Decentralisation and Gender Equity in South Asia
An Issues paper

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I. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Gender Unit of IDRC has commissioned this paper to provide the background for a research competition in South Asia on the gendered impacts and dimensions of decentralisation. This research competition is part of the Gender Unit programming initiative on gender, citizenship and justice. While a general background paper has been prepared on the Gender Dimensions of Decentralisation[1], the objective of this paper is to focus on the specific context of the South Asia region.

This paper is based on literature reviews of the international experience of decentralisation and also the literature produced on/in the region. It also based on the author's involvement in action research in the region with partner organisations on gender, citizenship and governance, and, consultations with researchers both from the region and elsewhere working on gender and governance issues and women's political participation.

1.2 Specific Focus of this paper

Decentralisation, in its simplest definition, is a form of governance that transfers authority and responsibility from central to intermediate and local governments (ODI 2002). In much of the development literature decentralisation of government has been treated as a technical exercise involving administrative and institutional reform to improve performance and planning and to make allocative decisions efficient and transparent. The idea of decentralisation is linked to subsidiarity which means that what can be done efficiently and effectively at the lowest level of government should be done at that level and not at higher levels (Issac 2000). Economists justify decentralisation on the grounds of allocative efficiency, enhanced policy responsiveness and effectiveness especially of poverty reduction programmes. The assumption is that because decisions are being taken in a local constituency citizens will have more control over decisions taken and it will reflect their preferences.

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[1] Developing a Research Agenda on the Gender Dimensions of Decentralisation: Background Paper for the IDRC 2003 Gender Unit Research Competition. Prepared by Melissa MacLean in May 2003

However, governance is about the exercise of power and thus a political project determining which citizens will be included in the process of decision-making, whose interests will be met through allocative decisions and how and by whom those in authority will be held accountable for unfair, unjust and exclusionary practices. Since to govern is to exercise power there is no a priori reason why localised forms of governance should be more just, equitable and inclusive (Heller 2001). Mapped onto existing systems of political patronage and culture decentralised government can prove to be just as discriminatory, and in the context of South Asia, operate along the fault lines of gender, caste, and class[2].

The focus of this paper is therefore on decentralisation as political project, as a form of governance that not only is justified on grounds of efficiency but on grounds that it is open to the participation of subordinate groups in society and accountable to their interests. The focus is on interrogating democratic decentralisation in South Asia not only because most governments in South Asia have espoused this form of decentralisation but because democratising political relationships and institutions at the local level is key to tackling the myriad social and economic inequalities plaguing the region and that continue to exclude vast proportions of the population from citizenship and rights. Democratic decentralisation as a form of governance that expands participation of subordinated groups and is responsive to their interests is critical for women as a subordinated group not only because of the proximity of local government to the lives of ordinary women but because the lack of democracy in gender relations excludes them from participation in governance and the consideration of their interests in the business of governmental decision-making.

This paper is in three parts. In the first part the international experience on decentralisation and development is reviewed including what the literature has to say about the gender dimensions of decentralisation. The second part looks specifically at South Asia, at the forms that decentralisation has taken and the prospects for democratic decentralisation. A significant part of this section is devoted to the gendered experiences of decentralisation taking place in the countries of the region. The last and final part suggests key areas for further research based on the purpose

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[2] Take for example the case of India which is by all accounts a highly successful democracy that has nevertheless institutionalised inequality.

that research on decentralisation should serve – to expand substantive participation of women in local government and to make gender equality concerns the basis for evaluating democratic decentralisation – rather than specific themes.

1.3 Structural constraints and resultant exclusion: gender and citizenship in South Asia

Democratic decentralisation as a form of governance is being mapped on to existing social and political relationships and this has implications for the success and failure of this mode of governance. In the context of South Asia, and reference is made here to Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India and Nepal, common patterns of structural constraints and resultant exclusion are evident that deny rights and agency to poor people and minorities more generally and to women more specifically.

High levels of female deprivation – the countries in the region are characterised by high levels of female deprivation starting from the right to life itself. This is acutely manifested in the declining sex ratio in all the countries of the region, except Sri Lanka, whereby the number of women in the population is declining. The standard situation in any given population is that women outnumber men and this is generally attributed to women's greater biological hardiness. This is the case in even the poorest regions of the world, namely, sub Saharan Africa where the sex ratio is 102 women to 100 men (Nussbaum 2002). Thus poverty is not an explanatory factor in declining sex ratios and is much more an indicator of the value given to female life in a given society.

High levels of inequality – this refers not only to the fact that South Asia is home to the largest population of poor people[3] in the world but also to the fact that these societies are highly unequal, that these inequalities are structural and historical and that decades after independence (from colonisation) and nation-building efforts, the state has been unable to alter these relationships. Inequalities based on caste, class, ethnicity and gender, for example, have created a virtual situation of apartheid in which access to justice and to equal citizenship remain unattainable for the majority.

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[3] Powerlessness and lack of 'voice' are a cause of poverty (the voice of the poor is rarely heard in allocational decisions), an aspect of poverty (lack of voice being a condition of poverty) and an effect of poverty (low levels of human capital particularly in the limited ability to exert influence)

High levels of social and economic dependence **–** The high levels of inequality are kept in place by the social and economic dependence of marginalised groups in a situation where state protection and promotion of social and economic rights has been inadequate and in some instances (e.g. social security provision for the majority) absent. For women from marginalised groups, and especially those living in poverty, this has meant reliance on family (especially marriage), kinship and community to access social goods and economic opportunities.

Ascribed identities as the basis of state-society relations. The nation-states that emerged from colonialism in South Asia were unable to undo the legacy of state-society relations produced through years of the colonial enterprise that had made ascribed relations (caste, religious community and ethnicity) the basis of identity and relationship with the state. Since gender relations and women's entitlements were key in defining the identity of these bounded communities, the implication for women's status is that, on the one hand, women's rights cannot be discussed, claimed, fought for separately from that of the 'bounded' community. On the other hand, the role of family, caste, kinship and religious community have become key factors of public life, structuring access to state and market opportunities. Women are brought into the public domain as mothers, sisters, and daughters and their entitlements subject to community and ethnic norms and arbitrated by family, kinship and custom.

II. Decentralisation Debates

2.1 Definitions

Definitions distinguish between types and forms of decentralisation (Rodnelli 2002; Work 2002). Typologies refer to what is being decentralised and therefore encapsulate three areas: political, administrative and fiscal. The form refers to the transfer of authority for making decisions: to local units of centralised agencies (deconcentration), lower levels of government (devolution), or semi-autonomous authorities (delegation) (ODI 2002)[4]. While deconcentration and delegation imply a

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[4] Rondinelli considers a fourth type of decentralisation, namely economic or market decentralisation. This can take the form of privatisation and deregulation, and shifts the responsibility of functions to the private sector that had been until then primarily assigned to the government.

reorganisation of central government, devolution means relinquishing political power. Political decentralisation where powers and responsibilities are devolved to elected local governments is synonymous with democratic decentralisation (Robinson 2003). The concern in this paper is with democratic decentralisation since most of the countries of South Asia have introduced some system of elected local government institutions and with the intention if not in reality to devolve powers to these bodies. While definitions neatly classify the types and forms of decentralisation, the reality of decentralisation is far more complex and varies from country to country. The decision to decentralise, and the form that decentralisation takes in a particular country, owes a great deal to domestic political calculations and to national political traditions (Crook & Manor 1995).

2.2 Decentralisation and development

The enthusiasm for decentralisation in development circles has continued unabated since the late 1980s although the understanding of what decentralisation is supposed to achieve has changed over time. Decentralisation is the corner stone of the good governance agenda sponsored by the international development community from the late 1980s onwards. In its earliest form the good governance agenda (or the good government agenda as it was known then) tried to persuade developing countries, especially in Sub Saharan Africa, to adopt more market-oriented economic policies, cut down on state expenditure, reduce public services and generally decrease the size and role of the state (Crook & Manor 1995). It was also assumed among some bi-lateral aid donors that inefficient, corrupt and centralised regimes should be replaced by western style multi-party democracies.

In the 1990s the emphasis of the good governance agenda changed. Instead of talking about the government type or regime that would be particularly suited to bringing about social and economic development, the more apolitical language of 'governance' was adopted that defined governance as 'the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs' (World Bank 1989). This definition set up the state as the main actor in governance and therefore reforming the state and 'improving' public administration became the key approaches (Mukhopadhyay and Meer 2004). The state, which had been downsized, was brought back in. It was in this context that devolution and

decentralisation of government, interpreted as institutional reform, was seen as an important strategy to build efficient, accountable and transparent government.

Crook and Manor note that decentralisation enthusiasts point to very similar justifications as those supporting good governance policies: more effective development performance arising from greater local accountability; locally adapted policy-making and implementation; encouragement of micro-accountability; greater efficiency of public management arising from improved coordination and shorter decision-making hierarchies; better mobilisation and use of resources.

The question as to whether democratic decentralisation improves development performance has animated development debates in recent years and sponsored a number of studies. The consensus seems to be that there seems little evidence that either democracy or decentralisation is necessary for poverty reduction in rural and urban areas (See Johnson 2001 for a review of the literature).

The major promise of democratic decentralisation, according to Blair, is that by building popular participation and accountability into local governance, government at the local level will become more responsive to citizen desires and more effective in service delivery (Blair 2000). In a six country study (the state of Karnataka in India being one) to test this hypothesis Blair finds that democratic local government does increase participation and representation but does not necessarily enhance empowerment of non-elite groups nor does this form of government make the distribution of benefits more equitable or reduce poverty.

In the same vein and in an earlier study Crook and Manor (1995) ask the question whether decentralisation improves performance of governmental institutions in relation to the more narrowly defined area of developmental and service outputs. Among the countries studied are Bangladesh and the Indian state of Karnataka. They conclude that decentralisation is not a catchall solution to wider problems of poverty, social inequality or economic stagnation. Further, enhanced participation alone does not guarantee good institutional performance and neither does decentralisation. Karnataka in India scored best in the evaluation of institutional performance (but not in the area of participation and resulting responsiveness) and the authors attribute this

to the following: free and lively press ready to investigate corruption and mismanagement, well established party system which meant constant pressure on the ruling party administration, well established bureaucracy groomed in the tradition that elected politicians make policy but that laws and rules exist and have to be obeyed and that there was a 'culture of accountability'.[5]

Robinson (2003) in reviewing the worldwide evidence on participation and its impact on decentralised service delivery finds that equity and efficiency of public services has not improved and in some instances disparity in access to social services, health and education, has grown (e.g. Latin America). For India he found that it is difficult to gauge equity impact because service provision is the responsibility of state governments and not decentralised units. Evidence from Bangladesh seems to suggest that successive decentralisation processes have failed to deliver improved services or outcomes. For South Asia more generally he concludes that equity outcomes were not realised for poor and marginalised people, the quality of public service had not improved and the efficiency gains as a result of financial responsibility delegation from central to state governments were undermined by inadequate resources to ensure coverage and quality.

This growing body of literature on democratic decentralisation and development outcomes while pointing to the value of participation of people in decisions affecting their lives, and the role of 'voice' in ensuring accountability nevertheless treats democracy and citizenship as instrumental to meeting development goals. The intrinsic value of substantive democracy and citizenship in poor peoples lives and the institutional conditions necessary to promote this in decentralised forms of government are les well explored in the literature. It has to be said, however, that most researchers while measuring the effectiveness of decentralisation in terms of development outcomes also point to the need for greater democratisation, the role of political parties, the state and civil society in creating these conditions in their recommendations. In the context of South Asia where the persistence of severe social and economic inequalities has not been redressed and not through procedural

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[5] These are all ingredients of institutionalised liberal democracy of which India has a long and stable tradition. As important and sacred as these are, these do not guarantee inclusive citizenship as the data on participation and performance bears out.

democracy (as for example in India), there is every need to re-think the paradigms used to measure the developmental effectiveness of decentralisation.

The discourse on decentralisation assumes to a large extent that once the institutions of government have been engineered to bring these closer to localities, participation and 'voice' will follow. Non-elite groups in society will automatically raise their voice and demand accountability and a share in public goods. This is because much of the discussion and action on decentralisation has been animated by a technocratic vision in which decentralisation is equated with the task of designing appropriate institutions whose structures can be simply inferred from the accumulated corpus of knowledge on public administration, finances and planning (Heller 2001). This vision is informed by unending faith in the ability of experts to know what needs to be done and to get it done. As Heller points out this utopian rationalism has deeply depoliticising and autocratic impulses as it assumes that the technocrat knows all, that decisions have to be insulated from the messy world of politics and therefore democracy has to be kept in check.

However, there are other voices informing the debate on decentralisation although these too suffer from utopianism albeit of a different kind. Labelled the anarcho-communitarians by Bardhan and Heller (Bardhan 1999; Heller 2001), they posit that present modes of governance suffer not from too much but too little democracy. They argue that liberal democracy does little to change the overtly centralised and elite character of post-colonial states. Democracy, it is claimed, can only work when formal institutions are kept in check by a vibrant and participatory civil society. The anarchical element lies in the rejection of traditional modes of popular mobilisation whether these be political parties or labour unions. Decentralisation, they claim has to be driven by the action of social movements building up local capacity, grassroots institutions and extra-parliamentary arenas for participation.

While there is much evidence to support this point of view, the truth must lie somewhere in between the polarised world of technocrats and anarcho-communitarians. On the one hand, decentralisation entails complex changes to administrative, financial and decision-making systems that require a high level of technical expertise and coordination. On the other hand, the basic premise of

decentralisation that government is brought closer to people and therefore is more responsive to real peoples' needs and interests is undermined without strategies to mobilise 'voice' of subordinate groups in society, and the forging of institutionalised spaces for participation and accountability.

Gender activists and feminist researchers are familiar with the dilemma involved in treading the difficult path between the technical (getting institutions right) and the political (mobilisation of voice, representation and demands for accountability). Projects of equality, as for example gender equality, simply cannot be forwarded solely by getting institutions right or merely through the agency of state bureaucracies (Standing 2004; Mukhopadhyay 2004). And yet women more than any other subordinate social group require state intervention and institutional provisions to free up agency, and the mere possibility of being able to participate in the public sphere.

2.3 Decentralisation and the female subject of social relations
The literature on decentralisation and development outcomes is more or less mute on the gendered outcomes of financial, administrative and political decentralisation, the gender differentiated nature of participation opportunities, gendered access to public services, and gender specific constraints to democratic functioning. Women are either aggregated with the poor more generally or part and parcel of subordinate and non-elite groups. Thus one has to look at gender specific research on the differential impact and dimensions of decentralisation as a form of governance on men and women.

Studies on the gender dimension of decentralisation are relatively recent and because of this it is limited both in quantity and scope (Maclean 2003; Goetz 2004). Women's participation as political representatives in decentralised government is a growing field of study in the South Asian literature on decentralisation because state sponsored affirmative action has opened up the theoretical possibility for women's participation. This literature is examined in greater detail in the following section. The purpose in this section is to understand what researchers are looking at when they examine the gender dimensions of decentralisation and its relationship to gender equity in development.

Decentralisation, as has been noted earlier, is a form of governance and because of this it involves the exercise of power and authority in the public sphere. Gender relations are centrally about power relations that arise first and foremost in the private sphere of family and kinship. However, power differentials between women and men are not restricted to the private sphere but define power and authority and identity in the public sphere. It is not surprising therefore that many of the studies on the gender dimensions of decentralisation focus on the connection between the subordinate power of women in the private and the possibilities and limits to the exercise of power in the public sphere, in the world of politics, decision-making and governance. A frequently asked question in the literature, therefore, is whether women as a group are better able to participate in decentralised systems of governance (than say at national levels).

