa representatives at the Delhi meeting.

While there were some duplicates, each group had produced different priorities, so out of a potential 9, each level produced a list of some 6-8 separate indicators. The three lists were then combined, and the whole group asked to vote again, for their three most significant.



Prioritising the indicators through voting

The voting thus distilled 12 indicators for the study, including three at each level, as follows:

<i>Individual:</i>	Awareness Savings Dignity of Women	<i>Family:</i>	Recognition of women’s work Mobility Decision Making in the Household (Economic and Family Affairs)
<i>Group/Village:</i>	Unity Participation in Social Action Benefit of Loans	<i>APEX/Union:</i>	Leadership of Women Linkages/Access to NGO and Government Services Capacity for Planning, Implementation and Action

Participatory tools were identified to assist in the collection of data for each of these indicators. The field staff of Khansama and Banaripara were then trained (including practical field exercises) for each of the methods. This training also included how to plan for and report on the PIA process.

Where communities were involved in analysis of the PIA findings (what changes had occurred and why) a new level of empowerment was evident. In such cases where communities and staff were involved together in analysis of impacts, modifications to the programmes were more readily initiated and agreed.

Some organisations found that by bringing other stakeholders into the PIA process it was possible to determine a wider range of impacts beyond those known to the staff or project beneficiaries. In one case an NGO found that at least some landlords (previously considered “oppressors”) were now supportive of the aims of the organisation and could be considered “allies”. This demonstrated how PIA could engage various stakeholders in an ongoing process, help the organisation to identify future strategies and improve the project’s effectiveness.

6.3 Gender Issues

The practice of participatory development has not always meant that gender issues have been adequately addressed. The VASS PIA pilot programme emphasised from the beginning the importance of consideration of gender issues and the need for all teams to include men and women and for gender considerations to be reflected adequately in PIA objectives and indicators.

Three of the four case studies primarily targeted women and PIA objectives included assessment of the impact of programme interventions on women’s empowerment. The team undertaking the fourth case study (an integrated rural development programme) decided that one of the two objectives of the PIA would be to assess the gender impacts of the programme. Women were included in all of the four PIA teams (comprising representatives of both the South Asian and NZ partners) although women predominated in only one. In the majority of the case studies women made up most of the primary stakeholders and were well represented at other levels such as agency staff or as members of teams/core groups undertaking the PIAs.

Some organisations took particular care to ensure that conditions were conducive to enable women to participate fully. For example in the case of WDRC women were consulted and involved in planning convenient times and places to meet. They attended meetings as a group and were able to bring children. Women’s views were given importance in the meeting and men’s views were accepted only with the concurrence of women.

A variety of participatory tools were identified to ensure the impact of programmes on women were assessed. These included time use studies and situational analysis, mobility-mapping, Venn diagrams, mood matrix, case studies, role plays, focus group discussions and individual interviews.

The case studies provided some significant findings in relation to gender issues, both in relation to the impact of the programmes themselves and in relation to the PIA process.

For example for the World Vision Banswara team the PIA enabled staff to see beyond their cultural stereotypes and inhibitions about involving women. In introducing the PIA idea to the communities the World Vision staff stressed the importance of participation of all. A folk song was sung to highlight the importance of involving women and through discussion a number of older men endorsed the full participation of women in the process. Women were involved at an early stage in core groups in the communities that planned the PIA and this encouraged the participation of women throughout the process. Programme interventions had clearly encouraged the participation of women and both women themselves and the wider community realised that women could participate in community initiatives and contribute in a variety of roles that previously had not been the case. This has the potential to change relationships between men and women.

The World Vision case study also identified some unintended negative impacts of the project including an increase in women's workload resulting from increased cropping made possible from irrigation. Also the availability of water had had the unintended consequence of making liquor production and consumption more available with resulting impacts on women and children. The women also indicated that they did not want further water facilities built if this increased the production of alcohol. Discussion of and addressing these issues through the PIA had some positive impacts in the community. The impact of liquor consumption was discussed and significantly decreased during the Holi festival.

Caritas found that in their programme women's perception of their own worth, their physical and social mobility and their economic and political status (and men's perceptions of these things) had changed markedly since the programme began and people at all levels of the programme were able to articulate and analyse these changes very effectively.

For WDRC an organisation committed to the empowerment of dalit and tribal women the PIA process identified how the programme interventions had had significant impacts in addressing gender equality. These included women from two divided sub-castes working together and obtaining house titles in women's names. From this action women recognised the power in organising together and through this and the economic power obtained by the creation of assets in women's name, women had gained courage to speak out. Some women had been released from the bonded labour system and from the violence and exploitation of the landowners. They had established income generating activities and organised loans for women, developed various cooperatives and promoted a housing cooperative and a housing rights movement. The mobility of women had increased significantly particularly in relation to attending meetings and meeting with government officials. They had become aware of the importance of education for their children.

