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IRMD

Sri Lanka

irrigation management / gender relation / management planning / female labor
women's status

GENDER AND IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT TRANSFER IN SRI LANKA

FIRST COMPONENT



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1997**

21958

**FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN FARMERS'
ORGANISATIONS**
REPORT FIRST COMPONENT

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This report discusses the results of the first component of the research on female involvement in farmers' organizations. (FO's) The results of the second component have been discussed in the first part.

The first component of the study on female involvement in FO's, consisted of short surveys in five different schemes, three minor schemes and two medium schemes. The principle objective of the short surveys was to obtain some figures about the extent of female participation in FO's. In addition to this, the short surveys would provide some information about the differences and similarities among the FO's with regard to female participation. For the latter purpose some qualitative data were gathered as well.

The short studies were carried out in Manankattiya tank system in Anuradhapura district, Dunupotha tank system in Kurunegala district, Parapegama anicut system in Kegalle, Udawela Maha ela anicut system in Kandy district and Ambewela tank system in Badulla district. (see figure 1.)

The surveys have been carried out by research assistants and the counterpart from the Irrigation Department under supervision of the researcher and the counterpart from the NIRP project.

After data collection, a report of the results of each short survey was made per scheme. On the basis of these reports, this report has been written. In stead of organizing the data per scheme, the data will now be organized under topics. This should allow the reader to get an idea of the extent of female participation in FO's in the different schemes, as well as to see the differences and similarities with regard to female participation between the five schemes.

The topics will first be elaborated in chapter two. Consequently in chapter three, the research methodology will be discussed and some background information about the schemes will be provided. In chapter four the figures on female and male participation will be presented. In chapter five, the participation of men and women in irrigated agriculture will be presented. Chapter six, discusses the participation of men and women in household decision making and chapter seven discusses the participation of men and women in organizations. In chapter eight, some practices of participation of men and women in the FO will be discussed. This chapter is based on information about the attitude of officers towards male and female participation and the history of the FO. In chapter nine some data about the costs and benefits of participation to men and women will be presented. In chapter ten conclusions will be drawn.

CHAPTER 2 HYPOTHESES OF THE RESEARCH

In Sri Lanka about 50% of the population are women. In rural areas most people depend on agriculture for their income. In irrigated areas, the cultivation under irrigation is considered one of the most important ways of securing an income. For these reasons, there is **a priori** no basis to expect that women are less interested to participate in the FO than men. A difference in participation between men and women in the FO is **a priori** not logical.

According to staff of the NIRP and the ID, less women than men participate in the FO's. The extent of this difference in participation between men and women, can be established by the following number of figures:

- number of male FO members and number of female FO members
- number of male FO office-bearers and number of female FO office-bearers
- number of male attendants in FO activities and number of female attendants in FO activities.

Theoretically, the limited participation of female farmers can be explained from two perspectives: either less women than men are allowed to participate in the FO, or less women than men are interested in participating in the FO. In this report, these two perspectives are referred to by: a difference in access to participation in the FO between men and women, and a difference in incentives for participation in the FO between men and women.

In the research team, the following six hypothesis explaining differential participation, with regard to female participation in the FO were put forward. The first three hypotheses seek the explanation for a limited female participation by arguing that women are less interested than men in the FO. They argue that women are not to the same extent stakeholders as men are.

The last three hypothesis explain the limited female participation by the difference in access between men and women.

1. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the participation of women in irrigated agriculture is limited.

The hypothesis is that women are not very much involved in the irrigated agriculture either contributing labour, money or land. Their lack of involvement explains their lack of interest in the FO according to this hypothesis, because the FO is intended for irrigated agriculture.

2. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the participation of women in household decision making is limited.

This hypothesis assumes that women are not involved in the main decisions of the household. Women are considered dependent on male household members. Therefore they are not interested in the FO, because the FO aims at improving the family income for which the male household members are responsible.

3. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the participation of women in organizations is limited.

The hypothesis is that women are not used to and have less skills to participate in organizations. Therefore they do not want to participate in the FO, because it is a public organization.

4. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the attitude of officers towards women is different than the attitude towards men.

The hypothesis says that women participate less in the FO activities because officers do not invite and encourage them as much as men to participate. Officers fail to do so, according to this hypothesis, because they do not consider women to be stakeholders in the FO matters.

5. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the FO has become male dominated.

The hypothesis is that because initially mainly men were involved with the FO, it remained male

dominated. Men encourage other men to come to the FO, while women are discouraged to participate if there are hardly any other women.

6. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the costs of participation are higher for women.

The hypothesis is that women have to face more problems than men if they want to participate in the FO, like work, children or travelling difficulties.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Background and Site Selection

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this research only deals with schemes belonging to the NIRP project, in other words, MANIS schemes. Although this limited the number of schemes from which sites could be selected, there were still 450 schemes all over the island belonging to the NIRP project, of which about 30 major/medium schemes. In the initial phase of the research some minor and medium schemes were visited during a reconnaissance survey. Very quickly it became clear that some FO's only come into existence after the start of the rehabilitation project and that overall participation in FO's is not yet very good, the rehabilitation being the only activity of the FO. In addition to this, FO's in the smaller minor schemes seemed to consist of people that cultivate plots in many different schemes. It appeared that the management smaller minor schemes usually did not have a very high priority to farmers.

Based on the reconnaissance survey and discussions within the Irrigation Department, it was decided to select only those schemes where rehabilitation had started before February 1995. In addition to that, only those schemes would be selected that were indicated by the implementing agencies, the Irrigation Department or the Department of Agrarian Services, as having relatively active FO's. Although 'activeness' is a very subjective matter, this criterion was considered necessary to avoid the problem that the selected FO's would only exist on paper. If both male and female participation is non-existent, there is obviously little left to compare. Schemes in the Western Province were left out, assuming that due to the degree of urbanization and off-farm employment, the interest in irrigated agriculture would be less. For the minor schemes only those would be selected that belong to the -present or future- After Care Program¹ and that have a command area of at least 20 hectares. This size-limit of 20 hectares was used to avoid the problem mentioned above that the scheme would not have much priority because it was very small.