Just as it was assumed that decentralisation provided greater opportunities for citizen participation in governance, it has also been assumed that the local arena of governance is best suited to women's participation. These assumptions are particularly women prone and identify the category 'woman' in relation to their enduring reproductive roles. Thus for example for Evertzen (2001), and many others but best exemplified by her, the reason why local politics is easier for women is because eligibility criteria for the local level are less stringent (read women have less merit), and local government is the closest to the women's sphere of life, and easier to combine with rearing children (so they can successfully combine their reproductive roles with public sphere activities). Local government is also seen as a political apprenticeship arena for women (Evertzen 2001; Goetz 2004).

However, the empirical evidence on women's participation in local government seems to belie these rather pat assumptions precisely because of the extension of private gender power relations into public authority and decision-making sphere. First, the quantitative evidence seems to contradict enhanced participation of women in local governance. Goetz (2004) points out that although it is currently impossible to obtain globally comparable data on women's participation in local government what evidence there exists shows that with the exception of Latin America, in no region of the world, not even in Europe, do we see a consistently higher proportion of women in local councils than in national parliaments. In many of the cases where there are in

fact more women in local than in national government*, **this is because quotas or other affirmative action provisions have been applied at the local level**, but not, or not to the same extent, at the national level. This is true for Namibia, Uganda, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, France, and indeed for a good many of the Latin American countries.

Second, a cursory review of the qualitative data on women's participation seems to indicate that contrary to the view that local government is the first level that women can break into and as such it may serve as a springboard to national politics (Evertzen 2001), local government is often more hierarchical and embedded in local social structures than national government and so is difficult for women to penetrate as independent political actors, or for them to raise controversial gender issues (Beall 2004; Goetz 2004; Mukhopadhyay and Meer 2004).

Whether or not women will be effective in the exercise of participation and power at the local level depends to a great extent on the terms of their inclusion (the specific features of affirmative action for example), the role and influence of traditional authorities in local government, the extent to which the rules and the extent of decentralisation allow for gender specific rights claiming. To this must be added the strength of women's specific organising in civil society at a local level.

Terms of inclusion – Affirmative action in some countries has made it possible for women's inclusion in significant numbers in local government. South Asia where four countries have quotas for women's entry is a good case in kind. However, do these measures make for effective and sustainable participation?

In Uganda the 1997 Local Government Act reserves 30% of local council seats for all-female competition. However, these seats are an *addition* to the council body, not a portion of existing seats. New wards are created for women to represent combining two to three regular wards, in effect at least doubling the constituency which women are meant to represent, compared to regular ward representatives. Elections for the women's seats are held separately, a good two weeks after the ward elections. In the 1998 local government elections, irritation with this unwieldy system, as well as voter fatigue, resulted in failure to achieve quorum for the women's elections all over the

country. After many re-runs the elections were held but the process undermined the perceived legitimacy and credibility of women politicians (Goetz 2004).

In Bangladesh women representatives are disadvantaged by structural constraints arising from the way in which quotas for women are incorporated within the electoral system. The *Union Parishad* (rural local government institution) is made up of nine wards and the electorate in each of these wards elects a general member – usually a man although women are not barred as candidates to general seats. The quotas for women were instituted by providing three additional seats within each *Union Parishad*, and potential women representatives to these seats are elected by and responsible for three wards. This meant that women candidates had to canvass across and be responsible for an area three times the size of the area covered by a general (male) member. Women were further disadvantaged by resource constraints because they received the same budgetary and other resources received by a general member, even though women covered a wider area. There was also role confusion, as the role of the one woman representative who operates in a constituency which also has three general members, was not clear (Mukhopadhyay & Meer 2004).

In India where there is 33% reservation for women at all levels of the local government institutions (three tier system), the seats reserved for women rotate in every election. Thus a ward reserved for all female competition becomes a general ward (in which women and men can compete) in the next election. As a result political parties simply do not take women's candidacy seriously nor do they invest in the elected woman candidate knowing very well that in the next round of elections these women are of no use to their electoral prospects. The selection of female candidates by parties for reserved seats is thus to a large extent determined by the calculation as to which women are the most 'useful' either because they are related to powerful men or because they can be easily bypassed in everyday political decision-making.

Goetz (2004) and Beall (2004) note that in many countries where affirmative action for women exist in local government elections, these measures were introduced as an afterthought thus detracting from the credibility and legitimacy of women as political actors.

Role and influence of traditional authorities - As has been noted above political relations at the local level, the distribution of power and authority, is often more hierarchical and embedded in local social structures. This is mapped on to the new forms of formal local government structures introduced by decentralisation. In some instances the power of traditional authorities is institutionalised through law as for example in South Africa.

Beall (2004) points out that local government remained a contested affair long after South Africa's 'rainbow nation' was firmly established at the national level. A number of factors served to retard progress. On the administrative side, South Africa suffered from a surfeit of racially divided institutional structures deriving from the former Bantustans, or so-called 'self-governing states', set up under apartheid. These had to be dismantled and merged. A further complicating factor was the absence of any effective local government in rural areas outside of the former white areas. Here governance had been largely in the hands of traditional leaders who had been used by the apartheid regime to run the rural areas along lines similar to the colonial system of indirect rule. Through this they had amassed considerable local level power, albeit within the constraints of apartheid policies and structures, and they were keen not to see this dissipate under a new dispensation. It is not surprising, then, that the initial efforts towards instituting local democracy were fiercely contested by traditional authorities.

Traditional authorities therefore sought concessions from the government to preserve their local level power by demanding fifty per cent of the seats in local government. Although the government did not agree to this, it nevertheless increased their participation in local councils from ten to 20 per cent. This was done despite the contradictions in terms of the constitutional rights of women and their implications for them of local governance dominated by traditional structures. Issues affecting women's strategic interests include poor access to rural community structures because of control by traditional leaders, the upholding of customary marriage laws and women's poor inheritance rights under these, as well as restricted access to communal land.

New government-sponsored traditional development centres, dubbed 'traditional' because they are set up under the aegis of local chieftaincies and in coordination with traditional structures of governance, were instituted at a local government level. These

function as one-stop shops for a range of social services dispensed to the locality. While taking information, communication and services to people in deep rural areas is undoubtedly a good thing and of potential benefit to women, it is ironic that non-elected, patriarchal appointees dominate the level of government closest to the people. Thus the elevation of hereditary chieftainship to a privileged and protected position within local governance has seriously compromised rural women's access to, and influence on, local government.

The role of informal and traditional authorities in the formal local government bodies in India (the panchayat raj institutions, PRI for short) is increasingly being documented. Kripa Ananth Pur (2004) shows in a paper that analyses the role of Customary Panchayats in influencing Grama Panchayat elections that they have been particularly damaging to women in local governments interested in a political career by reducing their chances of continuity, discouraging (or even not allowing) women to re-contest the elections. The customary Panchayats act as "gatekeepers" in controlling nominations to elections in general, but their influence is especially strong in the selection of women that may take advantage of reservation.

Decentralisation, gendered participation and gender specific rights claiming – Does decentralisation make it more possible for women's participation in decision-making to introduce woman friendly agendas or to make decision-making more accountable to these interests? In the wake of decentralisation, the introduction of measures in some contexts for women's greater representation, civil society groups have been extremely active in trying to make these provisions work to forward gender specific interests. These initiatives have concentrated on building the capacity of women elected to local government bodies, organising women's constituencies, introducing gender audits etc and using existing institutional spaces. In Latin America, for example, engagement with existing policy and institutional spaces to forward economic and social rights and women's participation in securing these rights is part and parcel of the approach to building an inclusive citizenship.[6] Decentralisation processes have been seized upon to enhance poor women's participation, participatory budgeting (a statutory requirement in Peru and Brazil) is being used both as a political

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[6] See Latin America trip report, IDRC Gender justice, citizenship and entitlement programme by M.Mukhopadhyay and N.Singh 2004.

tool for mobilisation as also for building accountability of local government bodies to poor women's interests. Local governments are also promoting self-help cooperatives as a way to tackle poverty and expand livelihoods and most of the users of these programmes are poor women. The role of research and activism has been not only to make these initiatives work but also investigate precarious nature of these economic alternatives and difficult questions regarding worker's rights and especially women workers.

However, the experiences seem also to indicate that women's participation in decision-making is dependant on a number of factors not least of which are the specific institutional rules governing planning, the extent of devolution of funds and other resources to the local level, and the extent of decentralisation of powers to oversee, monitor and audit resource use to local government bodies. A common problem in India, for example, is that not all states have devolved financial and administrative powers to the lowest level local government bodies, which is the panchayat. In many instances panchayats are merely the implementing agency for national poverty eradication and other related programmes and have no role in planning these (except perhaps to select the beneficiaries). These factors do limit the extent of participation possible and the forwarding of gender specific interests. Other factors include the poor institutionalisation of spaces for citizen participation, especially for women as citizens. As for example, different states have various rules regarding the role of the gram sabha (citizens forum) in taking decisions and overseeing implementation. However, very few states have actually introduced rules of attendance that would make sure that a quorum for the gram sabha cannot be fulfilled without women being present. This has resulted in all men assemblies making decisions excluding women altogether. Except for Kerala in India no other state has actually ring fenced a percentage of the budget for women's development making it even more difficult to press for decisions that would forward women's agendas.

Goetz (2004) gives examples of the institutional innovations that have made it possible in different country contexts for women to participate and for planning and monitoring functions to be more accountable to women's interests. These include rules to secure institutionalised spaces for women's participation in planning and

monitoring and most importantly auditing and review of expenditures; ring fencing a percentage of the budget for women-only deliberations, gender-sensitive local revenue and spending analysis. These are some of the measures that should amplify women's voice in local deliberations, and support spending on women's needs.

III. Decentralisation in South Asia

3.1 Background

Commentators trace a genealogy of local government institutions in the region going back to pre-colonial times. While pre-colonial governance structures were dispersed and localised, colonial statecraft built a centralised authority (the colonial state) by replacing the heterogeneous and fluid social and political arrangements through which relationships within and between diverse communities had been managed. They did this by codifying the practices of the diverse communities and in effect setting up separate 'bounded' communities based on ascribed relations (caste, religious community and ethnicity) each governed by its own customs and traditions. At a local level the guardians of community traditions became the new elites and were connected to state power through the power to interpret regulations defining communities. These traditional authorities did not disappear with the dismantling of colonialism but continued to exert authority as is evident in the power of caste and other community based panchayats evident in the region.

In this paper, however, the discussion is limited to the most recent reforms that have taken place in the region to promote decentralised forms of governance. Needless to say the form that decentralisation takes in the most recent reforms owes substantially to a prior *tradition* of governance but departs from it. These reforms have to be seen as not reviving the past but as fashioning the present and future with the imperative to extend state power and legitimacy.

3.2 Recent reforms

The provision for setting up urban and rural local government institutions is mentioned in the 11th and 12th schedules of the Indian constitution. In fact a number of states in India had set up local government institutions in the 1970s and 1980s. Several attempts were made in the period 1950 - 70 to operationalise decentralisation,

but this could not be done across the country because local government institutions did not exist in all states at the district and sub-district level (Pal 2001). The Constitution 73rd Amendment Act (1992) legalised and gave the impetus to set up a uniform structure of three tier local government institutions for the rural areas. The *panchayats* were recognised as the third tier of government with reasonable substance and contents in terms of powers and authority. These amendments also created space for women's representation in local government institutions by introducing a thirty three per cent quota for women to be directly elected to these bodies (and also in urban government structures). The Constitution 74th Amendment Act (1993) extended this reservation policy to urban local government institutions. Similarly, the representation of historically marginalised groups (scheduled castes and tribes) was also institutionalised. At the time of writing most states in India have had two rounds of elections since 1995.

In Bangladesh the 1972 Constitution emphasized the need for establishing local government with representative character at different levels (Chapter 3, Article 59). However, the long periods of military rule at the centre put paid to the intentions expressed in the Constitution. In 1982 the then military ruler of Bangladesh, H.M.Ershad introduced an elected administration at sub district (upazila) level. This was followed in the period 1996 – 2001 by an active local government agenda pursued by the then elected government that intended to institute a four tier local government structure – the Zila Parishad (district council), Upazila Parishad sub-district council), Union Parishad and Gram Parishad (village council). The 1997 amendments regularised the Union Parishad by passing the Union Parishad Bill. This Bill made provision for 3 additional seats reserved for the election of women. A similar reservation of seats was put in place on 22 March 1999 for Pourashavas (urban local government institutions), equivalent to one third of the number of commissioners, to be elected directly. The Union Parishad is the only really meaningful local government tier at present. Political differences between the main ruling parties have delayed the amendments for setting up the four-tier system. While the District Council Law 2000 proposes the setting up of Zila Parishads in the 61 districts of Bangladesh and the establishment of the four-tier system, the implementation agenda is yet to be finalised (Hossain 2003). Hossain notes that the

lack of consensus within government and the major opposition parties regarding the structure, participation and election process of the local bodies has led to delays.

In Nepal the 1990 Constitution was promulgated after the restoration of the multi-party democratic political system in the country.[7] Since then, many efforts were made to strengthen democracy and decentralization reforms. In a context of pressing international demand, the government in 1996 constituted a decentralisation coordination committee, whose suggestions were incorporated into the current decentralisation law, the Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA) 2055, passed in 1999.This law established a two tier system of local bodies, the District Development Committees (DDC) at the higher tier, and the Village Development Committees (VDC) and Municipalities at the lower level, in rural and urban areas respectively. Direct elections for village and municipalities representatives are to be held every five years, and a nominated group of such representatives will constitute the DDC. A twenty per cent quota of the seats for women in local elections at municipality and village level has also been established, as well as provisions to ensure the inclusion of women at the DDC level.

Sri Lanka witnessed the transition of governance from centralised to decentralised form in 1987, after the Government enacted the thirteenth Amendment to the constitution. The most important reform was that powers of central government were devolved to the provinces and the thirteenth Amendment provided for the setting up of Provincial Councils in each province. This occurred in a period of escalating civil conflict in which the north-eastern parts of Sri Lanka with a preponderance of ethnic Tamil population were demanding a separate state. Researchers have shown that the devolution of power from the centre to the provinces was undertaken mainly as an alternative to the demand for a separate state by the Tamil political parties and the militant separatist groups. Three types of local authorities were set up as a result of the constitutional amendment: Municipal Councils (for cities and larger towns), Urban Councils (for less urbanised areas and based on population size) and Pradeshiya Sabhas (in rural areas). Unlike the other South Asian countries Sri Lanka does not

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[7] The constitution stands abrogated at the time of writing, Parliament has been dismissed and the King has imposed monarchial rule with extensive powers to the military.

have affirmative action for women in local government (or at a national level) although it does have a youth quota.

In Pakistan the military government of General Musharraf launched a campaign for political devolution in 2000 that was aimed at transferring administrative and financial powers to local government. In reviving local governments Musharraf was following in the footsteps of his predecessors. Successive military rulers have typically instituted lower tiers of government as a substitute for democratisation at the provincial and national levels (ICG Asia Report No. 77, 2004). Under the Devolution of Power Plan announced in August 2000, elected local governments were to be established at three levels – village (Union council), sub district (Tehsil council) and district (Zila council). The Local Government Plan, as it was entitled, intended to build genuine democratic institutions and empower the people at the grassroots. [8] The plan envisaged a district assembly comprising chairmen of all union councils in a district. A tehsil council, comprising union councillors from the tehsil, would perform functions at its level. The lowest tier, the union council, would have its own chairman and 26 councillors. Members of the union council were to be elected directly by adult franchise. The final version of the Plan also reserved thirty three per cent of the seats for the direct election of women to the Union Councils (whereas the original plan had envisaged a fifty per cent quota).

3.3 The political economy of decentralisation

As has been discussed in the earlier section, the decision to decentralise, and the form that decentralisation takes, is always a political decision and is propelled by internal political considerations and regime needs to create or renew legitimacy. Governments in South Asia ushering in decentralisation reforms have done so claiming that these measures would empower people, involve a wide range of social classes in political and developmental decisions by bringing government closer to people, cut down bureaucratic delays and promote and rejuvenate democracy.[9] Given these policy

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[8] The Local Government Plan was approved in a joint meeting of the National Security Council and the Federal Cabinet on 5 August 2000. Bureau Report, "NSC, Cabinet Approve Devolution Plan", *Dawn*, 6 August 2000

[9] While introducing the Constitution (73rd) Amendment Bill in the Indian parliament on December 1, 1992, the then rural development minister observed that "this casts a duty on the centre and as well the states to

statements and professed commitments, what has been the record of devolving power to local government institutions?