TBF assessed the extent to which women had been empowered as a result of the programme through an analysis of women's involvement in decision-making on how to spend income earned by women, the extent to which husbands' assisted with housework, whether girl children were attending school and whether there was any domestic

violence. For a variety of reasons it was not possible to collect data on all these indicators with all groups. In three groups where data was collected there appeared to be joint decision-making on how to spend income. In one group women were doing their traditional work plus additional income generating activities, in two other groups around one-third of men were providing some assistance with housework. Around three quarters of girls were attending school. Wife beating was not an issue in one group but remained an issue for just under 20% in two others. Difficulty in completing the PIA activities relating to gender issues in half of the groups may have been because these groups had had less awareness-raising about broader social issues beyond savings and loans.

Apart from the gender impacts identified in each of the programmes, the PIA process itself highlighted the situation of women, the struggles they faced and the achievements they had made. Their views and opinions were heard by men and by individuals in powerful positions and their contributions valued. In this respect women's status in their communities was enhanced as a result of the projects but also the recognition given to women in the PIA process.

6.4 Partnership

The PIA pilot programme involved relationships at a number of different levels. These included relationships between the NZ Government through the VASS Project Selection Committee, PRIA, the PIA facilitators, four NZ NGOs, four South Asian NGOs and a number of communities (men and women) in the areas selected for the impact assessments.

Participants in the PIA process appreciated the opportunity to work in a different way with partners. For NZ and South Asian NGO partners the experience broke down the donor/recipient framework and enabled both parties to learn together in workshops, in planning together and with communities and in analysis of the PIA findings. This learning, action, reflection process involved a deeper level of engagement than had previously occurred for all those involved. For the NZ NGOs it enabled a better understanding of the contexts in which implementing partners work and constraints on them achieving programme objectives. A number indicated that this experience had significantly changed the nature of their relationship with their partner and deepened their commitment to working together in future. The workshops at the beginning and end of the process enabled the eight NZ and South Asian NGOs who do not normally work together so closely to learn from one another and share experiences.

The PIA process also enabled the partnership between implementing agencies and communities to be strengthened with the NGOs gaining a better understanding of the communities they are working with and of their views and aspirations. They saw this as having a positive affect on their ability to develop programme directions that better reflect local needs. For some the process involved a greater realisation that illiterate people through the use of a variety of participatory tools and methodologies were able to plan and undertake development activities (in this case an impact assessment) and to analyse their own situations and the impacts of programme interventions on their lives.

For a number of NGO staff the process of undertaking the PIA helped them see their role in a new light as facilitators of development rather than doers. They were able to experience and see the benefits and impact of “handing over the stick” and allowing communities more power in the relationship. This was an energising process and NGO staff could see the benefits for their future work.

The involvement of various stakeholders at the community level and both women and men in the process helped communities think in new ways about how they worked with one another and the possibilities of seeing some stakeholders in a different light. The realisation for WDRC members that they might be able to work with landowners was a new insight. The appreciation of women being able to fulfil different roles in the PIA helped some communities to see that they could contribute in new ways in everyday life, in decision- making and community affairs.

6.5 Institutional Strengthening

The nature of the NGOs involved in the PIA varied considerably in terms of philosophy, size, the nature of their work and its scope. For example, the NGOs that already had a more participatory approach to project planning and monitoring found the process more readily understood and implemented by staff and communities. For organisations that had a different way of working the process was challenging of some of their approaches.

Size was a factor. For one small organisation the full involvement of all staff along with the target communities meant that the process had significant impacts on organisational learning, capacity and potential for incorporation of lessons throughout the organisational structures and procedures. For larger organisations with multi-layered management/ staffing structures the PIA process served more as a model that may need to be replicated in a number of programmes in different locations for the lessons to filter through the organisation. It will be more difficult and require concerted efforts before PIA as a methodology will be incorporated into organisational systems and procedures.

There was recognition from all involved that the resource implications in terms of staff effort, time and cost required to undertake this particular PIA process were high. A number felt the process was very valuable but unrealistic to undertake for all their programmes. This suggested the need to find ways of incorporating PIA from the beginning in the project planning/design process in a manageable and useful way so that it becomes part of the normal working approaches within the organisation. A number of the NGOs were giving further thought to how they could do this.

All organisations involved in the PIA said that it increased their skill and confidence in planning and undertaking impact assessment and in analysing and understanding the impacts of their programmes. In particular the process enabled them to hear the views of primary stakeholders on the impacts their project had had on them. It also provided an opportunity for the NGOs to experience working with primary stakeholders in a different way.

A number of organisations noted the importance of building staff capacity in facilitating the PIA process in particular in the use of participatory tools and how to involve the community in the collection and analysis of information. All involved found that the PIA pilot programme with its combination of training in the theory, principles and methodologies of PIA as well as practice in implementing PIA had been helpful to them. The main drawbacks seen by those involved were the time consuming nature of the process and the cost. Discussion at the final workshop highlighted the need to find ways of integrating PIA effectively into ongoing project management processes. As Rajesh Tandon noted, *“When it becomes part of the habit to involve communities in identification, appraisal, design and monitoring of projects, then it will not be felt as an additional burden by organisations and their staff”*.