With these criteria, selection took place randomly in every district. As a result 6 minor and 3 medium schemes were selected for the short surveys and one medium scheme for the in-depth study. Due to its two moessons, Sri Lanka is divided in three climatic zones: the dry zone, the wet zone and the intermediate zone. (see figure 2) As the dry zone is considered relatively more important for irrigated agriculture, six schemes were selected from the dry zone, two from the

¹ The After Care program is the follow-up of the NIRP project. The counterpart from NIRP was also responsible for the design of the After Care, so this would be a way to directly benefit from research findings.

wet zone and two from the intermediate zone. Ultimately, short surveys were conducted in only 3 minor schemes and 2 medium schemes due to staffing problems. The in-depth study was conducted in Medagama, one of the villages of Buttala anicut system, in Monaragala district. The short studies were carried out in Manankattiya tank system in Anuradhapura district, Dunupotha tank system in Kurunegala district, Parapegama anicut system in Kegalle, Udawela Maha ela anicut system in Kandy district and Ambewela tank system in Badulla district. (see figure 1 and table 1)

3.2 The Locations of Research

Manankattiya scheme

Manankattiya schemes is a medium sized tank system. (see figure 3) The tank is believed to be built by King Vasabha during the 3rd century AD. Its main water source is the streams flowing from Ritigala mountains. This is supplemented by rain water and spill water from nearby tanks. In a very good rainy season the entire area is cultivated with paddy in Maha and Yala. Usually, however, in Yala the lands at the tail end of the canal run short of water. Red chilies are cultivated in the water short areas.

Prior to 1959 the scheme had only one canal, the Raja Ela, to irrigate the purana land. This land has been fragmented over a period of time and now the farmers own only a small portion of land. The scheme was rehabilitated in 1959. The bund and the spill were raised, and the new channels Meda Ela, Left Bank and Right Bank were constructed. Farmers were allocated new land under these new channels.

By 1993, before the NIRP, there were seven FO's established according to the villages of origin of the farmers. This was a complicated arrangement as most farmers had land under several channels. Therefore the organizations were restructured by the Irrigation Department, grouping farmers according to channel boundaries. The number of FO's was brought down to five: two FO's were established under Raja Ela, Siri Perakun FO and Gemunu FO, and three FO's under Meda Ela, Left Bank and Right Bank. Because the sluice of the left bank is relatively high, the Left Bank experiences severe water shortage in Yala. Recently, the DD of Anuradhapura formed a womens' organisation in the village.

Ambewela scheme

Ambewela is also a reservoir scheme. The reservoir is located about 3 km away from the command area. As this scheme is located in the wet zone, there is hardly ever a shortage of water in the reservoir. Therefore the head-enders do not face water problems at all. They take water whenever they want. The tail-enders, however, did not receive any water for the last three years. As siltation is a severe problem, the channels have to be cleared and desilted frequently. In addition to this, the farmers upstream have damaged the structures to prevent the water from flowing to the tail-end.

In this area almost all farmers cultivate vegetables. In Maha some paddy is cultivated in the low lands, and potatoes, beans and cabbage are cultivated in the high lands. In Yala, potatoes are grown in the lowlands and other vegetables, like beans, carrots, cabbage, tomatoes are cultivated in the highlands. The farmers have close connections with mudalali's in Colombo, who do not

only buy and transport their produce, but also provide them credits.

There are four FO's formed by the Irrigation Department in this scheme in 1991: Welibissawela FO, Ambagasdowa FO, Himbiliyagolla FO and Tennakoonwela FO. Wellibissawela FO is located at the head-end of the scheme, Tennakoonwela at the very tail-end.

Dunupotha scheme

Dunupotha is a minor tank system located in the dry zone. The main water source of the tank is seasonal rain, but it also gets water from three other tanks. Due to a severe siltation of the tank, it spills very quickly, resulting in a water shortage in Yala. When there is a water shortage, the secretary of the FO makes a rotation schedule.

Paddy cultivation is an important source of income, but the size of the plots is very small. In addition to the paddy cultivation, almost every household grows coconuts. Other kind of activities than agriculture, like carpentry, masonry and trading are prevalent. Many of the second generation work as wage labourers and some have found permanent jobs.

Dunupotha is the name of the village and of the tank. There is only one FO in Dunupotha. It has been organized by the Department of Agrarian Services. Under the NIRP a the spill gates and side walls have been repaired, and the tank bund has been raised. The farmers complain, however, that their major problem, the siltation of the tank, has not been solved.

Udawela Maha Ela scheme

Udawela Maha Ela is a minor anicut system located in the wet zone. (figure 4) It is very steep land, about 25% slope, therefore all fields are terraced. The terraces are very small, some less than 1,5 m wide. The main channel is lined. The scheme used to be larger, but part of the command area got under water when the Victoria Dam was built. About 15 families received land under Mahaweli H in compensation for this loss. Some farmers left to Mahaweli H for that reason, but the majority rents out that land to farmers there. Due to the Victoria Dam, there is almost no chena land available any more either. Some people do dry land cultivation in their homesteads.

In Maha there is no water shortage, everybody cultivates paddy. In Yala it depends on the distance to the main channel and the location in the scheme, whether it is possible to cultivate paddy. The upper fields have face more water problems than the lower fields. Therefore people cultivate vegetables, tomatoes, onions, beetroots, on the upper fields. The production of vegetables is good, but the income is limited because of the middlemen. An additional problem is the robbery of vegetables from the field, if the prices are high.

The majority of the farmers are tenants. The tenancy agreement is such that tenants pay relatively little money to the landlord for vegetable cultivation. Therefore the landlords prefer to rent out their land directly to mudalali's, who cultivate tobacco, in Yala. In that case, the rent is paid directly to the landlord and the tenant receives nothing. This decision depends on the rains. If there is too little rain, the plants will wither at the end of the Yala growing season. The landlords can only rent out their land for tobacco, if there is too little water to cultivate anything else during Yala.

There is one FO organised by Department of Agrarian Services. If there is a shortage of water, the FO decides about the allocation of water between paddy and vegetables. Their system is such that they always give preference to paddy cultivation. The FO also decides whether there is enough water to cultivate the whole command area in Yala. Landlords try to influence this decisions of the FO because they want to rent out their land for tobacco. To avoid this problem, the secretary of the FO wanted to build a small reservoir under the NIRP, but this was not accepted.

Parapegama Wel Anicut Scheme

Parapegama is a minor anicut system in the dry zone. (see figure 5) The scheme gets water from a stream coming from the Parapegama mountain. In Maha only paddy is cultivated, in Yala vegetables are cultivated along with paddy. Water shortage is not the rule, but may occur once in 5 years in Yala.

As the scheme is situated between mountains, there is a severe shortage of both highland and paddy land. The paddy land is fragmented up to 1/8 ac. and the tatumaru system is practised. This means that one plot is cultivated on a rotation basis by a number of people. For example five children have the right to cultivate a plot of 1/4 ac one Maha and one Yala season once in five years. Therefore the cultivation is very intensive: all rice is transplanted and vegetables are cultivated on the bund. Another prominent characteristic of the scheme is the use of attam groups for the major cultivation activities. There are hardly any off-farm employment opportunities, except for making beedi and brewing illicit liquor.