India. The year 2004 marked a decade of Panchayati Raj institutions in India. The 73rd Amendment stipulated that a uniform three tier system of local government institutions were to be set up for the rural areas. India is a stable parliamentary democracy. It is divided into states each with its own legislature. It also has central parliament. The central and state governments share power. The power to amend the constitution lies with parliament. The enactment of the 73rd Amendment made it incumbent on state legislatures to pass their respective acts to make the panchayati raj institutions legal. The 73rd amendment or Central Act does not specify the functions and powers of panchayats. This is left to the discretion of the state legislatures. The Central Act merely directs states to devolve powers and define responsibilities of panchayats so that they are able to prepare plans for economic development and social justice and implement schemes to further these. The subjects listed in the Eleventh schedule of the constitution (29 subjects ranging from agricultural development, land reform, irrigation to education, health and other social services) were supposed to be gradually transferred (the 3 Fs = functions, funds and functionaries) to the panchayats.

What has been the record?[10] Most state governments just barely managed to pass their respective legislation within the stipulated time period (within a year of the Central Act coming into being). This meant that not much time and planning went into setting up the panchayati raj institutions. Elections were held but in many states it was delayed due to court cases many of which had to do with objections to seats being reserved for women and for scheduled castes and tribes. The state governments did not pursue this vigorously enough. Only seven states (out of 24) managed to transfer all 29 subjects in the Eleventh Schedule to the panchayats although *not all of them*

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establish and nourish the village panchayats so as to make them effective, self-governing institutions" (quoted in Pal 2004). This he added would fulfil Mahatma Gandhi's dream of *gram swaraj* (village self-government). At the launch of his Local Government Plan in August 2000, General Musharraf justified the plan in the following words: 'The basic issue is to empower the impoverished and make the people the master of their own destiny. We want to introduce essence of democracy and not sham democracy, which promotes the privileged. Devolution will bring far-reaching consequences and will change [the] fate of the country' (quoted in ICG report 2004). In Nepal the Local Self-Governance Act was hailed as the most comprehensive piece of legislation that the country has ever undertaken for decentralization and devolution of power.

[10] This review of the state of devolution of power in India owes much to M.Pal's excellent overview. See Pal, M (2004) Panchayati Raj and rural Governance: Experiences of a Decade.

transferred the corresponding funds and functionaries to the local government institutions. The record of financial devolution has been appalling as a result and the transfer of functions to panchayats became meaningless without the corresponding finances to enable panchayats to act autonomously. Only Kerala state stands out as a shining example in that it put thirty five to forty per cent of the state's funds at the disposal of the local government institutions for spending on projects formulated by them. While the panchayats are supposed to mobilise their own funds through taxation, their share of tax revenue has been declining and none of the state governments have suggested mechanisms for revenue generation. In addition to this parallel funding from funds held by MPs, MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly), special state sponsored schemes have been channelised into rural development by-passing the local government institutions further disempowering them. This state of affairs has forced observers to conclude that the status of the panchayats in terms of autonomy and being able to be something more than just paper institutions remains the same as before the enactment of the 73rd Amendment. Power remains concentrated in the hands of the state governments.

Pal (2004) in reviewing this decade of decentralisation observes that the pressure for greater autonomy for the panchayats is not coming from the grassroots, from civil and political society, from the elected members themselves. It is also not coming from the political parties, which is difficult to understand, because they have everything to gain by promoting devolution since it would give them leverage and improve their electoral chances. The only exception is the state of Kerala where a political party appropriated decentralisation as a political project to democratise state-society relations recognising that (1) its electoral appeal was limited (2) the redistributive capacities of the developmental state were exhausted and (3) continued economic stagnation called for flexible decentralised forms of state intervention (Heller 2001; Sharma 2003).

Pakistan. Whereas the state of Kerala appropriated decentralisation as a political project to democratise state-society relations, President Musharraf in Pakistan used his Local Government Plan to bypass democratisation at the national and provincial level (ICG 2004). Local government has a long and chequered career in Pakistan's history as has parliamentary democracy. Successive military governments have used local

government to legitimise their authority, create local elites loyal to them and to undermine representative politics and the federal character of the Pakistan state[11].

On 12 October 1999, Pakistan's military deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's elected government. Like his military predecessors Musharraf seized upon the idea of using local government to advance regime survival and consolidation.[12] Creating a National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) he made devolution and diffusion of power a main policy priority of his military government. The devolution decision was also aimed at co-opting domestic and external constituencies that favour decentralisation and local empowerment as for example donors as well as influential sections of civil society such as the media and NGOs who have long blamed bureaucratic corruption and centralisation for Pakistan's political and administrative malaise. Local governments were intended to establish the military's democratic credentials and confirm its intent eventually to restore civilian rule in the eyes of the international community who did not take well to a military dictatorship in the late twentieth century.

Another key motivation was to create new elites so as to undermine and marginalise political adversaries. Ruling through non-partisan local bodies is a time-tested strategy employed by Pakistan's military rulers. Echoing the military's traditional distrust of party politics, Musharraf made it clear in August 2000 that local elections would be non-partisan. A multitude of scattered local power centres dependent on patronage are easier for the military to deal with than four, relatively more cohesive provincial governments. By creating a democratic façade at local levels, Musharraf hoped to circumvent constitutional provisions for provincial political, administrative, and fiscal autonomy.

Drafted with technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the "Local Government Plan 2000" (LG Plan 2000) called for reestablishment of elected councils at the sub-district and district levels. Musharraf's plan promised to vest extensive political and administrative authority in district and sub-district

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[11] Pakistan's first military ruler, General Ayub Khan, opted for an elaborate, though nominally empowered, local bodies scheme. Similarly Genderal Zia saw merit in instituting local bodies in order to cloak a highly centralised, authoritarian system of government.
[12] The analysis of the politics of decentralisation in Pakistan is taken from the ICG Asia Report 77, 2004 Devolution in Pakistan: Reform or Regression.

governments by providing for matching federal and provincial grants to help them fulfil their new responsibilities. For the first time in Pakistan's history, elected officials the Nazim and Naib Nazim (mayor and deputy mayor) were to be placed at the apex of district government, with executive powers and responsibilities for law and order.

Phased voting between December 2000 and July 2001 installed District and sub-district governments in 101 districts, including four cities. Operating under its respective provincial Local Government Ordinance 2001, each has its Nazim and Naib Nazim (mayor and deputy mayor), elected council and administration. However, the flaws in the system soon became clear. The Nazim and Naib Nazim are elected by an electoral college of union council members and not by direct election. This means that unelected heads of local government enjoy the most power but are not submitted to democratic controls. No clear lines of authority delineate the relationship between the nazim and the bureaucratic head of a district, the DCO (district coordination officer), who represents the centre. DCOs often ignore them in administrative matters since there is no provision in the LGO to ensure their compliance with local government directives. The elected local governments have been empowered only in name and do not enjoy any meaningful administrative or financial autonomy. Although devolution has certainly reduced the gap between state and citizen since local councillors and nazims are easily accessible, unlike their predecessors the district commissioners, many senior federal and provincial as well as local government officials report that the system is not working, citing as evidence the steady deterioration in delivery of basic social services like education and health. The bulk of local government resources come as fiscal transfers from provincially appointed provincial finance commissions (PFC), 98 per cent in some cases. Provinces transfer some 40 per cent of their total receipts to local governments, fuelling already widespread perceptions of encroachment on provincial autonomy. District governments, however, have limited discretion over their budgetary resources. Over 80 per cent of the money transferred is for salaries and cannot be used for any other purposes.

As the ICG report points out that the question of devolution cannot be addressed in isolation from the larger issue of provincial autonomy. Devolution of power, authority and resources is central to the viability of any multi-ethnic, multi-regional state. Although the federal principle is enshrined in the 1973 constitution, Pakistan's civil-

military ruling elite has been averse to devolving powers to the provincial level. Instead, it has often used the administrative and coercive powers at its disposal to extend the centre's control over the provinces. Since military-inspired devolution is directed to local levels, it enhances tensions between the centre and the provinces. Such schemes undermine the very concept of federalism and increase ethno-regional rifts. It has to be remembered that this centralisation of power and authority led to Pakistan's break-up in 1971, when the East wing rebelled against the centre's political control and fiscal exploitation. In present-day Pakistan, ethnic tensions, fuelled by bitter resentment against a Punjabi-dominated military, are rising in the smaller federal units of Sindh, Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

Bangladesh. The beginnings of local government institutions in Bangladesh bear close resemblance to the political economy of decentralisation in Pakistan. Introduced in 1985 by the then military government of H.M.Ershad the decentralisation plan linked existing elected councils near the village level to a network of new councils at the sub-district level. These reforms were introduced at a time of military dictatorship and by decentralising at the local level the regime appeared democratic without risking democratisation at the national level (Crook and Manor 1995).

In the present system decentralisation of governance, and devolution of political power is incomplete in Bangladesh. The authority of members of the national Parliament and that of locally elected representatives at Union Parishads or Pouroshabha levels are not clearly demarcated. As things stand now, the members of the national Parliament have much more power, backed as they are by powerful political party machinery, and holding much larger development budgets. Consequently, local representatives do not have sufficient authority and rather than protecting the interests of the local constituencies that elect them, they are often found to be held accountable by the Members of Parliaments for their own political agenda.

Funds have not been transferred to the Union Parishads further detracting from their autonomy. Resources to Union Parishads (UP) come from the central government Annual Development Plan (ADP) and these bodies are entirely dependant on these grants for undertaking development programmes. At the Upazila level, a special committee, Upazila Development Coordination Committee (UDCC) coordinates

funding to different UPs under the Upazila. By rotation the UP Chairpersons hold the UDCC chair. The member secretary is a government official. The other 18 members are drawn from different government departments at the Upazila level. UDCC allocates funds to different UPs in its monthly meetings, based on proposals submitted by the UPs. This generally means that only the Chairpersons of the Union Parishads are aware of the projects being submitted and the government grants sanctioned. The chairperson uses this information to extend his power over the other elected members of the Union Parishad and clientelism and rent seeking is common.[13]

3. 4 Gender, decentralisation and democracy

The South Asia specific literature on gender dimensions of decentralisation focuses on the performance and participation of women elected to local government on quotas, their political effectiveness, participation of women more generally, and the introduction of women's gender specific interests in local government budget allocations and spending.

As has been discussed, affirmative action measures to promote women's participation in local government as elected officials are in place in four countries of South Asia. These include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Sri Lanka is the only country of the five that does not have special provisions for women's participation in the elections at local government level. Much of the literature on the experiences of the affirmative action measures introduced focuses on India. There is considerably less information on Bangladesh and Pakistan and we were unable to locate substantive published information on Nepal. The material on Pakistan is indicative probably because local government institutions and elected women were in place quite recently (since 2001). The following discussion therefore does not intend to be an exhaustive review of the literature but is a pointer to the main issues being highlighted.

The quota systems were set up to allow for the inclusion of women in political decision-making in sizable numbers and serve as a training ground for women to enter politics. This would in turn democratise political and governance institutions because fifty per

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[13] See Report on Action Research project on 'Enabling Elected Women Members to participate in the development committees at grassroots level', KIT Gender, Citizenship and Governance programme

cent of the population generally left out of politics and decision-making would be represented.

The design of quota systems and women's chances

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have a first past the goal post system of elections and thus the affirmative action measures are mainly aimed at reserving seats for all women elections to a particular constituency. As has been mentioned in the earlier section, in both Bangladesh and India the terms on which women are included in the electoral process as candidates poses severe limitations to their functioning and legitimacy and to the sustainability of women's participation in local politics. In Bangladesh the quota system does not reserve one third of all seats for women's elections but adds one seat to every three general seats for all woman elections. Women candidates therefore have a larger constituency or no constituency at all. The area being large and women's mobility being far more restricted than that of men means that women elected on quotas are rarely known beyond their immediate vicinity and have no role. Since the Union Parishad (the only legal body in the local government structure at present) does not have its own funds and has to access these from the general government funds and via the UP Chairperson, those closest to him get to know of the funded schemes and compete for access. Women elected on reserved seats are doubly handicapped since they generally have poor access to the chairperson and also because they have to cover a bigger area than those elected to general seats with the same resources.

In India although the quota system does reserve one third of all seats for women's elections, the reserved seat rotates in every election. This means that a ward reserved for women would be open to general competition in the next round. In an action research study on women's participation in urban Municipal councils and Corporations in Andhra Pradesh in India COVA (Confederation of Voluntary Associations) found that where a third of seats in a local council were reserved for women just prior to an election on a rotation basis, the male incumbents (that is the representatives who normally held the seats) were unable to contest their seats and found themselves out of the running. To get around this obstacle male incumbents and political parties devised ways of capturing women's seats. They did this by sponsoring compliant women (generally

2002, PRIP Trust Bangladesh and cited in M.Mukhopadhyay & S.Meer (2004) Creating Voice and Carving Space.

family members) to occupy these seats on the basis that the woman would be the representative in name only, while the male incumbent would actually carry out the duties. The women's families and the political parties who sponsored them did not invest in developing their role because their 'usefulness' did not extend beyond the immediate term of office (Mukhopadhyay & Meer 2004).

In her study on women's participation in panchayats in Karnataka state Vijayalakshmi shows that at all levels of local government, there was little evidence of political parties supporting women candidates to contest general seats, which were considered as a male domain. Nineteen per cent of the women elected in the 1993 grama panchayat election and 1995 zilla and taluk panchayats elections wanted to contest panchayat elections in the year 2000. They could not contest in the elections as the party did not support their candidature as the reserved seats they were elected to had become general seats (seen as a male domain). In the case of 97 per cent of the women representatives their political representation was a one-time affair.

The gendered construction of the proxy candidate
The question as to whether women elected on quotas are proxy candidates of men aspiring for political office and/or political parties has dominated discussion regarding quotas in India and to some extent in Bangladesh.

That many women entering local government institutions (on quotas) are newcomers, that politically active families bring them in, and that many instances these women have not been allowed to take office and male relatives have officiated on their behalf, is well documented. It is these women elected on quotas who are generally referred to as 'proxy' candidates. This equation of proxy with women helps reduce affirmative action to tokenism. The construction of women as compliant subjects nominated by influential men who have power over them – either because they are male relatives, employers, political bosses – robs women in the public sphere as elected representatives of legitimacy and becomes an argument against quotas. This equation of women with proxy/ compliant subject invisibilises the fact that entry into politics is generally through the patronage of more powerful people and is not an experience limited to women (or South Asia). Reports from Sri Lanka point out that the youth quota in local government elections has been used by political parties to bring in

young men related to political elites and this phenomenon is popularly called 'uncle/nephew party politics' pointing to the system of patronage involved. The gender issue lies in the male and female subjectivities reproduced in the process – that women are 'illegitimate' occupants of public office brought in by government favours whereas patrons *groom* newcomer men into public life.

As John points out the equation of women with proxy candidates 'has provided a misleading image of male political empowerment as being independent and autonomous. In fact, successful male politicians require connections and are indebted to leaders of their own. One might say that 'proxy' women have rather too few such connections, hence a reliance on male family members' (Mary E. John quoted in SAP Workshop Report 2003).