The PIA created a pressure for change in the NGOs involved in the pilot programme, although most of the issues raised for each NGO were particular to their contexts. These differed depending on the size and nature of each organisation and other contextual issues. However one lesson that emerged from the pilot was that if a PIA approach is to be incorporated into an organisation’s work there are likely to be implications for all aspects of the organisation. At the individual level these include changes to attitudes and the need to learn new skills. At the organisational level these include changes to procedures, rules and monitoring and reporting systems. For the organisation as a whole there may need to be a change in culture with staff being prepared to give up power in relation to the communities in which they are working. The process of change needs to address all three aspects if new ways of working are to be sustained.

A further learning from the PIA pilot programme is that undertaking such an approach will change the relationship between the implementing NGO and the primary stakeholders with which it works. It will also change the nature of their relationship with donor or support organisations. PIA legitimises the views and experiences of different stakeholders; it enables them to work together in new ways and requires all involved to accept and work with differences. Involving PIA at all stages of the project cycle can be beneficial in understanding and negotiating these differences. In feeding back the findings of PIA the different needs of stakeholders should also be considered. For example, different kinds of reports may be needed depending on who the stakeholders are. Some will be written, others verbal. Some of the tools used in undertaking the PIA may be useful in sharing the findings with various stakeholder groups.

The challenge for organisations interested in PIA is to develop strategies to incorporate the process into ongoing organisational philosophies, structures and systems in a way that takes account of staff, time and financial resources.

At the final workshop after the pilot programme was completed there was agreement that all the organisations involved would report on progress made in relation to organisational change resulting from the PIA in a year’s time.

7 Conclusion

In Section 2 of this report Tandon is quoted as suggesting that social development evaluation should have four aims - to be educational, developmental, empowering and attempt to clarify objectives and future strategies. PIA is a particular form of evaluation practice that offers scope for achieving these aims. If these are used as criteria for evaluating the success of the PIA pilot programme, it has proved effective. All four criteria were met in each of the case studies.

All of the NGOs involved found PIA to be a useful tool in identifying project impacts some of which had not been anticipated. Through the PIA process and engagement of primary and secondary stakeholders both the organisation and beneficiaries learnt more about the impacts of the projects. In many cases organisations were encouraged by the positive impacts project interventions had had on the lives of beneficiaries. In some cases the process identified unintended negative consequences. The process has in some cases already influenced project implementation, clarified important issues and future directions with a much greater involvement of project beneficiaries.

However perhaps more important than the project impacts that were identified was the learning from the process itself. The PIA challenged existing relationships at all levels -between partners, within organisations and between the NGO and the community it sought to assist. Through engaging stakeholders and in particular primary stakeholders at all stages of the PIA process it deepened understanding of the nature of participatory development and was in itself a learning and empowering experience for all involved. In particular the process provided an opportunity for the organisations involved to hear the voices of the people they sought to assist who provided a valuable and rich source of information to help them plan with the communities how to more effectively meet the needs of communities.

The use of participatory methods and tools enabled illiterate people to participate actively in reflecting on and analysing programme impacts to date and in contributing to future planning. In some cases this encouraged a shift in power between the NGO and the community as beneficiaries took ownership of the process and modified it to reflect their own perspectives and concerns. Women gained status and recognition through their involvement in all of the PIA case studies. Their situation and struggles were heard and their contribution valued, increasing their power in the community. For many of the organisations involved there was an increased realisation that even without formal education beneficiaries were able to participate actively in all aspects of the programme that had significant implications in terms of future relationships and planning.

An important part of the PIA process was capacity building not only of the NGO staff/representatives who attended workshops in Delhi and Auckland and worked with the PIA facilitator in planning and implementing the process but also of the community members who in many cases were actively involved in the PIA training, planning, data collection and analysis. An important need identified from the PIA programme was for more training for NGO staff to be able to facilitate participatory approaches effectively.

While the PIA process was considered very valuable by all the NGOs involved there was some concern over the resources (both staff time and costs) required and the demands placed on communities. There was a need to find ways to incorporate PIA into on-going appraisal, monitoring and evaluation systems so that there is a way to assess impacts at all stages of the project cycle without adding the demands of intensive detailed assessments such as were undertaken in this pilot programme. There was also a need to take account of demands on communities (such as heavy workloads at harvest times etc) when planning activities such as this.

The PIA highlighted the fact that organisational change may be necessary at different levels of the NGOs if participatory impact assessment is to become part of their everyday way of operating. This included the need for reassessment of organisational culture, structures, systems and staff training. There was agreement that all NGOs that participated in the pilot programme would report back in a year on progress in relation to organisational change.

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