There is one FO in Parapegama. It has been organized by the Department of Agrarian Services in 1991.

3.3 Methodology

In the minor schemes there is only one FO. In the medium schemes, the most active FO's according to the implementing agency were selected. An overview of the FO's that have been studied is given in table 2.

The short surveys have been carried out by two research assistants and the counterpart from the Irrigation Department under supervision of the researcher and the counterpart from the NIRP project. As a preparation for the field work, the research assistants -and later the counterpart from the Irrigation Department- were given a training on gender and gender research. As gender is a sensitive topic, men and women tend to respond questions with regard to gender by the norms instead of by the practice. Men and women sometimes consider actual practices that deviate from the norm, eg. of women involving in wage labour, embarrassing. Therefore a lot of attention was given to the behaviour of the research assistants and interview technique, in order to avoid these 'gender confirmative' answers.

Data collection was carried out with the help of checklists (see annex 1), but the main responsibility laid with the person in the field. In addition to the figures and basic data, she had to identify the FO issues in the scheme and direct her questions towards those issues. A lot of attention was given to the qualitative data in order to cross-check the opinions of officers, office-bearers and male and female farmers about the FO and about female participation. The research

assistants were visited several times by the researcher and the counterpart from the NIRP project, to give feedback on their work.

No formal selection of sample households was carried out. The research assistants selected about 15 households on the basis of the FO membership lists. The households selected included:

- households of male FO members
- households of female FO members
- households with no FO members at all
- households of FO office-bearers

In these households, both male and female household members were interviewed separately. In addition to these people, some officers like IO, DO or TA were interviewed.

Initially only a short time was reserved for data collection for the short surveys, but this proved too short in the medium schemes. Therefore, later on the period of data collection was split between a general part, and a part in which data collection was focused on a limited number of households. In between the two parts the work was discussed with the team in Colombo.

CHAPTER 4 FIGURES AND FACTS ON MALE AND FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE FO

In table 1, the extent of female participation in FO's in the different schemes, is expressed by the following figures:

- number of male FO members and number of female FO members
- number of male FO office-bearers and the number of female FO office-bearers
- number of male attendants of FO activities and the number of female attendants of FO activities

Table 1 Figures of male and female membership, office-bearership and attendance for the FO's of Manankattiya, Ambewela, Parapegama, Dunupotha and Udawela Maha Ela. (GEM FO= Gemunu FO, SPK FO= Siri Perakun FO, LBA FO= Left Bank FO, WBW FO= Wellibissawela FO, TKW FO= Tennakoonwela FO, PPG FO= Parapegama FO, DPO FO= Dunupotha FO, UME FO= Udawela Maha Wela FO, #='number of', % = 'percentage females in comparison to males, av. =average)

	Manankattiya			Ambewela		Parap e	Dunup o-tha	Uda we-la
	GEM FO	SPK FO	LBA FO	WB W FO ²	TK W FO	PPG FO	DPO FO	UME FO
# male members	30	23	25	-	-	38	35	65
# female members	8	10	7	-	-	0	5	15
% female members	26.6	43	28	2	0	0	14	23
# male office-bearers	7	8	7	-	-	5	5	3
# female office-bearers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
% female office-bearers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
av. # male attendance ³	-	21	-	-	-	20	-	-
av. # female attendance	-	6,4	-	-	-	0	-	5

² There are no figures available from Ambewela FO about the exact number of male and female members.

³ It is difficult to encounter FO's where attendance lists are regularly kept. In many FO's meetings are not held regularly, and attendance lists are not always made. Some office-bearers give estimations of attendance and female attendance, but these estimations vary a lot between one FO. It is generally agreed that female attendance is much less than male attendance, but it not possible to give exact and reliable figures on male and female attendance.

FO Membership

The figures show that in all cases female membership is less than male membership. The average percentage of female membership in comparison to male membership is 15.3%. If the ratio male members to female members would be 1:1, this figure would be 100%. The main reason is that in all schemes, FO membership is formally based on landownership or legal tenancy of paddy land in the command area. In Sri Lanka, although in the law no distinction is made between daughters and sons for inheritance of paddy land, land rights are predominantly vested in men. Therefore the membership criterion of 'legal landrights' limits the access of women to the FO. In addition to this, officers and male farmers generally mention other criteria to explain that women do not participate or do not take membership. In the following table these additional criteria are summarized for the five schemes.

<u>scheme</u>	<u>membership criteria</u>
Manankattiya scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-legal landrights + Rs100 membership fee-If both a male and a female in a household have landrights, the membership is with the male because he represents the household.-If a women has landrights, her husband or elder son can obtain membership in the FO.-Office-bearers think that only one person should represent the family and that is person invariably is the male as he is the cultivator and the head of household.
Ambewela scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-legal landrights-sons without legal landrights cultivating the land of one of their parents can obtain membership.-If both husband and wife have legal landrights, the husband obtains membership.-Only one person from each household should participate, obviously the head of household. As a convention the head of householdship automatically goes to the father or the eldest son.
Parapegama scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-legal landrights
Dunupotha scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-legal landrights-most women who have landrights are represented either by their sons or by their husbands in the FO
Udawela Maha Ela scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-legal landrights-Women do participate in the FO meetings, but as they normally keep silent it is more useful if men participate

In all schemes, female FO membership is thus limited by the criterion of legal landrights because less women than men have legal landrights. In some schemes, female membership is further limited because:

- A male household member obtains membership for a female landowner or tenant

-Only the male household member obtains membership if both a female and a male household member have legal landtitles.

-Women are directly excluded from membership, because they are not considered as real cultivators or representatives of the household. The notions of 'real cultivator' and 'head of household' are used in a highly gendered sense, because a priori men qualify for these. Only in case of a widow without a sons, she is considered the cultivator and head of household. An example of the difficulties a woman who has legal landrights, may face in order to obtain FO membership is given in the case of Ranjinee in Manankattiya scheme.

When Ranjinee wanted to become a member of the FO, the president had told her that since both she and her husband own land, her husband could take the membership in stead of her. If both would apply for membership it would be a wastage of money. At that point, Ranjinee had to insist that she wanted the membership, and that she would pay the membership fee.