The role of family and kinship in the political life of women candidates in South Asia is also much discussed in the literature and generally in terms of being a constraint to women's autonomous action in politics and the public sphere. But since, as John points out, women lacking connections and networks that make it possible to succeed in the public sphere of politics have to rely on family members, this can work to their advantage while also constraining them. Islam (2001), for example, suggests that family and kin networks not only play an important role in women's political life but it can be to their advantage. She shows in her study of 18 women in urban local government institutions in Bangladesh (mainly Dhaka municipality) that almost all of them had either immediate family members or other kin in politics. The women saw their first initiation into politics as being the result of their family environment or wider kin relationship. Rather than seeing the role of family and kin as a constraint on their political autonomy, her respondents argued that the regular and close contacts with family and kin members in politics inspired them to stand for elections and do their job as elected ward commissioners. Kinship was not only responsible for bringing them into politics, but had also encouraged women to be skilled and competitive. They had used their kin networks and their involvement in politics to overcome the constraints of their limited role as ward commissioners. Although the work of women ward commissioners was restricted to slum developments projects and women's welfare, they had managed to initiate or participate in other activities and programmes with the help of their fathers/uncles/ brother-in-laws who were

already in politics. Kin ties are so strong that even in cases where the women had different political affiliation than their kin, they got support from them.

John (2003) suggests that in South Asia women's relationships with family members differs widely, and cannot be reduced to that of 'proxy' and that at least in urban situations, but probably elsewhere, being a 'proxy' is rarely a static condition.

Participation

Are women elected to local government able to participate as representatives and councillors? Are they able to take office? While the equation of women elected on quotas to proxy candidates conjures up the misleading image of male political empowerment as being independent and autonomous, men are able to use their patronage networks to function as elected representatives because their role in the public world of politics is taken for granted. However, this is not so for women and herein lies the gender dimension of political representation. There is no getting away from the fact that affirmative action in local government in South Asia has given rise to what has been termed de facto politics. 'De facto politics' refers to a political situation where despite being the elected representatives the person elected does not actively participate in the functions of governance. In the case of women, the male family members and/or elites who were politically active managed the functions of the panchayats 'on behalf' of women members (Vijaylakshmi 2002) Affirmative action does ensure that more women come into politics but it does not ensure that elected women will be seen as legitimate political actors. This is not to suggest that all women in all circumstances are subsumed in de facto politics and that this is an eternal condition. There is enough evidence to suggest that rural and urban women, as also low caste, tribal women elected to local government institutions have functioned and are functioning as elected representatives.

> I was the one who was elected. But I was not allowed to go out, never to speak. I have learnt to speak, to use the microphone. Now the mike has come into my hand, it will remain with me for all my life – nobody can take it away.
> **Murawarunissa, Corporator, Warangal. India.**
> *Source: Mukhopadhyay,M & S.Meer (2004) Creating Voice and Carving Space*

Several reasons are forwarded to explain why de facto politics has gained ground especially where women representatives are concerned. Non-Governmental

organisations supporting women in local government in India and Bangladesh do so on the assumption that women's political inexperience, lack of skills and information constrains their participation. This has given rise to a spate of much needed capacity building programmes for women in local government. Governmental programmes for training of elected representatives share these assumptions. Many civil society organisations and especially those representing women's interests have also realised the importance of support networks for women's survival and continuance in public office. In Pakistan, for example, in the run up to the first local government elections Aurat Foundation formed a national network, the Citizens' Campaign for Women's Representation in Local Government, with several civil society organisations to support women's elections to these bodies (Naz 2001). These networks have remained active in building the capacity of elected women and supporting them to take office.

Several research studies on women's participation in local government institutions as elected representatives study women as independent agents or rather as women unfettered by the social relations of gender. According to an assessment carried out by the Asian Development Bank (ADB 2004), more than 70% of women councillors interviewed in Bangladesh were not aware of their rights and responsibilities as representatives; even a higher percentage –more than 80%- expressed their lack of confidence in their ability to conduct meetings. In Pakistan, only 22% of the women councillors reported that they attended council meetings regularly and less than 30% had any knowledge of the Council agendas of the last two sessions or of the Council budget (ADB 2004). Some of these studies while concluding that the participation rates of elected women in local councils is low also point out that participation is contingent on several factors – gender norms, family, caste, class, religion etc. [14] Without meaning to these studies nevertheless point to the 'incapacity' or 'apathy' of women in getting involved in politics and the local council. The solutions offered are generally measures to make up for women's deficits rather than measures that would tackle the institutional conditions that constrain women's participation.

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[14] See for example studies that undertake quantitative analysis of women's participation. See A.K. Sinha et al (2003) 'Participatory role of women in panchayati raj institutions in Haryana'; S.Govinda Gowda et al (1996) Developmental Role of Women members of Panchayati Raj institutions: A Study in Karnataka.

Goetz (2004) offers the argument that decentralization processes tend to reinvigorate and entrench existing traditional institutions and local elites. These institutions tend to be deeply patriarchal, offering little or no space for women's authority and agency. In South Asia affirmative action to bring more women into local government structures are mapped on to existing and deeply ingrained structures of inequality based on gender, caste, class, religion and other hierarchies. It is no wonder then that families, political parties and other agencies that have power over women work the quotas as best they know how to gain leverage and often to the disadvantage of women. This has led several researchers to conclude that affirmative action is a necessary but not sufficient condition to overcome the rigid social and cultural barriers that women face and which disallow their participation in the public sphere.

The constrained terms of women's participation despite the existence of affirmative action is a prime example of how decentralised institutions are captured by traditional authorities and how this form of governance can extend patriarchal privilege and consolidate the power of local elites. Beside the fact that families and political parties have constrained women's participation through de facto politics, women entering the official space of local councils find that these spaces also reduce their participation to a token presence. The deep abhorrence of South Asian culture to women's role in the public sphere infects the meeting rooms and council chambers of local government institutions.

> After my oath I went to the chairman and asked him to assign me some work. The chairman became annoyed and said the government has brought out the women from their houses to create unnecessary trouble in the *Union Parishad*. [He said]'What will you do in the *Union Parishad*? Go upstairs and sit with my wife and spend your time. I do not find any work for you. No specific work is mentioned in the manual for women'.
> Hasnehana, UP member
> *Source: Mukhopadhyay,M & S.Meer (2004) Creating Voice and Carving Space*

Studies from Bangladesh find that women's marginalisation was reinforced by council practices and procedures. Rules declared meetings quorate even if women representatives were not present, and since the council could function without women representatives, officials and male representatives did not inform women of meetings. When women's votes were needed the chair and general members approached women representatives with blank pieces of paper and solicited their signatures to resolutions they did not bother to discuss. When women representatives queried this practice they

were victimised. Women representatives were often intimidated into silence by male representatives at committee meetings, and they were not taken seriously by male officials in the council office (Mukhopadhyay and Meer 2004).

Reyes (2000) found that Pakistani women councillors complained about being ignored by their male counterparts; did not have offices, tables, chairs; did not receive stipends to cover their meals and transportations; were not given the opportunity to participate in council deliberations; and their projects did not receive budget allocation. On a similar note Rizvi reports in the Women's Feature Service that women's organisations in Pakistan that have lobbied for greater representation of

> We soon discovered that representation alone, no matter how many seats, will not change the deeply ingrained social attitudes towards women...we should still speak only when spoken to and should hold no opinions - especially opinions that clash with a man's Sumaira Gul, 26, district councillor, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.
> *Source: WFS February 2005*

women in politics and decision-making find that they have a new fight on their hands after having obtained the quotas for women's representation in local government institutions. 'They are grappling with a deeply patriarchal social set-up that does not allow women councillors to function effectively. The list of complaints is long. To name a few: no travel allowance for women to attend council and assembly meetings; no office space where they can be contacted; contrary to the vision of the devolution of power plan, low or no representation in various committees, particularly budgetary committees; marginal employment of women in local government institutions' (Rizvi, WFS February 2005).

Researchers and activists from India cite similar experiences to show how women councillors are excluded from public office by council practices and procedures. (Sinha et al 2002; Vijaylakshmi 2002; Mukhopadhyay and Meer 2004; Goetz 2004). Several studies also point to how dalit men and women are excluded from public office through the manipulation of official rules of procedure governing local government institutions.

Goetz cites the case of Chaggibai, a dalit woman in Rajasthan elected as head of panchayat in a predominantly high caste neighbourhood which, because of the rotation of reserved seats, was declared a reserved constituency for women and dalits.

Chaggibai was elected sarpanch of Rasulpura panchayat, Rajasthan, in 1995, a chair reserved not just for a woman, but for a Dalit. Chaggibai, a member of the tiny Bhil group, part of the Dalit community there, was encouraged to run for the sarpanch position by members of the Rawat caste group, the elite caste that made up over 60% of the residents of the area. As an independent-minded woman, she was not an obvious choice for an upper-caste proxy candidate, as she was literate, known in the area as a woman's rights activist, a participant in the national-level Mahila Samakhya programme, and had worked as a school administrator. But she had long ago separated from her husband, and she was seen therefore as more easy to manipulate than a married woman would be. At the first village assembly after her election, the local Rawat strong man who had always run the local council, Charan Singh, conducted the meeting and refused to allow Chaggibai to speak. She had assembled over 400 women and Dalits from the area to attend, but Charan Singh, who was accustomed to conducting all council meetings in secret and from his own house, ordered them all to go home. Chaggibai mobilised the local Dalit and female community in the subsequent months to support her efforts to change council practices. She held open meetings to discuss local development plans, initiated projects to cover local drains, repair the school building and some roads, and she completed the panchayat building so as to accommodate open sessions. When she led local women in demonstrations against the illegal liquor store run by the deputy sarpanch, Charan Singh and the Rawat community counter-attacked, locking the panchayat doors against her, hiding files containing illicit transactions, and attempting to assault Chaggibai. Subsequently, nine of the twelve panchayat members, including two women, convened a secret meeting and passed a vote of no-confidence against her. Chaggibai's case was taken up by the People's Union of Civil Liberties and by Rajasthan's vibrant women's movement, and a petition was filed against her removal in the Jaipur High Court. In the end she did not succeed in getting reinstated. As she commented to a journalist several years later: 'they simply couldn't tolerate a woman. And, above and beyond that, the panchayat is dominated by non-Dalits, so they couldn't tolerate me doubly. If I had been their puppet, as they expected me to be, none of this would have happened.'
Source: Goetz 2004

Political effectiveness and gender specific agendas

Do women representatives have any impact on local decision-making? Are they able to articulate priorities in local planning and decision-making that differ from those of men? Most of the studies that draw a connection between women's representation in local government and impact on decision-making are based on studies undertaken in India.

A number of such studies find that women councillors and residents manage to articulate priorities in local planning and decision making differently from men. This is reflected in the activities they carry out and their local spending patterns (Mayaram 2003, Chattopadhyay and Dulfo 2004:984, Topalova 2003). Basu (in Nussbaum et al 2003) reports evidence from villages in Maharashtra, where women-led Panchayats placed greater emphasis on construction of wells, playgrounds, roads, public toilets and non-polluting stoves. Topalova (2003) found that drinking water supply services tend to be better in Panchayats led by women rather than men and that the local residents agreed that women were less likely to demand bribes. However, this study also found that residents were less likely to be satisfied about the quality of water when panchayats were reserved for women, despite receiving objectively better

service showing that women were subjected to harsher standards of performance than men.

A study by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) using data from 165 village councils in West Bengal and Rajasthan, argues that women's leadership has indeed had positive impacts on policy decisions. The study explores the relationship between women's stated priorities and actual spending patterns in village councils and finds that, in spite of obstacles, women (and members of scheduled castes -SC) in village leadership positions tend to invest more in what women (and SC) seem to want such as drinking water facilities, recycled fuel equipment and construction of roads.

Vijayalakshmi (2002), on the other hand, argues that a number of factors such as the way in which women are brought in to the political process in local government institutions (as de jure and not de facto representatives), the fact that most women elected to reserved seats have no prior experience of politics or of contact with constituencies, that elected women have little communication with each other, that they belong to different social groups which divides them, limit the possibility of developing shared gender specific agendas. Although a significant proportion of representatives she interviewed stated that women of their constituencies bring issues specific to women to them, these issues included street lighting, drinking water and sanitation, which in any case are important community services and are not specific gender interests. Women constituents did not vote for women representatives with the expectation that they would represent their interests. Constituents (69 per cent) asserted that they had voted for a particular candidate due to the party identity and the individual canvassing for the party; 11 per cent related voting to the personal attributes of the candidate, while 20 per cent stated that elites played a vital role in influencing their choices. Since the seats were reserved, the option for them was to vote for one of the women candidates. Even in a rare case where a woman zilla panchayat member was elected to a general seat, the constituents voted keeping in view her good performance in her previous term as panchayat representative, towards the entire constituency and not for women's interests.

Women elected to local government institutions, especially urban local government, do not necessarily see themselves as representing women's interests. John (2003)

argues that the idea that one-third reservations for women would enable a 'critical mass' of women to represent women's interests politically as a group is a flawed concept. Existing studies and project work on urban local government suggest that it is simply not the case that women candidates perceive themselves as representing or empowering women. Similarly Lama-Rewal (2001), in her study of women councillors of Calcutta Municipal Corporation, found that women councillors did not tend to consider women's issues as major concerns and did not see themselves as having being elected to represent women's interests.

The research so far on whether women representatives have any impact on local decision-making, whether they can articulate priorities in local planning and decision-making that differ from those of men and what constitutes gender specific interests in deeply divided societies like those in South Asia and how these can be forwarded, is far from conclusive. The inconclusiveness is partly due to the fact that the connection is being drawn between women elected on quotas as individual agents and performance and effectiveness *without adequate insights into the institutional conditions, political alliances and support that enabled elected women to make the choices they did*, represent interests and shift budgetary allocations.

Quotas for women represent one set of institutional mechanisms to make up for the democratic deficit in representational politics. That this mechanism is necessary but not sufficient to establish women as legitimate political actors is borne out by the experiences so far. Part of the difficulty in establishing women elected on quotas as legitimate political actors lies in the way the quota system is set up in India and Bangladesh which has made it easier for male family members and political party elites to capture the seats reserved for women's elections and to exclude the very women for whom the quotas were meant. Bringing more women into local level decision-making is one set of issues. However, sustaining women in power represents another set of issues for which other mechanisms are necessary.

Although the mechanisms to include women as a group in local government institutions was intended to expand representation and 'voice' of women as a group, that this is not necessarily so draws attention to the efficacy of these mechanisms. The idea that elected women by virtue of their sex will be better able to identify and empathise with and therefore represent issues that are of special concern to women is an appealing idea but

politically unworkable in the absence of articulated interests[15]. The construction of interests as also the construction of 'voice' is a political project and involves building citizen capacity to collectively engage the state. This capacity is constructed through the simultaneous process of engagement from below and above (Heller 2001). Whereas the active agency of civil and political society builds participation and mobilisation from below, state created channels, opportunities and incentives (or disincentives) for collective action construct citizen capacity from above.

It can be argued that in the case of South Asia affirmative action has provided the opportunities for women's participation in local level governance and that this is a measure to construct capacity of women as citizens from above. Because women as citizens are unlike any other constituency in that their identity and interest does not lie solely in their gender, constructing 'voice', participation and democratic competencies requires additional measures, measures that enable the 'coherence' of identity and a basis for collective action. Based on the international experience of decentralisation and how best to make this form of governance open to women's participation and accountable to their interests, researchers suggest that the introduction of institutional innovations such as participatory budgeting and auditing (and specifically gender budgeting) as mandatory, ring fencing budgets specifically for women's development, creation of standing committees within local government bodies that that specifically look into the problems and concerns of women in rural society, provisions to ensure that women participate in village assemblies along with the need to build the capacity of women local councillors.

Even with the introduction of many of these measures citizen 'voice' and particularly that of women may not get amplified without the corresponding pressure from civil and political society, the mobilisational strategies from below that create citizen competency and engage the state. In this the experience of Kerala state in India is particularly instructive. The Kerala model of decentralisation introduced a number institutional innovations to ensure that local government institutions would take women's 'voice' and

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[15] The literature on 'women's interests' or gender specific interests is extensive and it is not my intention to repeat it. That women are not a homogeneous group with similar interests is also much discussed in the literature and is assumed here. My concern is with the pragmatic and political task of 'constructing' interests and mobilising constituencies, tasks that are central to developing citizens, democratic competencies and accountable and responsive governance.

participation seriously. These included ring fencing ten per cent of the budget for women's development, the production of status of women report for each panchayat on the basis of which the women's development plans would be made, stipulations regarding women's inclusion in sectoral committees etc.