FO Office-bearers

Female office-bearers are absent in all FO's that have been visited for the short surveys. In all schemes, the general opinion is that FO office-bearers should be educated people. This does not only refer to literacy, but also to experience in dealing with village organizations. Women are considered 'uneducated' in this respect. In addition to this, in Parapegama it is stressed that FO office-bearers should be capable to control the meetings. Women are not considered capable of doing this.

In Manankattiya the male office-bearers are reluctant to get women elected for the ranks. They feel that women cannot attend to work outside the village alone due to lack of mobility and transport. They say women cannot control the water distribution, because they cannot do night irrigation. They also find their level of education too low to become office-bearers. They think that the womens' organization is a good forum for women to have their needs look after. Since office-bearers are selected out of Field Channel Representatives, it will take a long time for a woman to be elected to the FO committee.

FO Attendance

No exact and reliable data are available on male and female attendance, but interviews indicated that female attendance is absent in Parapegama, Dunupotha and Ambewela, whereas there is some female attendance in Udawela Maha Ela and Manankattiya.

In Manankattiya the participation of women in the FO increased, only after the women insisted to be able to participate in the training programmes of the FO about construction work and agriculture. Initially the office-bearers had not included female members in these activities, because they felt that it was meant for males only.

In Parapegama, women do not like to participate in FO meetings because they are held at the bar and usually end up in drinking liquor. In addition to this there are only male attendants, and women say they do not want to come with one or two women in a group of only men. Some people, like the wife of the FO president, think that women should not participate because it is not suitable to surpass the husband.

*'Women work hard in the field. They contribute more labour to the cultivation than men. However, we never try to challenge the men. We think they should retain their position as head of household. Traditionally a man is the decision maker in the household, this is not the case in reality, but still we allow them to go to the FO meetings in that capacity. In addition to that, we are unclean persons. We have our periods. We cannot make the milk spill either.'*⁴ Therefore men also do not like us to participate in public activities, and we agree. We do not try to surpass them.'

In Udawela Maha Ela the participation of women is considered less valuable than the participation of men. Therefore women are not encouraged to participate in the meeting. They do participate to eg. training, but they usually leave early, as the following case illustrates.

She participated in a training on water management with eight other women, but she left at lunch. The class was supposed to start at 9, but the officers from Department of Agrarian Services came only at 11. There were 70 people invited, but only for 30 food was ordered. There were 2 hours of training, but it did not appear very relevant to the situation of their scheme. The lack of food was embarrassing, therefore the women left.

Women are not encouraged to participate in Ambewela either, where the time to hold the meetings is adjusted to male convenience only. The meetings are held in the night.

As the farmers are very busy during the day, the male farmers think it is a waste of time to hold the meeting during day time. Therefore all meetings are held after 6 pm, and sometimes the meetings go up to 2 am. As the mobility of female farmers is limited during the night, it is difficult for them to participate. Male farmers argue that their attendance would drop drastically if the meetings would be held during the afternoon. The FO members (who are male) consider their participation more valuable than the participation of female farmers, because they (the male farmers) represent the household.

conclusion

The average percentage of female membership of the FO in the eight FO's that were selected is 15.3%. In some FO's it is even zero. Only in one FO in Manankattiya scheme the percentage is 30%. No exact figures are available about the attendance of FO meetings. However, the general opinion in all schemes is that female attendance is much lower than female membership.

Female participation in the FO is limited due to the formal membership criterion of legal landrights. In addition to this, actual participation is limited by a number of assumptions about the correct participants of the FO. These assumptions then function as informal membership criteria. The most important informal membership criteria are:

- the idea that real cultivators are men
- the idea that heads of households should participate, who are mostly men.
- the idea that it is not suitable for women to participate in organizations like the FO, because they are uneducated, shy or because it is inappropriate to surpass their husbands.

Finally, in some schemes the limited participation of female farmers may be attributed directly to the fact that male farmers make arrangements for FO activities that are only convenient to themselves and sometimes even prevent female farmers from participation.

⁴ After the sinhala new year, the fire is lightened at an auspicious time and milk is cooked until it spills. It is auspicious if the milk spills in a certain direction. Apparently this woman thinks that women cannot carry out this religious activity.

CHAPTER 5 PARTICIPATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE

According to some people the major criteria for FO participation should be participation in irrigated agriculture. Others argue that people who are not involved in irrigated agriculture, will not have an incentive to participate in the FO activities. This chapter looks at the relative contribution of men and women to irrigated agriculture in terms of land, labour, money or knowledge.

In all schemes, women make longer working days than men, because in addition to agricultural work, they are responsible for almost all household work. However, elderly people may perform quite some household cores as well. In all schemes women, irrespective of their income levels work in their own paddy fields, except when having very small children. Women who are better off engage in traditional activities such as transplanting, weeding and harvesting. Better off women do not participate as much in attam work, as other women. They usually hire labourers. In medium income families, women are more active, they engage and they actively participate in attam. Spraying is not a task women from medium income families perform usually. In low income families, women engage in any kind of labour irrespective of the gender division of labour eg. land preparation, making bunds, applying fertilizers, water diverting. An illustration of the latter point is the example of Nandawathie in Manankattiya scheme and of Arem and Ghanawathie in Udawela Maha Ela scheme.

Nandawathie is a female head of household who is doing water diversion even during the night. The male farmers whose paddy land is adjacent to hers blocks the flow of water to her land by raising the bund. When she complains he scolds her. She is unable to bring this matter to the FO as she is not a member.

Arem (35 yrs) is married, but she lives separate from her husband. She cultivates one acre tenant land of her father. The land is for all brothers and sister, but as they are not in the village at the moment, she may cultivate it. In Maha she cultivates paddy, in Yala vegetables, tomatoes, onions and beetroot. She works alone. She prepares the land and makes the ridges. If she cannot finish in time, she will hire some labourers, but she will always work along with them. She participates in the FO, but she normally does not talk.

Ghanawathie is a widow. Her son is married and lives with his wife and two children in the same house, but the households are separate. Ghanawathie lives with one of her two daughters who works at the Suriya Matches company. She earns about Rs1000 per month. Ghanawathie took over her husband's tenancy of 1/2 ac. She does all the work in the field, including land preparation with mamaty, spraying and manuring. If she cannot finish in time, she will hire some labourers to help her and pay with the daughters money.

Still, some better off women are very actively engaged in cultivation, not only controlling the hired labour, but also working themselves. This is illustrated by the cases of Ranjensee from Manankattiya and the walauwe family from Udawela Maha Ela.

Ranjensee decides about what to cultivate and about all the activities involved with it. She does land levelling and water diversion. Her husband applies chemicals and fertilizers.

In Udawela Maha Ela FO there are three walauwe sisters of about 50 yrs old. Together they control about 10-15 acres. The land still belongs to their mother who is about 90. They go to the FO meetings to prevent the tenants from cultivating vegetables and to free the land for tobacco cultivation in Yala.

In Dunupotha there is hardly any tenancy land. Paddy land is cultivated by the household members of the owners themselves or by hired labour. There is a clear distinction of participation of women in agriculture according to their income levels. The families with higher incomes, hire labour for the paddy cultivation. Females of such families supervise the labourers and prepare meals for them. They do not engage in water diversion, except when tapping water illicitly for their vegetable gardens in their homesteads. Women of low income families work on the paddy field and also go for wage labour in other paddy fields.

In both Ambewela and Parapegama the contribution of women to irrigated agriculture seems to be more than the contribution of men. This may be attributed to the fact that in Ambewela the main crop is vegetables and in Parapegama there is a severe shortage of land. Both situations result in a highly labour intensive cultivation and a very high contribution of women. In Ambewela, the majority of the people are full time engaged in farming. In potato cultivation, a household may hire some tamil estate working to do tilling, but both male and female household members involve in each and every stage of the potato cultivation. There are exceptions in Ambewela where female household members do tilling as well, for example in the following case of Premawathie, whose husband is employed in the army.

Premawathie's husband is employed in the army. He comes home once a month, therefore Premawathie cultivates herself. She works in the field, and sometimes she hires hired labourers. She cultivates beans and potatoes in the rainy season. She does the tilling for the potato cultivation and she applies fertilizer.

In Parapegama, inputs are considered almost too expensive for the cultivation. Therefore transplanting is still used on a large scale. However, hired labour is rarely used, people organize attam labour. A group of attam labourers can consist of 20-30 women or men. Women do transplanting, weeding, collecting paddy, carrying paddy. Men do harvesting, land preparation, and spraying. Threshing floor activities are done by women.⁵ In addition to the attam labour, women grow vegetables on the bunds. That the above gender division of labour is not very rigidly applied in a -poor- village like Parapegama, is illustrated by the story of Mr Subasena, who taught his daughter to do 'male jobs'.

'People think the FO is especially for muddy farming and most of the hard works are done by men. Therefore men go to the meetings. However, my younger daughter can plough and make field bunds. I learned her to do this, because I do not have boys. Hired labour is too expensive.'

conclusion

There is obviously a difference between the norm and the practices of male and female labour contribution to irrigated agriculture. The norm is that men do the cultivation and women help them a little, but the practice in almost every family deviates from this general norm. In all schemes, women contribute labour to the own cultivation. There are differences between women of families from different income levels. However, one cannot simply conclude that women from better off families contribute less labour to the cultivation, this is illustrated by the examples

⁵ It is surprising that in this -rather traditional- village harvesting is considered a male job, while threshing is done by females. In other schemes, women may be found in harvesting, but they do not engage in threshing. In some areas it is even considered impure if women walk on the threshing floor.

from Manankattiya and Udawela Maha Ela. Female labour contribution to the cultivation also depends on the specific situation of the family, the availability of labour within the household and the need for labour substitution eg if one household member has a job. In addition to this there are differences in female labour contribution between schemes, related to the kind of crops and the cultivation methods. Finally female labour contribution is of course also related to the personal qualities and preferences of the female farmers.

CHAPTER 6 PARTICIPATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKING

In a similar way as some people argue that the major criteria for FO participation should be participation in irrigated agriculture, it is argued that the main decision maker of the household should participate in the FO. The idea is that the aim of the FO is to improve the family wellbeing. Therefore the main decision maker should participate, because he or she is most knowledgeable about the household. This chapter discusses the relative participation of male and female household members in decision making at household level.

Decision making is a very complex matter. Decision making at household level involves negotiations about resources like land, labour and money between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters etc. These relationships are ties of kinship and love, but also economic ties. Gender is an important principle structuring the responsibilities and validity of claims of person over another person in these relationships.

In this report, decision making will only be dealt with very briefly. The focus is on decision making between husband and wife. The chapter concentrates on financial decisions, because profit margins are very low and many households face difficulties in making both ends meet. A distinction is made between day to day expenditures and major expenditures. It is important to realize that the majority of the major expenditures in these households are agricultural expenditures. In the report on the in-depth study on Buttala anicut, decision making at household level is discussed in more detail.

In all schemes the majority of the interviewees state that decision making about day to day expenditures lies with the wife. Often this is explained by the idea that women have the capacity to spend the money very economically, while men have less capacity to do so. Women accept this responsibility for financial management, because culturally they have the major responsibility in the household for the every day needs of the family. Husbands also agree with this 'female' capacity. It is not rare that husbands, especially those who do wage labour, hand over all or the larger part of their earnings to the wife. The latter is illustrated by the following case from a woman from Parapegama scheme:

I do all the monetary activities. I spent the money only for necessary things. We could prepare rice three times a day, but then we cannot save. Therefore we only prepare rice for the children and we eat yams or jack. We discuss on major expenditures. If my husband asks me money, I will ask: "Why do you want money? What for?" Then only I will give him money.

While women dominate in day to day financial decision making, in most cases husband and wife jointly decide about major expenditures. The majority of the major expenditures are agricultural expenditures. Almost all interviewees, both male and female, were able to explain about how they decide on the next crop, what fertilizers they will be using, how they will market their produce etc. The relative influence of husband and wife depends on such things like who has the legal landrights, who has taken the loans and who organises for example attam labour. However, there are instances in which either husband or wife is less involved in farming and in which the other partner takes most decisions alone. This is particularly the case when the husband or the wife has a job. An illustration of this is the case of Gunawathie in Udawela Maha Ela whose husband is a driver.

Gunawathie cultivates one bushel of paddy as a tenant. Her husband is a driver, therefore she decides about the cultivation. She uses hired labour for ploughing and land preparation and most of the field work is done by herself, including water diversion. She cultivates her own paddy seeds, because it is cheaper and then she knows what kind of seeds she grows. She uses money from her husbands job to buy chemicals. She uses attam labour for transplanting. Normally her yield is very good, because she works very carefully.

In Manankattiya scheme, some husbands think that it is not proper for women to go alone to banks or to the markets due to lack of transport. The majority of the households, however, depend on neighbours or business men for credits. In addition to this some households have access to money through traditional female savings groups, seettus. The latter two kinds of financial activities are more often undertaken by women. An example of saving is given by the following case from Udawela Maha Ela scheme.

My husband does not go for hired labour to earn money, therefore I have to go. We have two daughters, we have to save money for them to marry. We do not even have our own house to live in. We live with my brother-in-law.