Sakhi, a women's research organisation in Kerala, developed micro-level, ethnographic studies of four panchayats, their decision-making patterns, the planning and spending of the women's development budget and the scrutiny of the general budget from gender perspective (Mukhopadhyay & Meer 2004). They found that the Peoples Plan Campaign (PPC) had incorporated all the correct policies and procedures to ensure an inclusive and participatory process of self-government. Participation of the people in setting up priorities and deciding on projects was not only made a key principle but strict guidelines were set up to ensure this. Women's place in the decision-making structures was assured by the reservation policy. Strict procedures were set up to reserve ten percent of the budget of each *panchayat* for women's development (the Women's Component Plan, WCP hereafter). The State Planning Board, the oversight body, reprimanded the *panchayats* for using the WCP funds for infrastructure projects and stricter guidelines were set up to ensure that money would be spent on women's development. Studies by Sakhi and other research institutions have shown that poor women are overwhelmingly the beneficiaries of *panchayat* programmes and this is because of the strict guidelines issued by the State Planning Board regarding the criteria for selection of beneficiaries (pro-poor and pro-women). So what more do women want?

Sakhi researchers' engagement with the planning process and with an array of institutional actors in local government development processes provided the insights as to what accountability standards mean in this context beyond the favourable numbers and procedures. There was no clear-cut elite capture of the development process, public officials were obliged to answer if asked questions, and poor women were beneficiaries of programmes. And yet ensuring accountability to a participatory planning process that incorporated a gender perspective remained a terrain of struggle. The analysis revealed that in this particular context there was real patriarchal bias. 'Bias' describes the leakage of patriarchal norms into purportedly impartial law and policy so as to ensure that women's access to justice systems, or to public resources,

does not challenge male prerogatives or undermine women's domestic roles (Goetz 2003). This was manifested in two ways: (1) the deeply demeaning ways in which the women representatives were treated by their male counterparts, preventing thereby their active participation and the incorporation of their ideas in the planning processes; (2) the interpretation of poor women's roles (domestic, secondary income earners) which then entered into the planning process and biased the kind of projects designed (short-term projects to meet practical needs of women living in poverty rather than long-term investments to improve their position) and influenced resource allocation. The task for Sakhi and similar organisations was, therefore, to generate awareness among all accountability actors about the importance of judging the success and failure of the PPC by gender equality outcomes.

IV. Areas for further research

Strengthening and empowering local government has been justified not only on the grounds of making government efficient but also on the grounds of increasing accountability and participation. While the debate rages on as to whether democracy improves development performance, whether democracy can redress the severe social and economic inequalities that characterise developing countries there is growing acknowledgement of the intrinsic value of substantive democracy in improving governance, making governance more accountable to the needs and interests of subordinate groups and open to their participation. In no other sphere of governance is this challenge greater than in democratic decentralisation because, on the one hand, politics at the local level is far more embedded in local social structures where traditional authorities and elites hold sway and, on the other hand, the institution building and planning capacity is weaker. The challenge becomes even greater when women as a subordinate group are sought to be included not merely as wives, mothers and daughters and members of other marginalised groups but as citizens with rights able to have a say in local decisions, and, when gender equality outcomes form the basis of accountability standards.

Rather than suggesting research themes that respond to each of the problem areas that have been identified in the literature the priorities for research can be grouped keeping

in mind the purpose that research on democratic decentralisation should serve. The broad areas of research can be grouped as follows:

- Research that contributes to constructing substantive representation of women
- Research that expands the scope and depth of participation of women as citizens in public decision-making
- Research that builds the accountability of state, political parties and social movements to gender equality outcomes at the local level.

Research that contributes to constructing substantive representation

The research under this broad category would aim at investigating whether and how the legal legitimacy for women's representation provided for by affirmative action is turned into legitimacy for women as political actors. Much of the research on women elected on quotas focuses on either how they are used as and reduced to proxies of men and political parties or how they have triumphed despite being newcomers and against all odds. The parameters of the debate get restricted to for and against quotas. That affirmative action is not, even incrementally, building substantive representation of women is quite well established by the existing research. What would be the measures necessary to build substantive representation? In investigating this there is a need to look beyond the quotas and at the determinants of women's political effectiveness. Goetz and Hassim (2002) suggest a framework for investigating women's access, presence and influence in politics. The framework suggests that enquiry has to be directed to three institutional levels that determine women's political effectiveness:

(1) Civil society – the place and power of the gender equity lobby in civil society; nature, number, leverage and unity of women's associations; and whether women's movements position themselves, as autonomous or/ and integrated with other social and political institutions.

The role of social movements, especially women's movements, in securing substantive representation is under explored. In India, by and large, women's movements have shied away from engaging with political parties and the

world of politics (except the party based women's organisations) and the demand for greater political representation of women at the local level has not come from the movement.

(2) The political system and the organisation of political competition – the nature of parties; the discourses that animate politics; electoral systems, quotas and reservations; party structure and the nature and culture of political competitions. The questions that need to be asked in the context of south Asia would include: Do women make it into the political mainstream at the local level? Do political parties have any incentive to groom young women leaders at the local level? These lines of enquiry are of relevance to India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Although in Pakistan and Bangladesh local government elections are supposed to be non-partisan it is well known, however, that political parties and elites have a major say in nominating candidates. It is of relevance in Sri Lanka too although there is no affirmative action for women at the local or national level. However, there does exist a youth quota in local government elections, which by and large has been turned into a quota reserved for young men. In India political parties are gatekeepers to the chances of aspiring politicians male and female. Despite the fact that political parties play such an important role in the careers of those whom we elect to office, in-depth studies on the relationship between political parties, their agendas, political culture and women candidates is very scarce.

(3) What is the role of the state in securing the substantive representation of women? Besides quotas what other state initiated measures are necessary to ensure that political parties and the electorate engage with women candidates? The nature of the state, the capacity of state institutions to push through reforms, the degree of decentralisation of administrative and political functions and the extent to which horizontal accountability systems have been institutionalised and are open to public scrutiny and deliberation determine whether or not gender equality discourses acquire legitimacy and women emerge as political agents and actors.

Research that expands the scope and depth of participation of women as citizens in public decision-making

The research under this category would investigate whether and how the present modes of decentralisation in South Asia contribute to democracy deepening, whether and how it expands the *depth* and *scope* of participation of women as citizens in public decision-making (Heller 2001). By depth is meant the incorporation of previously marginalised or disadvantaged groups, as for example women and more specifically poor women/ low caste, into politics. By scope is meant the inclusion of a wide range of social and economic issues into the authoritative domain of politics as for example the introduction of gender equality issues and gender strategic interests as the subject of politics, decision-making and authoritative resource allocation.

Investigating 'voice'[16] – The constraints to women's 'voice' have been discussed in the previous section. These constraints include women's position in the gender division of labour that limits their participation, their restricted associational life and activities beyond family and kinship, their heterogeneity making interest aggregation and articulation difficult and most critically men's control over women's sexuality undermining 'voice' and consent. Voice and consent are the two key features of democratic institutions because democracy involves accommodating a wide variety of interests and manufacturing consent for a particular decision/ action through debate and discussion. However in relations of subordination, as for example, in gender relations, consent is assumed (without the need for deliberation), men can speak for women leading to a loss of legitimacy of 'voice'. A key problem and one that accounts for the hostility of political parties in nominating women candidates for local government elections who are not pliant is precisely the problem of illegitimate voice.

Given these difficulties we need to investigate the processes through which voice is constructed, how interest aggregation takes place and the role of political parties, state officials and programmes and social movements in expanding voice.

Investigating impact – There is still too little substantive information on women's impact on public spending at a local level. As has been earlier discussed the devolution of functions, funds, and functionaries to local government institutions is

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[16] 'Voice' is understood to 'describe how citizens express their interests, react to governmental decision-making or the positions staked out by parties and civil society actors, and respond to problems in the provision of public goods' (Goetz and Jenkins 2002).

incomplete in most of the countries of South Asia for which data exists. Given these circumstances women's participation in priority setting and decision-making in resource allocation is restricted but in a different way to that of male representatives as the case of the Bangladesh Union Parishads bear out. Even within the limited parameters there is need to investigate the impact of women on public spending at a local level and to investigate it in a way that accounts for how the limitations to women's participation is overcome, develop *adequate insights into the institutional conditions, political alliances and support that enabled elected women to make the choices they did,* what these priorities are, whether new agendas that relate to gender equality make their way into public decision-making (e.g. measures to curb violence against women).

Research that builds the accountability of state, political parties and social movements to gender equality outcomes at the local level

In this broad category the research aim should be to investigate whether and how accountability for women's representation and participation in local government and for gender equality agendas influences the ambit of issues taken into account in evaluating performance; making gender equality central to how local 'governance' is evaluated.

'Voice' and accountability are two sides of the same coin because if public officials have to answer for their decisions and actions somebody has to be asking the questions. Accountability failures at the local level are life threatening for women from the most marginalised groups. This can be seen discerned from one example that is the extremely high maternal mortality rates in much of South Asia. This is partly attributable to the fact the public health system, on which most poor people depend for health care, just does not perform. Health providers in rural areas answer to their bosses in the Ministry of Health against criteria which do not include whether poor women have received good care and whether deaths due to maternal causes have been prevented or not.

Accountability failures are most often discussed in terms of capture of resources whereas gendered accountability failures do not neatly fall into this category.

However, there are gender specific forms of corruption which include the mismanagement, diversion, pilfering of money for women's development because women are less powerful to voice concerns or the demand for sexual favours in return for receiving public goods. However, the most elusive accountability failure lies not in outright capture of resources but in the failure to ensure that a participatory planning process at local government level incorporates a gender perspective. As has been discussed in the earlier section when citing the example of the Peoples Planning Campaign there was real patriarchal bias. 'Bias' describes the leakage of patriarchal norms into purportedly impartial law and policy so as to ensure that women's access to justice systems, or to public resources, does not challenge male prerogatives or undermine women's domestic roles.

Annex 1

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GENDER AND DECENTRALIZATION
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With particular emphasis in South Asia

Hanny Cueva

A. References on Decentralization overviews and definitions

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This article defines decentralization and identifies four types: political, administrative, fiscal and economic or market. It further identifies three major forms of administrative decentralization: deconcentration, delegation and devolution. It also distinguished two different dimensions of market decentralization – privatization and deregulation.

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This article defines decentralization and its different types and forms. It identifies three major types (political, administrative and fiscal) and forms (devolution, delegation, deconcentration and divestment). The concept of "divestment" is similar to Rondinelli's privatization form of market or decentralization.

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http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan006230.pdf
This is a brief synthesis that summarizes the key policy lessons and recommendations of nine case studies commissioned within the framework of the UNDP-MIT Global Research Programme on Decentralised Governance. It includes seven main sections. The first one is an introduction, which includes basic definitions on decentralisation. The second briefly describes the research framework and methodology of the Programme. The third part includes a brief summary of nine case studies, from Brazil, Honduras, India, Jordan, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, South Africa and Uganda. The fourth section identifies main thematic findings in six areas – enabling environment, service delivery and institutional structures, participation, partnerships, initiative and leadership, and operationalising reforms. The next three sections present lessons learned, policy implications and recommendations and conclusion.
INCLUDES CASE STUDIES OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN

- For case studies: http://magnet.undp.org, Decentralized Governance Programme, Case Studies
- For longer version of report: http://www.undp.org, Democratic Governance, Decentralisation

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Accessed January 2005 www.ids.ac.uk/bridge /reports/CEP-part-rep.pdf
This report looks at convergences between approaches to gender and participation. It consists of three main sections. The first one presents a background on the concepts of gender and participation, and explains why interaction amongst these has been limited so far. The second one looks at efforts to combine participatory methodologies and gender in projects. The third one describes ways in which both approaches have been used to influence policy and to what extent measures have been institutionalised (including one small section on decentralization and affirmative action). Finally, main conclusions and recommendations for policy and programmes are presented, and gaps in research on these areas are identified.

Baden, S. (1999) *Gender, governance and the 'feminisation of poverty'*, Background paper for UNDP Management and Development Division conference on: Women and Political Participation in the 21st Century, 24-26 March 1999, Delhi, India ▤
This paper summarises current thinking on the theoretical and empirical relationships between gender inequality and poverty, including reflection on how these relationships have been articulated in development policy discourse. It examines the potential of governance structures and processes to promote poverty reduction in a way which recognises and responds to women's gendered experience of poverty, questioning whether and how the governance agenda needs to be reconstituted if it is to succeed in addressing women's gender specific needs and interests. In addition, the paper identifies some strategic entry points in the governance agenda which provide opportunities for promoting poor women's gender interests.
SEE ALSO BRIDGE BRIEFING PAPER ▤

Bell, Emma et. al. (2002) *National Machineries for Women in Development: Experiences, Lessons and Strategies*, With Bridget Byrne, Julie Kock Laier, Sally Baden and Rachel Marcus; Report prepared for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Denmark, BRIDGE, IDS, Sussex ▤
This report is an up-dated version of a 1996 BRIDGE report on National Machineries for Women (NWMs). It consists of two main parts. The first one includes background information on NWMs; an overview of constraints to their effectiveness; an exploration of the implications for NWMs of the changing macro-political and institutional environment (with an emphasis on "good government", especially programmes of decentralisation and civil service reforms as well as broader issues of participation and democratisation); and, finally, strategies adopted to further implementation of gender-aware policy are presented. The second part presents four case studies on South Africa, Uganda, The Philippines and Denmark.

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★ **Cornwall, A. (2000)** *Making a Difference? Gender and Participatory Development*, IDS Discussion Paper 378 ▤
This paper addresses feminist concerns about representation, agency and voice that are growing as participation becomes part of the development mainstream. It argues that traditional remedies of including women on committees and making sure that efforts are made to listen to women's voices are not enough. The paper raises questions about what women themselves want and how to deal with situations in which

women themselves perpetuate male domination. It is suggested that the way in which "gender" is defined in development work provides in itself an obstacle to realising the potential of "gender-aware" participatory development. The paper concludes with suggestions on how, by rethinking 'gender' and focusing on the points of connection between participatory development and GAD, participatory strategies can be used to make a difference.

⊗ **Cornwall, A. and Gaventa, J. (2001)** *From users and choosers to makers and shapers: repositioning participation in social policy,* IDS Working paper 127

Eschle, C (2002) "Engendering global democracy", *International Feminist Journal of Politics 4:3*, December, p:315-341 ▪
Recent feminist arguments about citizenship and governance, despite bringing together concerns about gender inequality and globalisation, remain centred on states and the states-system as vehicles for democratic representation and participation. This paper argues that a more radical reconstructive strategy can be derived from debates about the democratisation of feminism itself. The document draws on responses of black and third world feminists to racism in the white-dominated feminist movement, examines their influence on efforts to organise transnationally, and points to innovative ways of thinking about power, politics, agency and change.

★ **Evertzen, Annette (2001)** *Gender and Local Governance*, SNV – Netherlands Development Organization ▪
This is a manual on gender and local governance and it includes an overview of the literature and websites on gender and governance processes. Special emphasis is given on local governance in the region of West Africa. Appendixes include an annotated bibliography, and further websites, toolkits, knowledge institutions and databases (statistics).