The majority of the female heads of households take their own decisions, but older widows tend to leave most decisions to their elder children (especially sons). The reasons is that these women spent their old days living with one of their children (especially their youngest son), and they do not want to upset the children by becoming too dominant. However, if they really want something, their influence on decision making turns out to be rather decisive.

In all schemes there is a substantial number of households in which financial matters are completely separate. It may be in richer families in which both husband and wife have a job, but also in medium income families, if the wife does not agree with the husbands' expenditure pattern. Even in very poor families, husband and wife may have separate financial affairs and income flows. In all these cases, the wife remains the one who is responsible for day to day family needs like food and children's schooling expenditures. In the following, a woman from a medium income family in Parapegama is quoted.

I never give money to my husband. He wastes money for games and liquor. I do not ask money from him either. I go to the market myself and I cook myself.

conclusion

Evidence from the surveys showed that there is rarely one decision maker at household level. Decisions are made in negotiation with several household members who all make their

contributions to the family income. Larger financial decisions are generally taken by husband and wife jointly. Family wellbeing, however, is largely dependent on the day to day expenditures and in these women play a dominant role.

Profit margins in agriculture are very low, because inputs are relatively expensive. Therefore most households have difficulties in making both ends meet. These difficulties are predominantly faced by women, because culturally it is their responsibility to make sure that the needs of every day are there. The strategies women employ to solve this problem, has given them the reputation of being 'economic spenders'. In this capacity they also engage in saving and loan activities.

CHAPTER 7 PARTICIPATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN ORGANISATIONS

The hypothesis is that women are not used to participate in organisations. This explains the limited participation of women in the FO, because as a consequence they have less skills and experience than men to participate in organisations. They are shy and they do not want to participate in the FO. This chapter will examine the above statements by using data on female participation in organisations other than the FO.

Besides the FO, the following organisations exist and are more or less active in all schemes:

Death Donation Society -saving organisation for funerals

Rural Development Society -organisation for building infrastructure and houses with community labour and additional funding

Sanasa -saving and credit organisation

youth organisations -organisation promoting development of the youngsters

religious organisations -organising religious activities and financing temple maintenance

political organisations -organisation in support of a political party

womens' organisations of AGA -no specific activities

cooperative shops -buying cooperatives

Samurdhi -selfhelp organisation for those who receive Samurdhi support

There are thus quite a number of organisations at village level. In all schemes Death Donation Society is the most successful and most active organisation, other organisations come and go. The success of an organisation principally depends on the availability of funding. Most organisations are highly politised, therefore their activities and funds also depend on who is in power. For example, the Rural Development Society and womens' organisation of AGA are organisations initiated under the UNP government. They now fade away. Samurdhi is a PA program for the poorest, it is gaining importance. Due to the number of organisations in the village and their political dependence, most men and women do not have large expectations from organisations. This in itself is yet another reason for the fact that many organisations merely exist on paper or in the minds of one or two office-bearers.

Apart from the womens' organisation, that consists of women only, male membership exceeds female membership in all organisations in all schemes with the exception of some of the Sanasa,

the Samurdhi and the religious organisations. Death Donation Society has a large number of female members in all schemes but Ambewela scheme. There are two reasons for the high participation of women in the Death Donation Society. Firstly there are a lot of women who initially participated as representatives of their husbands and later took membership in stead of their husband. Secondly, if the wife's parents are still alive, while the husbands' parents are death, the wife will take membership. In the Death Donation Society, women do hold positions. However, their participation in organisations does not result in a career in village organisations, like some men have.

The Death Donation Society is the most successful organisation because the rules are very rigid and the benefits are very clear. When a death occurs the member may receive 2000-4000Rs from the organisation plus a kilo rice and a coconut from every members plus labour from all members during the funeral. The main reason for its success, however, is that members have to pay 10Rs every meeting and they will be removed from the organisation if they do not participate three consecutive times. This means that members continue to participate, because they do not want to loose their investment in the organisation.

In most schemes womens' organisations are not very successful. Either they do not conduct any activities at all, or they engage in typical activities of urban females, like sewing and weaving. Most of the income generating activities generate very little income and cost relatively a lot of time or marketing efforts. In the most positive case, the womens' organisations involve with home gardening. They do not discuss womens' landrights, the lower wages that are paid to female wage labourers nor domestic violence or womens' fertility, nor womens' influence in other organisations, while these are all problems to women. However, even the rural women themselves have become accustomed to the idea that a womens' organisation can only do marginal activities. As a consequence, participation in the womens' organisation is low, unless the organisation provides some kind of material benefits like credits or seeds.

Many women are shy to talk at mixed meetings if they participate. They say they are uneducated. This does not refer to literacy directly, they refer to their lack of experience with formal organisations. It is striking that women participate a lot in informal organisations, like seettus. Their lack of experience thus does not refer to organisations as such, but to the formal character of organisations.

Literacy and level of education is a positive factor in female participation. Education may give women the strength to stand up on their own and to get recognition from males. In Manankattiya a women represented her old father-in-law, because she had passed her O-levels. However, higher education levels does not automatically result in higher female participation.

It is important to realize that both male and female farmers do not expect much from most formal organisations and that they will only participate if there is some kind of incentive for them to do so.

conclusion

There are a lot of organisations at village level. In the majority of these organisations male membership outnumbered female membership. Many organisations are not very active. This

means that the limited participation of women is partly related to the lack of incentives. In active organisations, like the Death Donation Society and Sanasa, female membership and participation is quite substantial. Women do perform many tasks in these organisations, but they hardly make a career as office-bearers from village organisations like some men.

Still, male membership in organisations outnumbers female membership. Therefore it may be assumed that women have less experience in public life and less opportunities to develop skills for participation in formal organisations. It would, however, be wrong to conclude that women lack experience in organising capacity. The existence of traditional organisations like seettu that are managed by women, may suffice to countervail that statement. The formal character of organisations is frequently mentioned by women as a barrier to speak in front of men and to their participation in the FO. Unfortunately womens' organisations do little to help women to solve this problem.

CHAPTER 8 ATTITUDES OF OFFICERS TOWARDS MALE AND FEMALE PARTICIPATION

The attitudes of officers towards male and female participation are important because officers were the ones who started the FO in most cases. The people in the schemes understand the FO in the way the officers have explained it to them. There are two ways in which the attitude of officers may negatively affect female participation:

- 1.If officers do not view women as potential active FO participants.
- 2.If officers do not recognise that the participation of women sometimes requires the adaptation of their time-frames and methods to specific female needs.

There are many different attitudes towards male and female participation among officers. No generalisations can be made about DAS being more or less gender sensitive than ID officers. The main problem is that the majority of the officers does not view women as potential active participants of the FO. This does not mean they are against the participation of women. They think that it is not necessary for women to participate either because they do not realise the degree of involvement of women in agriculture or because they think women should be represented by their husbands.

Some officers like the DO in Parapegama, think that women do not work in irrigated agriculture. In spite of the evidence of female labour contribution in Parapegama, he says that all jobs are done by men, therefore men should participate in the FO. Other officers acknowledge that women do work in irrigated agriculture, but they call this 'helping' not 'working'. Officers, like the TA in Anuradhapura, feel that women are very active in irrigated agriculture and that women should be given the opportunity to participate in the FO, because agriculture is their main income source. Despite this positive attitude, male officers tend to think that women should not work over or above their husbands. Quoted from this TA:

'Women should be represented by their husbands, therefore their number in the FO is less. Women should not supersede the males and that is why they do not hold any positions in the FO.'

Senior female officers appear to have a slightly different opinion. It is striking that womens' organisations were started in the two schemes where senior female officers were involved, Manankattiya and Parapegama scheme. This may be related to the fact that male officers talk more easily to male farmers only, while female officers also talk to female farmers. The female AI in Parapegama organised the womens' organisation and selected the female IO's. She thinks that women have the skills to improve their family situation and the FO, but she says in this village there is an attitude that women should not surpass men. She thinks that women's groups are stronger than men's groups. Unfortunately these womens' organisation do not address the problem of womens' participation in the FO directly.

Contrary to senior female officers, many junior female officers talk mainly to men, because they think that men are the only real cultivators. There are many female IO's, in Ambewela, Udawela Maha Ela, Parapegama, but in general this does not seem to affect female participation in a positive way very much. Some female IO's do recognise the problem of female participation, like the IO from Manankattiya. She disapproves of the limited participation of women. She says that women do not only contribute their labour to the paddy, but they also take part in planning of the cultivation. They remind their husbands to apply fertilizer and chemicals in time for example. In contrast with the information above, the positive attitude of officers is sometimes the decisive factor in female participation. This is illustrated in the following case of Manankattiya FO. While male farmers were reluctant to allow a woman to participate in the construction training, the officers from the Galgamowa Training Institute encouraged her participation.

The female IO had informed both male and female farmers about the FO training program on construction conducted by the Galgamowa Training Institute. One female farmer was eager to participate, but male farmers disagreed. They thought it was mainly for men. Then the woman complained to the trainer about this. The trainer said: 'This is a common program for both males and females. You are also a farmer and you have the right to participate.' Thus the male farmers had to accept her participation and she participated.

Even if officers are positive towards female participation, they generally fail to recognize the specific problems women face in their participation. Their opinion is that women can participate if they want, 'nobody created barriers for them'. Because less women than men participate, these officers conclude that either women are too busy to participate in the FO, or women are not interested. The above case was successful, not only because the officer considered the woman as a potential participant, but also because he recognized her problem with the male farmers.

In all schemes numerous village level organisations have been formed by the government departments since independence. Officers of the departments formed these organisations. They made use of the local elite groups they knew and as a consequence the members of elite groups became office-bearers in the most of the new organisations. These were mainly men. The formation of village level organisations increased with the implementation of several state sponsored development projects and programs. Those who are used to enjoy benefits of organisations, join other organisations for deriving benefits. Thus, most positions in village organisations are held by male local elite. With respect to this there is no difference between the FO and those previous village organisations. This means that in the process of intervention, less men than women were encouraged to participate. In Ambewela, no women were encouraged at all to participate. The president of one of the FOs and the WS of the scheme said the following.

The have been set up by the Irrigation Department. The TA, IO and WS came to the villages and informed the gramasevakas. Then the gramasevakas informed the villagers. They gathered one day and elected the office-bearers. The were formed during the JVP era. Nobody addressed or invited the females to participate in the FO.

conclusion

From the above it may be clear that the attitude of officers has its impact on female participation. If their attitude is biased this may hamper female participation. Officers may fail to view women as potential participants in the FO, because they think that women do not work in irrigated agriculture or that women should be represented by their husbands. Officers may also fail to see the specific problems that women face in participation.

The Sri Lankan law does not support a differential treatment of men and women. Therefore it is the responsibility of the officers to make sure that all stakeholders have equal chances to participate. This argument holds as much for poor people as for women. In practice this may entail that officers have to give specific attention to the participation of such groups (affirmative action) and accommodate for their specific problems. Ultimately, this will not only benefit these people, but also the program as a whole because there will be a larger group to support the organisation.

CHAPTER 9 COSTS AND BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION TO MEN AND WOMEN

Both male and female farmers face difficulties in participation. These may have either a material or social character. One could assume that if the material and social benefits outweigh the material and social costs, both male and female farmers will decide to participate in the FO. This chapter explores the costs and benefits of participation and differences between men and women in these.

In all schemes it was clear that both men and women expect their major benefit from an organisation like the FO to be material benefits. More specifically they expect seed paddy, fertilizers, chemicals at a cheaper rate than in the shops. Some farmers also expect benefits from the FO intervening in marketing. Both male and female farmers expect other services of the departments through the FO like extension and training, but they give priority to material benefits.

Male farmers are not very specific about the benefits from the FO, they call it a social service in general terms. Female farmers appear to be more critical of the benefits of the FO in comparison to the time they invest. This is not only because women tend to have less leisure time than men. Participation is mainly a question of priorities. Women do not give priority to participation in the FO as the FO is not very active. They prefer to spent their time for other - more beneficial- activities. In the following case, a woman from Parapegama explains her priorities.

I never participate for the FO meetings. If I go there I have to spent about 2 or 3 hours, but if I stay a home I can make 200-300 beedi. Therefore I do not like to go. I will ask my husband what the officers said. It is better to be a member of the Death Donation Society than to be a member of the FO. The FO does not give quick benefits, we can cultivate without the FO. In addition to that, most people ignore the FO.

An important reason for women to be critical of costs and benefits of participation in organisations is the fact that women cannot transfer work to their husbands. However, men can transfer some of their responsibilities in the farm or at home to their wives. As a result participation in the FO does not necessarily increase the workload of men, but it generally increases the workload of their wives even if they do not participate themselves. In Parapegama the wives of the male secretary and president criticize their husbands' participation for this reason. In the following case the secretary's wife speaks.

I never disagree with my husband. It is good he is the secretary of the FO, but because of that he cannot do home activities. Therefore I have more work than before now. I should go to the market, wash, do transplanting, organise attam, do threshing etc.