★ **Goetz, Anne Marie (2004)** "Decentralization and Gender Equality", Chapter 12 in UNDP (Forthcoming) *Striving for Gender Equality in an Unequal World*, UNDP report for Beijing +10 ▪
This chapter presents an overview of current research on gender and decentralization. It argues that, contrary to common wisdom, women may face greater obstacles to political engagement at the local level than the national level, because of local patriarchal norms. Four main obstacles are identified and further elaborated. First, the resistance from traditional authorities, including cases where women act as proxies for male leaders. Second, the existent gender-insensitive institutional arrangements in local government, which need innovations to become women-friendly. Third, women's voices must be enabled to be heard, as they may not yet feel free to fully participate. Fourth, innovations in local governance are needed, including the development of gender-sensitive local budgets. Despite these obstacles, it is argued that women seem to have an impact on local decision making, reflected in local spending patterns. It concludes highlighting the need to both encourage women's participation in local government and make local governments accountable to female constituents.

★ **Goetz, Anne Marie (2003)** "Chapter 3. Women's Political Effectiveness – A conceptual Framework" in *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women*, Zed Press, London ▪
This conceptual framework enables analysis to look at both "voice" and accountability processes, considering how changes to democratic institutions might affect women's political effectiveness. It argues that when assessing the usefulness of institutional changes designed to enhance women's political effectiveness, it is not enough to consider whether they enhance both voice and accountability to women, but also to what degree they do so. This is so because "voice" does not easily and simply lead to better outcomes for women, because political institutions can have strong gender biases which undermine the impact of women's "voice" and presence in public office. At the same time, it suggests that keeping "voice" in mind when reviewing changes to political institutions which are intended to produce more accountability to women help to avoid the "anti-political" problem of promoting bureaucratic changes in isolation from the politics which would make these new procedures work effectively in promoting gender justice.

⊠ **Goetz, Anne Marie and Gaventa, John (2001)** *Bringing citizen voice a client focus into service deliver*, IDS Working Paper 138

Goetz, Anne Marie and Jenkins, Robert (1999) "Accountability to women in development spending – Experiments in service-delivery audits at the local level", Paper presented at the UNDP conference on *Gender, Poverty and Environment-Sensitive Budget Analysis*, June, New York ▤
Accessed January 2005;
http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/publicfinance/decentralisation/gender.htm

Heller, P. (2001) "Moving the State: The Politics of Democratic Decentralization in Kerala, South Africa and Porto Allege", *Politics and Society*, Vol. 29, No.1, March, p:121-163 ▤

IULA (1998) IULA Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government ▤
Accessed January 2005 www.iula-int.org/iula

Jaeckel, Monika (2002) *Advancing Governance through Peer Learning and Networking; Lessons Learned from Grassroots Women*, Huairou Commission Our Best Practices Campaign and LIFE Global Programme of IDG/BDP/UNDP ▤
This report is a reflection on the process, results and key lessons of the campaign "Our Best Practices Campaign for Local Governance", launched by the Huairou Commission with the support of the LIFE Global Programme of IDG/BDP/UNDP. One of the main objectives of the campaign was to learn from Grassroots women's groups first hand knowledge and expertise (in issues like drinking water and sanitation, health, environmental sustainability), as well as increasing their influence in women's perspectives on public policy. The campaign promotes "local-local" dialogue and action to improve the lives of the poor and influence policies related to participatory governance.

Jaquette, Jane (2001) "Regional differences and contrasting views", *Journal of Democracy 12:3*, p:111-125 ▤

⊠ **Jaquette, J.S. (1997)** "Women in power: from tokenism to critical mass", *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1997, No. 108

Johnson, C. (2001) "Local democracy, Democratic Decentralisation and Rural Development: Theories, Challenges and Options for Policy", *Development Policy Review 19(4)*, p:521-532

Lakshminarayanan, Rama (2003) *Gender and Health Sector Reform: An Annotated Bibliography*, International Women's Health Coalition ▤
Accessed January 2005 www.iwhc.org/document.cfm?documentID=7
This annotated bibliography is divided into three sections. The first and largest section provides an overview of the key issues in current work on health sector reform, gender equity, and women's health, especially reproductive health. The second section focuses on specific reform interventions (decentralization, integration of services, priority setting, financing, and sector-wide approaches) and their impact on women's health. The third section presents regional and country reform experiences using a gender lens.

★ **MacLEan, Melissa (2003)** "Developing a Research Agenda on the Gender Dimensions of Decentralization: Background Paper for the IDRC 2003 Gender Unit Research Competition" IDRC◼ Accessed January 2005
http://web.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/10648666471Background_Paper_-_Gender_dimensions_of_Decentralization.doc
This paper offers a theoretical review of the gender dimensions of decentralization followed by a literature review and suggests a framework and guidelines for further research. Three theoretical issues central to debates on decentralization are selected to explore gender dimensions: the conflictive arguments for supporting decentralization of efficiency and empowerment; the extent to which decentralization in the context of globalization will affect or create new opportunities to the most vulnerable (especially poor women); and the existent (positive or negative) links between decentralization, participation and poverty reduction. With respect to the existent literature, it is argued that while increasing activity related to women in local governance can be appreciated, little attention has been paid to research on the gender dimensions of decentralization. Most research in related topics include women in local government and politics and the gender dimensions of sector decentralization (such as health and resource management). Finally, after developing a conceptual framework on Gender, citizenship and entitlement in decentralized governance, four main topics for research are suggested: (i) the conditions and policy impacts of women's political participation at the local level; (ii) the extent to which decentralization affects the capacity of women and gender advocates in civil society at the local level, and vice-versa; (iii) the role and impact of "national machineries for women" at the local level and especially in decentralization processes; and (iv) the analysis of how decentralization affects women's access to specific serviced and resources.

★ **Molyneux, M. (2001)** "The Local, the Regional and the Global: Transforming the politics of rights" in N. Craske and M. Molyneux (eds.) *Gender and the Politics of Rights and Democracy in Latin America*, Hampshire; Palgrave

☒ **Norris, P. (2000)** "Breaking the Barriers: Positive Discrimination Policies for Women" in J.Klausen and C.S. Maier (eds.) *Has Liberalism Failed Women? Parity, Quotas and Political Representation*, New York, St. martin's Press.

One World Action (2001) *Developing Gender-Sensitive Local Services*, Report from a seminar organized by One World Action and The British Council, London, June 28 –29 ◼
This seminar aimed to explore the gender dimensions of service delivery in practice, and attempted to make a contribution in three specific topics through the presentation of world-wide case studies. First, who delivers services and how are they delivered. Second, what is the role of civil society organisations; finally, how gender-sensitive services can be envisioned.

☒ **Phillips, A. (2000)** "Representing difference: why should it matter if women get elected?" in A. Coote (ed.) *New Gender Agenda*, London; IPPR.

☒ **Rai, S. (ed.) (2003)** *Mainstreaming gender, democratising the state? Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women*, Manchester and New York; Manchester University Press

Robinson, M. (2003) "Participation, Local Governance and Decentralised Service Deliver", Paper presented at the workshop on *New Approaches to Decentralized Service Delivery*, Santiago de Chile, 16-20 March

Scott, Roxanne (2003) "Gender Responsive Approach to Budgets",
Public Finance, Decentralization and Poverty Reduction Program,
World Bank Institute ▪

Standing, Hilary (2000) "Gender Impacts of Health Reforms—The
Current State of Policy and Implementation" Paper for ALAMES
Meeting, Havana, Cuba, 3-7 July ▪

★ **UNIFEM/VADE (2001)** *Rethinking Gender, Democracy and
Development: Is Decentralisation a tool for Local Effective Political
Voice*? Summary of a seminar organized through cooperation
between UNIFEM and VADO/WAVE Italy, May 20-22 ▪
The seminar covered themes relating to: (1) decentralization from a perspective of women's political
agency, (2) decentralization as a tool to increasing women's access to services and (3) decentralization
as a means for effective women's participation in the formulation of local budget and a more gender
balanced allocation of local resources. The main topics discussed include: (1) The overall conceptual
framework - questions related to the women's movements role and power structure within the global
context; (2) Political decentralization - local vs. national and the need for defining what is meant by
participation (e.g. The PRSP); (3) Decentralization of services - privatization was a key question; (4)
Decentralization of Budgets – the question of the macro economic policies seen from the local
perspective.

★ **United Nations Development Programme – UNDP (2000)**
*Women's Political Participation and Good Governance: 21st Century
Challenges*, New York ▪
Accessed January 2005 http://magnet.undp.org/new/pdf/gender/wpp/women_book.pdf
This publication was launched during the General Assembly Special Session on Beijing+5. The studies
included show that, despite substantial obstacles, women decision makers in developing countries have
begun to make a difference on governance mechanisms, institutions and broader political debates.
However, it also highlights that there is still much to be done to increase women's voices in governance.
This goes beyond increasing the numbers of women in politics, but requires addressing the complex
relationship between power, poverty and participation. The book has three main parts, in addition to an
overview chapter on women's political participation and good governance. The first part focuses concepts,
including three chapters on women's agency in governance; gender, governance and the feminization of
poverty; and, a review of strategies and trends on women's political participation. The second part is a
collection of cases from India, South Africa, Uganda and Latin America and the Caribbean. The third part
includes three concluding chapters on voice, budgets and the global-local tension.

World-Bank (2001) *Engendering Development: Through Gender
Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice,* Oxford University Press and
World Bank ▪

C. Gender and Decentralization in South Asia

C.1 Decentralization in South Asia

Alam, Imtiaz (2004) "Electoral politics in South Asia", South Asian
Journal: Quarterly magazine of South Asian journalists and scholars
No.5 ▪

★ **Asian Resource Center for Decentralization (2002)**
"Decentralization: An overview" in *Sourcebook on Decentralization in
Asia*, Philippines ▪
This is the first chapter of a Sourcebook and offers an theoretical overview of decentralization.

SEE CHAPTERS ON NEPAL, INDIA, SRI LANKA, BANGLADESH AND PAKISTAN.
CHAPTER ON NEPAL:

- **Concepcion, Zita (2002)** "Nepal. Strengthening Local Self-Governance" in ARCD, *Sourcebook on Decentralization in Asia*, Philippines ▤

Crook, Richard C. and Alan Sturla Sverrisson (2001) *Decentralization and poverty-alleviation in developing countries: a comparative analysis or, is West Bengal unique?*, IDS Working Paper 130, February ▤

The report compares a large number of decentralised forms of government across the world, focusing on ten countries and two Indian states where data on the performance of decentralised governments was most informative. [It measures ten national governments and two Indian states against these criteria.] Only West Bengal comes out well in a review which finds most decentralising governments lack an ideological commitment to pro-poor policies, do not respect local autonomy and are unwilling to tackle entrenched elites.
SEE ALSO:

- ID21 Research Highlight; Accessed January 2005
  http://www.id21.org/society/S8brc1g1.html

★ **Crook, Richard C. and James Manor (1998)** *Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa: Participation, Accountability and Performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

This book is an in-depth empirical study of four Asian and African (Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Karnataka-India and Bangladesh) attempts to create democratic, decentralised local governments in the late 1980s and 1990s. The case studies focus upon the enhancement of participation; accountability between people, politicians and bureaucrats; and, most importantly, on whether governmental performance actually improved in comparison with previous forms of administration. The book is based upon popular surveys and local fieldwork, and it contributes to debates on whether "good governance" and decentralisation can provide more responsive and effective services for the mass of the population – the poor and disadvantaged who live in the rural areas.

Among its main conclusions, the authors point out that while women displayed reasonable high levels of political awareness in Karnataka, and engaged in moderate-to-high levels of participation, they participated and accomplished less on the councils than did Scheduled Castes councillors. Elected women's accomplishments tend to occur more on the District Councils that on the local ones. However, the authors also stressed that there were signs that, in the long term, women's participation in councils may exceed that of scheduled casts.

The case of Bangladesh, where seats were reserved for women on the lower-level Union Councils, is contrasted with Karnataka. In the former, women tend to be filled by appointment at the chairman's discretion, while the latter were elected in their own right. This situation nullified any benefit that might have flowed from such reservations, even more considering that women hardly spoke in council meetings, and when they did so was usually to back the chairman.

★ **Hameed Aliani, Adnan (2002)** "Local government in Asia and the Pacific: A comparative analysis of fifteen countries", UNESCAP, Paper presented at the *2nd International Conference on Decentralization*, Manila 25-27 July ▤
Accessed January 2005 http://www.decentralization.ws/countrypapers.asp

UNESCAP (2003) "Updated Country Reports on Local Government Systems: Nepal".
Accessed January 2005 http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/index.htm

von Einsiedel, Nathaniel (2002) "Overcoming the obstacles to decentralization in Asia", United Nations Urban Management

Programme, Paper presented at the *2nd International Conference on Decentralization*, Manila 25-27 July ◨

Accessed January 2005 http://www.decentralization.ws/countrypapers.asp

★ **Wignaraja, Ponna and Susil Sirivardana (2004)** *Pro-poor growth and governance in South Asia: decentralization and participatory development*, New Delhi, Sage

This book main contribution is to show that the governance agenda, with an emphasis on participatory development, can be combined with systematic decentralization of power and resources to the grassroots in order to lay the basis for sustained poverty reduction. The key to this process is community mobilization through social movements and non-governmental development organizations that can catalyze change through partnerships with state organizations and by advocating for deeper reforms in governance that bring about systemic changes in the conditions of the poor. The book consists of three parts; the first one develops a conceptual framework for the case studies. The second presents six experiences of decentralization in Kerala, Gujarat, Karachi, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. Finally, lessons for macro-micro policy are identified.

C.2 Gender and Politics in South Asia

Asia Foundation (1999) "Strengthening democracy through women's political Participation", Emerging Issues in Asia seminar, April 14, 1999, The Asia Foundation ◨

Accessed January 2005 http://www.asiafoundation.org/pdf/rpt_emerg2.pdf

This report is the result of the seminar "Emerging Issues in Asia", held on April 14, 1999. The seminar's four panels focused on effective strategies for human rights and legal reform, the participation of women in politics and other sectors of society, governance reform in the aftermath of the economic crisis and the current security challenges in Northeast Asia. The report has four main sections: opening remarks, Nepal, Mongolia and Sri Lanka. A final section with questions and answers, as well as a list of seminar participants, is included.

⊠ **Desai, Vandana (2002)** "Informal Politics: Grassroots, NGOs and Women's empowerment in the slums of Bombay", In: Parpart, Jane; Rai, Shirin and Kathleen Staudt (eds), *Rethinking Empowerment*, London: Routledge

Gibson, Katherine (2002) "Women, identity and activism in Asian and Pacific community economics" Development 45:1, p:74-79 ◨

This paper argues that as an antidote to capitalist globalization it is necessary to identify the full range of economic identities that people occupy and the multiple directions that local economic transformation might take. It is suggested that an economic politics of place can build upon the distinctiveness of the diverse economies that inhabit specific economic landscapes. Using the lens of a diverse economy, the author elaborates what community economy activism might be and introduce three stories of women's role in building and strengthening non-capitalist community economies in place.

⊠ **Hye, Hasnat Abdul, Ed. (2000)** *Governance: South Asian Perspectives*, Dhaka University Press, Dhaka

⊠ **Huang, Shirlena; Teo, Peggy and Yeoh, Brenda; Eds. (2002)** *Gender Politics in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Routledge, London

⊠ **Meinzen-Dick, Ruth (2001)** "Gender dimensions of community resource management: the case of water users' associations in South Asia", In: Agrawal, Arun and Clark C. Gibson (Eds) *Communities and the Environment*, Rutgers University Press, New Brusnwick

⊠ **Menon, Nivedita; Ed. (2001)** *Gender and Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

⊠ **Manandhar, Laxmi Keshari and Drishna B. Bhattachan, Eds. (2001)** Gender and Democracy in Nepal, Women's Studies Program, Tribhuvan University, Katmandu

⊠ **Manchanda, Rita; Ed. (2001)** *Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond victimhood to Agency*, Sage, New Delhi

★ **Jeffery, Patricia and Amrita Basu; Eds. (1998),** Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicised Religion in South Asia, London, Routledge
Mukta, Parita (1999) "BOOK REVIEW", *Ethnic and Racial Studies 22:6, p.1089-1091* ▤
Lindio-McGovern, Ligaya (1999) "BOOK REVIEW", *Contemporary Sociology 28:1* ▤
This book comparatively explores the complex intersections of gendered ideologies, class structures, the state and religious and ethnic politics in the social construction of gender identity in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. On the whole, it is a reminder that to understand the social construction of gender identities and hierarchies, gender must be examined in ways that allow incorporating and disentangling its complex intersections with other social constructs. The book consists of three parts. The first part, "Gender, Nation and State" explores the role of the state and religion in the social construction of gender identities. The second part "The Local and the Everyday" fills the gap of the macro-level analysis on the first part. The last part, "Agency and Activism", depicts various forms of women's resistance, pointing out both the complexity of the struggle for women's empowerment and the contradictory outcomes of women's collective actions.