Costs of participation for women are also higher because their mobility is more constrained than men's mobility. Most men go to meetings by bicycle, but very few women own a bicycle to go to meetings. This means they have to walk, which takes more time. In addition to this, the mobility of young women is limited in two ways. If they are married they usually have small children. They have to be critical in their activities, because they cannot ask their neighbours or relations too frequently to look after the children. If they are unmarried, parents do not like them to go around alone. Young men are not confronted with these constraints.

Another reason why the costs of participation in the FO differ between men and women, results from the fact that the FO is already male dominated. This encourages men to participate, but forms a barrier to female participation. The complete absence of female participants in Parapegama and Ambewela is partly explained by the dominance of men. In Ambewela, meeting places and times are agreed upon with male members. They hold meetings in the night which is very inconvenient for (potential) female farmers. In Parapegama the meetings are held in the afternoon, but they are held at the local bar. The constraints this poses to female participation is explained by a woman in the following case.

The meetings are held in the afternoons at the boutique. At that time most men become drunk from arrack. There are no women who go to those meetings. For these two reasons, I think participation in the meetings is not suitable for me.

conclusion

While the benefits of the FO are more or less equally valued by men and women, the costs of participation are much higher for women. This is mainly caused by the fact that most women cannot transfer their responsibilities at home and in the field to somebody else in the household. In contrast, men can transfer some of their workload to their wives. Therefore women tend to be more critical than men in participation.

The costs of participation for women are further increased by their limited mobility and constraints posed by the fact that the FO is already a male dominated organisation.

CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first component of the research on female involvement in FO's aimed at answering the question whether female participation in FO's is less than male participation. It also aimed to give some information about the reasons for a different rate of participation of women.

The extent of the difference in participation between men and women, was examined by the following figures:

- number of male FO members and number of female FO members
- number of male FO office-bearers and number of female FO office-bearers
- number of male attendants in FO activities and number of female attendants in FO activities.

It was assumed that a priori one would expect women depend on agriculture for their livelihood as much as men. Therefore it was assumed that the percentage of women in comparison to men in the organisation should be equal to the percentage of women in comparison to men in Sri Lanka, which is about 50%-50%. The figures showed that on average the percentage of female membership in comparison to male membership was 15.26%. To have a participation of 50% men and 50% women, this figure should be 100%. There were no female office-bearers in the FO's of the selected schemes. There were no exact figures on female attendance, but the general opinion is that attendance by women is very low.

Within the research team the following hypothesis explaining female participation were developed:

1. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the participation of women in irrigated agriculture is limited.
2. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the participation of women in household decision making is limited.
3. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the participation of women in organizations is limited.
4. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the attitude of officers towards women is different than the attitude towards men.
5. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the FO has become male dominated.
6. Female participation in the FO is limited, because the costs of participation are higher for women.

These hypotheses have been discussed in the chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 (hypothesis 4 and 5) and chapter 9 respectively.

ad1.

There is a large discrepancy between the norm and the practice of female labour contribution in irrigated agriculture. In all schemes women contribute labour to the own cultivation. Differences between women from different households may be attributed to different income classes, the specific situation of the family and the kind of crops and cultivation methods.

ad2.

There is rarely one decision maker at household level. Decisions are made in negotiation with several household members. Family wellbeing depends on day to day expenditures and in these women have a dominant role. This role becomes increasingly important, as profit margins in irrigated agriculture are very low.

ad3.

In most organisations, male membership outnumbers female membership. Many organisations are inactive. Female participation is highest in active organisations. Women also participate in some very successful informal organisations, like seettus. Due to their underrepresentation in organisations women do have less opportunities than men to develop skills and gain experience in formal organisations. This is considered as a barrier to their participation by some women.

ad4.

Male dominant FO's generally result in time-frames and arrangements that are suited to men. These are not necessarily suitable for women.

ad5.

The attitude of officers has its impact on female participation. If they do not view women as potential participants or if they do not give accommodation for the specific problems women face in participation, this may negatively affect their participation in the FO.

ad6.

Benefits of the FO are more or less equally valued by men and women, but the costs of participation differ. This is mainly caused by the fact that men can transfer their responsibilities to their wives, while women do not have that possibility. Costs of participation for women are also higher due to their reduced mobility and the fact that the FO is already male dominated. Therefore women tend to be more critical than men about participation in the FO.

The first and the second hypothesis have to be rejected. The participation of women in irrigated agriculture and household decision making should be given its due recognition. Their role in irrigated agriculture and family wellbeing, makes women as much stakeholders in irrigation management as men. This implies that their participation in the FO is desirable. In addition to this, it followed from the results of the third hypothesis that traditionally women participate successfully in informal village organisations, like seettu. The results of the last three hypothesis can be summarized in the following three problems about female participation in the FO:

1. Women have less opportunities than men to develop skills and gain experience in formal organisations than men.
2. The status quo of male dominant FO participation is not facilitating female participation.
3. The female participation gets less attention from officers than male participation.
4. Women cannot transfer part of their workload to another person, therefore they tend to be very critical in participation in organisations.

Of course the Irrigation Department cannot solve all these four problems. The origin of the last point is located at household level. Starting points for change by the Irrigation Department may be the first and the third point. Officers may give specific attention to the time schedules and

places that are convenient for women for example. They can also demand to have a minimum of women participating in their training sessions and at meetings. In addition to that, womens' organisations or informal womens' groups could be used to discuss FO issues and develop strategies to improve female participation in the FO.

The importance of affirmative action towards less involved groups, like poor people and women, follows from the second point. Without specific attention, it is not probable that female attention will increase, because the organisation is made by the people who participate in the FO at the moment. The participation of other groups is needed ensure the sustainability and continuity of the FO in the long run. Not only will a larger number of people sustain the FO activities, but also the acceptability of the FO in the villages increases if the organisation involves more people.

In the short surveys not very much attention has been given to the specific incentives men and women may have to participate in the FO. It has only been discussed in general terms whether women are stakeholders in irrigation management.(hypothesis 1 and 2) In theory, one could expect that the FO affects their farming practices. In practice this is not necessarily the case, as one respondent said: 'We can cultivate without the FO. People tend to ignore the FO.' Whether women really want to participate in the FO depends very much on the activities of the FO, especially because women tend to be more critical than men about participation. In addition to this, the activities of the FO may have a different character for men and women. Therefore the discussion on female participation cannot take place without the (implicit or explicit) discussion of the function of the FO in irrigated agriculture. This question has been elaborated further in the in-depth study.