⊠ **Kapadia, Karin (2002)** *The violence of development: the politics of identity, gender and social inequalities in India,* Kali for Women, Zed books, London

Lundberg, Paul (2002) "A comparison of Decentralization in Pakistan and Nepal, PARAGON Regional Governance Program for Asia", Paper presented at the *2nd International Conference on Decentralization*, Manila 25-27 July
Accessed January 2005 http://www.decentralization.ws/countrypapers.asp
This paper presents the salient features of the institutional frameworks in Nepal and Pakistan that have influences the development and implementation of their respective decentralization policies. The document focuses primarily on the new process unfolding in Pakistan, using critical similarities and contrasting aspects of the institutional setting, the policy framework and resulting outcomes from Nepal as points of comparison and learning. It includes a brief review of the context of both countries; their status of experience with decentralization and policy frameworks; and an overview of the structure of both decentralization reforms, including fiscal decentralization aspects and central-local relations. It then identifies the main issues and concerns related to the decentralization implementation, with a brief discussion on the impacts of these processes. Finally, a few lessons are presented for the case of Nepal (not for Pakistan as the process was relatively new at the time of this paper.

★ **Samarasinghe, Vidyamali (2000)** "Subverting patriarchy?: leadership and participation of women in politics in South Asia", *Ethnic Studies Report 18:2*, pp.193-228 ▤

This study argues that women in South Asia have used the existing system of patriarchy to break into the public sphere of politics. Using India and Sri Lanka as case studies, the authors attempt to demonstrate that at different levels of political participation and leadership, ranging from the national level to the local level, women have demonstrated that they have the ability to use the patriarchal system to gain political visibility. Furthermore, the issues that emanate in the reproductive sphere, which is the designated sphere for women within patriarchal cultures, are carried into the public sphere as political issues that demand public articulation.

★ **UNESCAP (2003)** *Putting Gender Mainstreaming into Practice*, UNESCAP, New York ▤
Accessed January 2005 http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/regionalsymposia.htm.
This is the report of a symposium organized for the Asia-Pacific region in Bangkok from 10 to 13 December 2001, and hosted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It includes presentations of five sessions, in addition to the opening of the symposium. The second session focused on eradicating poverty and the empowerment of women; the third on institutional change for gender mainstreaming. The fourth session addressed issues of gender mainstreaming in national budgets, including the case of Sri Lanka. The next session dealt with responsibilities and accountabilities for gender mainstreaming. Finally, the last two session suggested strategies for gender mainstreaming in national and intergovernmental processes.

C.3 Gender and Decentralization in South Asia

★ **Asian Development Bank (2004a)** *RETA 6008: Gender and Governance Issues in Local Government*, "Overview paper", March ▤
Accessed January 2005 http://www.adb.org
This paper is an overview of a Regional Workshop that presents the results of the project "Gender and Governance Issues in Local Government" (RETA 6008), implemented in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan, under the Regional Technical Assistance Program of the ADB. The aim of the project was to build the capacity of grass roots women leaders in local government units to perform their role and function more effectively, and to promote more efficient and transparent public service delivery. This document contains seven sections. The first two present a conceptual framework and a description of the background conditions to the RETA. The third section explains the structure and implementation of the RETA in each country included in the project. The next section describes the methodologies of evaluation and monitoring used. The last three sections present results and major findings, summarize lessons learned and suggests recommendations for ADB operations.
SEE ALSO
  ▪ Original Proposal and Country reports: 1 on Bangladesh, 2 on Pakistan and 2 on Nepal. ▤

★ **Drage, Jean (2001)** "Women in Local Government in Asia and the Pacific. A comparative Analysis of thirteen countries", Report prepared for the UNESCAP Summit of Women Mayors and Councillors, Phitsanulok, Thailand, 19-22 June 2001 ▤
Accessed January 2005; http://www.unescap.org/huset/women/reports/
This report is a comparative study of women in local government in the Asia-Pacific region. It argues that while women are underrepresented in local government throughout the region they have been more successful in gaining access to local than to national reasons. In the specific case of South Asia, it is argued that allocation of quotas of reserved seats for women have changed their participation instantly in this area, but other areas remained unchanged (such as elected mayors and management). The report includes brief summaries of governmental arrangements at the national and local level, with a mention of women's quotas of reservations if it is the case, in 13 countries including India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Then, factors ensuring, enhancing and affecting women's involvement in local governments are identified regionally, including a section on South Asia. Considering this, regional proposals for change in systems, attitudes, strategies and training are presented. Finally, the report

includes a section on the impact of women as transformative leaders, considering the issues promoted, their leadership style and their impact on equality.
SEE ALSO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY REPORTS

★ **Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee and Shamim Meer (2004)** *Creating Voice and Carving Space, Redefining Governance from a Gender Perspective*, Royal Tropical Institute, KIT Development Policy and Practice, The Netherlands ▪
This book is the result of a three-year programme entitled 'Gender, Citizenship and Governance' initiated in 1999 by KIT Gender at the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam. Sixteen organizations from Southern Africa and South Asia were partners in this. The book has four chapters.
CHAPTER 1 is an introduction to the book which includes an overview of the three topics that chapters 2 to 4 cover, as well as concluding remarks on gender, citizenship and governance in development. The following chapters have a similar structure – they include an introduction, a historical overview, a collection of case studies and an exploration of issues and strategies based on the case studies, as concluding remarks.
CHAPTER 2 focuses on women's political representation and includes five case studies from Namibia, Sri Lanka, Zambia, India and Bangladesh.
CHAPTER 3 explores responsiveness and accountability of Governance Institutions to women and includes five case studies; two from India, two from Bangladesh and one from Pakistan.
CHAPTER 4 addresses citizenship issues and includes six case studies; two from South Africa, two from India, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee (Ed.) (2003a) *Governing for Equity. Gender, Citizenship and Governance*, KIT Publishers, Amsterdam ▪
This book is based on the conference "Governing for Equity" convened in Kochi on 15, 16 and 17 October 2002, held as part of the programme "Gender, Citizenship and Governance" initiated in 1999 by KIT Gender at the Royal Tropical Institute (Amsterdam), with the participation of sixteen partner organizations from Southern Africa and South Asia. It includes six sections. The first addresses global debates on gender, citizenship and governance, including testimonies, presentations by international institutions representatives on the gender and equity agenda and issues on women, power and politics. The second part focuses on women in office, with case studies from Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Namibia and Zambia. The third part presents six case studies on engendering governance institutions from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and South Africa. The fourth section addresses issues of citizenship with four case studies from South Africa, India, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. The next section includes four case studies on governance in peace processes from India and South Africa. Finally, conclusions and a synthesis of key concepts are presented. The book also includes highlights from a public hearing, a "Conference Declaration", a list of participants, the conference programme, a brief description of partner organizations and their addresses.

Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee (2003b) "Creating citizens who demand just governance. Gender and development in the twenty-first century" *Gender and Development*, Vol. 11 No. 3, November ▪
This article discusses the programme "Gender, Citizenship, and Governance", initiated by KIT Gender, at the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam, and its relevance to international development, providing three cases studies from partners of the programme in India, Bangladesh and South Africa. The programme aims to address two key omissions on issues of good governance. First, the fact that "public" consists of women and men, who have gender-differentiated needs and interests. Second, that civil society institutions have a role to play in creating the demand for democratic, accountable, and just governance.

★ **Nussbaum, M.; Basu, A.; Tambiah, Y.; Jayal, G.N. (2003)** *Essays on gender and governance,* Human Development Resource Centre, India ▪
This book is based on four essays that look at gender and governance in the context of UNDP's efforts to promote development, and women's role in it. Some of the highlights from the essays include: the role of affirmative action in achieving a greater voice for women in government, the importance of achieving more adequate representation of women in the state (by focussing on engendering policy, not just the people who formulate policy), and the crucial importance of women's education in making political opportunities

meaningful for them, and in giving them a voice once they attain a political position. The essays included in the book are:

- Nussbaum, Martha "Gender and Governance: An Introduction"
- Basu, Amrita "Gender and Governance: Concepts and Contexts"
- Tambiah, Yasmin "The Impact of Gender Inequality on Governance
- Gopal Jayal, Niraja "Locating Gender in the Governance Discourse"

South Asia Partnership – SAP Canada (2004), "A case for affirmative action. A fact sheet on South Asian Women's Representation in Government" ▪
Accessed January 2005 http://www.sapcanada.org/south_asia.html
This short article argues that despite various reformative measures adopted by some South Asian countries, there hasn't been a significant improvement in women's participation in governance over the years. It includes an overview of the current situation and some recommendations on how to improve this situation.

D. Gender and Decentralization in India

D.1. Decentralization in India

Arora, Guljit Kumar (2002) Globalisation, federalism and decentralisation: implications for India, Bookwell, New Delhi

Aziz, Abdul (2002) "Democratic decentralisation and civil society", Journal of the Council for Social Development 32, Nos.1-2 , p: 135-46

Baviskar, Amita. (2004) "Between micro-politics and administrative imperatives: decentralisation and the Watershed Mission in Madhya Pradesh, India", The European Journal of Development Research 16, No.1, p:26-40

Bohra, O.P. (2000) "Decentralisation and devolution of powers and functions to Panchayats", Journal of rural development 19, No.2, National Institute of Rural Development, p:185-97

Chandrasekhar, C.P. (2001) "Democratic decentralisation and the planning principle: the transition from below", Social scientist, Nos.342-343

Diwan, G.R. (2002) "People's participation in decentralised planning", Indian journal of regional science 34, No.1, p:17-29

Dube, M. P.; Padalia, Munni (2002) Democratic decentralisation and Panchayati Raj in India, Anamika, New Delhi

Hadenius, Axel (2003) "Decentralisation and democratic governance: experiences from India, Bolivia and South Africa", Expert Group on Development Issue, Sweden Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Harriss, John (2001) "Public action and the dialectics of decentralisation: against the myth of social capital as 'the missing link in development", Social scientist, Nos.342-343

Johnson, Craig; Deshingkar, Priya; Start, Daniel (2003) "Grounding the state: poverty, inequality and the politics of governance in India's panchayats", ODI Working Paper 226, London

Kapoor, R.M. (2002) "Federalism : the future of decentralizing States, The Indian Experience" Urban Studies Centre and The Times Research Foundation, Paper presented at the *2nd International Conference on Decentralization*, Manila 25-27 July ▪ Accessed January 2005 http://www.decentralization.ws/countrypapers.asp

Kumar, Girish (2002) "Constitutionalising panchayats: the response of state legislatures", CSH Occasional Paper No. 4, Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi

Mallick, Ayub (2001) "Panchayati Raj and tribal development: a case study", Indian journal of regional science 33, No.2, p:53-65

Misra, Kajri (2000) "Visioning local planning and governance: post 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts", Working Paper 143, Anand Institute of Rural Management

Montes Jr, Raphael (2002) "India. Pachayats: Decentralization to the Grassroots" in ARCD, *Sourcebook on Decentralization in Asia*, Philippines ▪

Perumal, M. (2003) "Rural Panchayats and provision of Seventy Third Amendment in India", in Avesak 33, No.1, p:43-48

Rajneesh, Shalini (2002) Rural development through democratic decentralization, Deep & Deep, New Delhi

Reddy, T. Prabhakar. (2004) "Functioning of panchayats in Andhra Pradesh", Social Change: Journal of the Council for Social Development 34, No.1, p:102-111

Sanyal, B.M. (2001) India: decentralised planning: themes and issues, Concept, New Delhi

Sivaramakrishnan, K.C. (2000) Power to the people? The politics and progress of decentralisation, Trade Policy Research Centre (London) and Centre for Policy Research (New Delhi, India)

Sundar, Nandini (2001) " Is devolution democratization?", World development 29, No.12 p:2007-23

D.2. Gender and Decentralization in India

Ananth Pur, Kripa (2004) *Rivalry or Synergy? Formal and Informal*

Local Governance in Rural India, Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Working Paper No. 226, IDS, Brighton ▤

This paper argues that Informal Local Governance Institutions (ILGIs) in India have not only "oppressive" features, but also show some "functional" and progressive features. The latter are explored in this study, using field work undergone in Karnataka. In relation to changes in the status of women, the study concludes that ILGIs seem to continue to be patriarchal and gender biased, with little if any participation of women in meetings (and when women participate usually do so as silent observers).

Ananth Pur, Kripa (2002) *Selection by Custom and Election by Statute – Interfaces in Local Governance In Karnataka*, Paper presented at the Workshop on Local Governance, Centre for the Study of Law & Governance, New Delhi, 11-12 April ▤

This paper analyzes the role of Customary Panchayats in influencing Grama Panchayat elections, arguing that they have been particularly damaging to women in local governments interested in a political career by reducing their chances of continuity, discouraging (or even not allowing) women to re-contest the elections. Customary Pachayats act as "gatekeepers" in controlling nominations to elections in general, but their influence is especially strong in the selection of women that may take advantage of reservation.

★ **Bryld, Eric (2001)** "Increasing Participation in Democratic Institutions through Decentralization: Empowering Women and Scheduled Castes and Tribes through Panchayat Raj in Rural India." *Democratization 8, 3* (Autumn), 149-72 ▤

ONLY ABSTRACT AVAILABLE

This article analyses the potential and the pitfalls of increasing women's and scheduled castes' participation through decentralization by analyzing the Indian Panchayat Raj system. It is shown how technocratic regulations are not sufficient to ensure genuine empowerment for all in democratic decision-making. The question whether decentralization can be justified as one of the main means to development remains to be resolved.

Chattopadhyay, Raghabendra and Esther Duflo (2001) "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a India-Wide Randomized Policy Experiment" ▤

This paper compares the type of public goods provided in reserved and unreserved village councils, using a data set collected on 165 councils. It is shown that women (reserved GP) invest more in infrastructure that is directly relevant to the needs of rural women (drinking water facilities, recycled fuel equipment and construction of roads), while men (unreserved GP) invest more in education. Women are more likely to participate in the policy-making process if the leader of their village council is a woman.

★ **Chattopadhyay, Raghabendra and Esther Duflo (2004)** "Impact of reservation in Panchayati Raj: Evidence from a nationwide randomised experiment", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 9, pp.979–986 ▤

This paper explores the relationship between women's stated priorities and actual spending patterns in village councils led by women in West Bengal and Rajasthan. It argues that reservation makes a difference as both women and scheduled casts (SCs) in village leadership positions invest more in what women and SCs seem to want. Hence, the authors argue that reservation may be a tool to ensure adequate representation and delivery of local public goods to disadvantaged groups, considering that local leaders seem to have some effective control over decisions, even when they are women or SCs, and despite preconception that they provide weak leadership. It is also worth mentioning that this study questions the possible negative impacts that the tagging of other objectives onto the reservation policy may have, using the example of laws mandating a two-child norm for members of the Panchayat, which may discourage women from being candidates (especially considering that they don't usually control their fertility choices).

⊠ **Holzner, Brigitte M.; Wit, Joop de (2003)** *Supporting decentralised urban governance: training women municipal councillors in Mumbai,*

India, Working paper series, Institute of Social Studies (The Hague), No. 386

★ **Institute of Social Sciences, South Asia Partnership and IDRC (2003)** *A decade of Women's Empowerment through Local Government in India*, Workshop Report, October 20-21, New Delhi

Accessed January 2005 http://www.sapcanada.org/south_asia.html
This workshop carried out on October 20-21, 2003, was organized by Ottawa-based SAP Canada and Delhi-based Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) with the sponsorship from the Ottawa-based International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The expected outcomes of the workshop were to gather together current research and innovative practices on this theme; provoke discussion and a cross fertilization of ideas; come to a better understanding of the concept of women's empowerment within the context of the Indian amendments; and understand the factors enabling and disabling women from entering and being effective in local government. The workshop consisted of four panels:
- PANEL 1 - Setting the context: Concepts and models of empowerment
- PANEL 2 - Approaches and tools for empowerment
- PANEL 3 - Micro studies and case studies from the field
- PANEL 4 - Current innovations, future strategies

SEE ALSO WORSHOP BRIEF AND FOLLOWING PAPERS
- Aggrawal, Artee (2003) "State Initiatives in Gender Empowerment: A Study of Uttar Pradesh", Presented at the Workshop: *A decade of Women's Empowerment through Local Government in India*, October 20-21, New Delhi
- Singla, Pamela (2003) "Women's Participation in Panchayati Raj – Case Study of Gurgaon District in Haryana", Presented at the Workshop: *A decade of Women's Empowerment through Local Government in India*, October 20-21, New Delhi
- Vijayanthi, K.N. (2003) "Power to the Women — Innovative Strategies and Approaches Adopted for Empowerment in a Urban Community Development Programme", Presented at the Workshop: *A decade of Women's Empowerment through Local Government in India*, October 20-21, New Delhi
- Baviskar, B.S. (2003) "Impact of Women's Participation in Local Governance in Rural India", Presented at the Workshop: *A decade of Women's Empowerment through Local Government in India*, October 20-21, New Delhi
- Bezboruah, Rakha (2003) "Women and Governance: Reimagining the State: Micro Study on Obstacles and Factors Mediating Women's Political Participation", Presented at the Workshop: *A decade of Women's Empowerment through Local Government in India*, October 20-21, New Delhi
- Deshmukh-Ranadive, Joy (2003) "Women's Participation in Self-Help Groups and in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Suggesting Synergistic Linkages", Presented at the Workshop: *A decade of Women's Empowerment through Local Government in India*, October 20-21, New Delhi
- Isaac, Thomas ; Seema, T.N. and Smitha Gupta (2003) "Women Elected Representatives in Kerala (1995-2000): From Symbolism to Empowerment", Presented at the Workshop: *A decade of Women's Empowerment through Local Government in India*, October 20-21, New Delhi

★ **Lama-Rewal S. Tawa (2001)** "Women in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation: A Study in the Context of the Debate on the Women's Reservation Bill." *CSH Occasional Paper 2*, Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi
This article presents the findings of a survey conducted in 2000 in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, to assess the first phase of the implementation of women's quotas – 33 per cent of seats - in this urban local body. The study proceeds by testing the major arguments expressed during the debate over the Women's Reservation Bill, which proposes to implement similar quotas in legislative assemblies at the States and Union levels. Based on a questionnaire, interviews, and direct observation and archive analysis, the paper addresses in turn the five major issues raised in the course of that debate: do women's quotas favour or hinder gender and social justice? Do they hinder the efficiency of the assemblies to which they apply? Do they favour the representation of women's interests? Do they have

an impact on the general functioning of the urban body? Lastly, is the system of rotating reserved constituencies detrimental to (women) politicians and to voters?

☒ **Mayaram, Shail (2003)** "Gender in Governance: Family and the Constitutional Panchayats of Contemporary India", In: Pernau, Margrit; Ahmad, Imtiaz and Helmut Reifeld (eds.), *Family and Gender*, New Delhi, Sage, pp.242-276

★ **Mohanty, Bidyut (2001)** "The Daughters of the 73rd Amendment", Presentation for South Asia Parternship - SAP, Canada ▪
Accessed January 2005 http://www.sapcanada.org/south_asia.html
This presentation argues that the 73rd Amendment has an empowering impact on women, even where women's labour is still marginalized and the rural hierarchies remain unchallenged, as the entry of women into politics in such a big way signifies in itself a radical change. The study also disproves the myth of being a proxy woman and argues that, even though in a limited sense, women are engendering the development process and husband-wife relationships are becoming relatively more egalitarian. However, it is also highlighted that there are many constraints limiting the role elected women can play, such as panchayat's resource scarcity, the existence of parallel institutions (such as the Water Harvesting Committee) which by-pass panchayats easily, the budget control of line departments, amongst others.

★ **Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee and Shamim Meer (2004)** *Creating Voice and Carving Space, Redefining Governance from a Gender Perspective*, Royal Tropical Institute, KIT Development Policy and Practice, The Netherlands ▪
SEE REVIEW IN SECTION B.
Three relevant case studies of interventions in India:

▪ *"Building Political Legitimacy for Elected Muslim, Dalit and Backward Caste Women: Confederation of Voluntary Associations (COVA)" [p.88-94]*
COVA is a network of 750 organisations based in Hyderabad, India, that works for communal harmony through participative community empowerment. COVA was concerned that political parties and male politicians had captured women's quotas making women's representation a sham. Considering this, in 1990s, it embarked on a programme aimed at establishing the legitimacy of women political representatives as political actors, through enabling them to take on the tasks demanded of their office. The idea was that once the women representatives successfully performed their official responsibilities there would be a shift in their self-perception, and in the perception of significant others – such as male representatives, officials, political parties, the community and families – thus establishing women's legitimacy as political actors. The lessons learnt from the COVA experience highlight that it is possible to make headway in establishing the legitimacy of women political actors even in the face of deeply ingrained resistance. For doing this, a key element is to end elected women's isolation, to advance opportunities for networking and organising, and to address the deep power differentials that result in women's marginalisation, alongside skills and confidence building.

▪ *"Influencing Planning Processes in Kerala, India, to ensure accountability to Women: Sakhi" [p.112-117]*
Sakhi Women's Resource Centre was set up in 1996 in Trivandrum, Kerala, to promote women's rights and support women's organisation. Sakhi's interventions consisted of two phases. The first one carried out an assessment of how planning processes were responding to women's concerns, finding out that women's needs and interests weren't adequately addressed. The second phase attempted to influence the planning processes so as to ensure women's needs and interests were taken into account.

▪ *"Advocating Women's Literacy for Empowerment: Nirantar" [p.128-131]*
Nirantar is a resource centre based in Delhi, with a gender and rights perspective on education. The main concern generating the intervention was the absence of adequate programmes to advance women's literacy in India, despite the espoused commitment of India's education policy to promote women's empowerment. The intervention focused its efforts on influencing the government's 10th Five Year Plan through a process of research and advocacy, culminating in a National Consultation on Gender and Education Policy.

The following two case studies on citizenship issues were not included as they are not very much related to decentralization:

- *"Engendering the peace process: North East Network (NEN), India" [p.172-176]*
- *"Reframing the Global Debate on Trafficking from a Sex workers' perspective: Durbar Mahila Samanway Committee, India" [p.176-182]*

⊠ **Murthy, Ranjani; Ed. (2001)** *Building women's capacities: interventions in gender ransformation*, Sage, New Delhi

★ **Arun Palnitkar, Sneha (2001)** *State of Women in Urban Local Government, India*, Report prepared for UNESCAP, UNESCAP and All India Institute of Local Self Government ▤
Accessed January 2005; http://www.unescap.org/huset/women/reports/
This report has three main sections. The first one is a brief description of the country, including a socio-economic profile, an overview of the country's politics and governance and an outline of women's participation and representation in politics. The second section addresses the participation of women in local governance and government, as well as briefly discusses the use of sex-disaggregated data for policy and programme formulation as part of a gender sensitization program. The third section focuses on women's representation on local governments, including an overview of the legal and political initiatives from the government, the mechanisms for training and supporting elected women and the special measures being taken to increase women participation in civil service and decision-making positions. SEE ALSO: similar chapters on Nepal (2001), Sri Lanka (2001), Bangladesh (2001) and Pakistan (2001).

Pinto, Patricia (2002) "Making democracy work in Goa: Promoting Parternships between NGOs and local government", Presentation for South Asia Parternship – SAP, Canada ▤
Accessed January 2005 http://www.sapcanada.org/south_asia.html
Patricia Pinto is a civil and environmental activist and was elected councillor on the municipal council of Panjim, in the southwestern state of Goa, India. This is the presentation she gave during her visit to Canada in September and October 2002, as part of the activities of the South Asia Partnership Canada's India Linkage Program. The presentation provides an overview of women's political participation in Goa and a brief description of the activities carried out in the council.

⊠ **Pinto, Ambrose and Helmut Reifel; Eds (2001)** *Women in Panchayati Raj*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi

⊠ **Raj, Manoj (2003)** "Participation of Marginalised Sections: Woman and Dalit Leadership in Panchayats." In Manor Raj and Malini Nambiar, et. al. (eds.) *State of Panchayats: A Participatory Perspective*, New Delhi: PRIA

⊠ **Topalova, Petia (2003)** *Women are Changing Governance in India? The Impact of Female Leadership on household Satisfaction, Quality of Public Goods and Governance*, Mimeo, MIT, Boston

★ **Vijayalakshmi, V. (2004)** *Citizenship, Differences and Identity. Dalit Women and Political Inclusion,*, Working Paper No. 147, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore ▤
This paper examines issues related to citizenship and political participation of dalit women, which participation in citizenship is constrained by high levels of deprivation, minimal participation in civil society and low political activity of any kind. It suggests that class, caste and religion are elements that have been neglected in feminist politics in India.

★ **Vijayalakshmi, V. (2003)** *Rent-Seeking and Gender in Local Governance*, Paper presented at the Conference on Re/constructing Corruption, Norwich, 28 April–2 May ⊞
This paper examines the relationship between corruption and gender in local governments in India. It argues that, despite previous studies supporting that gender equality contributed to reducing corruption, no significant relationship was found between attitudes towards rent-seeking and gender distribution in local government. The results also point out that institutional measures such as accountability, risk factor and the role of opposition parties were crucial in explaining the level of corruption. The author explains that while women might score high on integrity tests, exhibit community orientation in experimental situations and show a lesser tendency towards corrupt behaviour in hypothetical situations, it need not necessarily be reproduced in political and economic situations where multiple factors are involved.

Vijayalakshmi, V. (2002) *Gender, Accountability and Political Representation in Local Government*, Working Paper No. 102, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore ⊞
This paper examines the complexities of political representation of women's interests in the panchayats of Karnataka. It is argued that lack of effective participation, multiplicity of identities (caste, class, political party) and the absence of the consolidation of gender specific concerns (the absence of the "we" factor, isolated activities, no gender identification), prevent women's interests from being an issue in their political representation. The authors suggest that reservation was a necessary but not sufficient condition to ensure that women's interests were addressed. Thus, it may be necessary to think about legislation that would make it obligatory to take up issues that concern women, and that will probably increase the chances to bring about change in attitudes about women.

★ **Vijayalakshmi, V. and B.K. Chandrashekar (2001)** *Authority, Gender and Powerlessness: Women and Political Participation in India,* Working Paper No.16, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore ⊞
This paper argues that even though reservation policies have ensured authority of elected women, this has not been translated into power (i.e. the ability to actually affect outcomes). This duality of women's authority and men's power is permitted by the gender order (women were not willing to risk anything that may damage their families). According to the authors, the acceptance of this situation by women was clear when considering male and female perceptions on their resources' the first considered themselves to be in direct control while the latter didn't perceive themselves in a decision-making position. While reporting on their election, male and female representatives also diverged in their perceptions for being elected; the former emphasised the individual self while the sense of self tended to got diluted in the case of women (who gave more weight to the importance of their male members in the family).

E. Gender and Decentralization in Sri Lanka

E.1. Decentralization in Sri Lanka

★ **Dainis, A. P. (2003)** "Updated Country Reports on Local Government Systems: Sri Lanka", UNESCAP.
Accessed January 2005 http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/index.htm

Government of Sri Lanka (2002) *REGAINING SRI LANKA: Vision and Strategy for Accelerated Development*, December ⊞
Accessed January 2005, External Resources Department (ERD) webpage: http://www.erd.gov.lk/publicweb
This is an official document that describes the (former) government's vision and strategy for development. It includes three parts; the first one focused on economic growth, the second on poverty reduction strategies and the third one presents action plan matrices. The second part includes a section on pro-poor governance and empowerment, and a sub-section on combating gender discrimination [p.92-93], which suggests a reservation of 50 percent of all seats in local and national government elections for female

candidates. It also suggests a number of initiatives that the government will take, including the protection of women's rights, support for victims of violence against women and gender sensitization programs.

Government of Sri Lanka (2004) *Creating our Future. Building our Nation* ▣ Accessed January 2005, External Resources Department (ERD) webpage: http://www.erd.gov.lk/publicweb
This is an official document that briefly describes the National Development Strategy of Sri Lanka's government after "the failure of the *Regaining Sri Lanka* strategy", including policy briefs for key areas and sectors. It is worth noting that gender dimensions are not included in this document, and the necessity of increasing women's representation in local governments is not mentioned either.

★ **Hemamalee, K. (2001)** "Sri Lanka", Sri Lanka Institute of Local Governance, Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government, Colombo ▣
Accessed January 2005 http://www.apo-tokyo.org/icd/papers/E-Publications/01.EffDecforICD/3-11.pdf
This paper attempts discusses the background of decentralization/ devolution of power in Sri Lanka and explains how the Provincial Council System functions in the country. It also presents the administrative and legal constraints experienced by provincial councils in the execution of devolved power in the face of the resistance of the policy and the bureaucracy for decentralization of power. Finally, some strategies that can be adopted for effective decentralization aimed at community development are suggested.

Martir, Rolando (2002) "Sri Lanka. Strengthening Decentralization and Democratization: Challenges, Issues and Reforms", in ARCD, *Sourcebook on Decentralization in Asia*, Philippines ▣
This section of the sourcebook briefly describes the political system and local government institutions in Sri Lanka. It includes a short history of decentralization in the country (until 2001) and identifies issues, concerns and lessons learned.

★ **Samaranayake, Gamini (2002)** "Ethnic conflict and the process of decentralization and devolution of power in Sri Lanka", University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, Paper presented at the *2nd International Conference on Decentralization*, Manila 25-27 July ▣
Accessed January 2005 http://www.decentralization.ws/countrypapers.asp
This paper argues that Sri Lanka is gradually but steadily moving from centralization towards decentralization and devolution as a result of the ethnic conflict. It includes an examination and exploration of the origin and development of the discourse of federalism, decentralization and devolution of power in the light of the roots of ethnic conflict and ensuing armed conflict in Sri Lanka. It also examines the reasons for the failure of decentralization and devolution of power as a mechanism of conflict resolution and identifies the major short-comes of the attempt of decentralization and devolution of power.

E.2. Gender and Decentralization in Sri Lanka

★ **ADB (1999)** *Women in Sri Lanka. Country Briefing Report* ▣
Accessed January 2005 http://www.adb.org/Publications/year.asp
This report includes four chapters.
CHAPTER 1 is an overview of the situation of Women in Sri Lanka and has two main sections. The first one has background information on women in the country, including demographic background, legal rights and political participation, health and nutritional status, education and training, economic activities and socio-cultural aspects. The second section elaborates on the existent policies and programs for women (carried out by both, government and non-government institutions).
CHAPTER 2 elaborates on the current issues for women in Sri Lanka, including the gender dimensions of poverty, the impact of the civil conflict on women and issues of migrant women workers.
CHAPTER 3 identifies gender issues relevant to ADB's Operations.
SEE ALSO: similar chapters on Nepal (1999) and Bangladesh (2001).

⊠ **Gomez, M. and S.Gomez (2001)** *Gender and Politics in Sri Lanka: Preferring Women*, Shakti Press

⊠▷**Harris, Simon (2004)** "Gender, participation, and post-conflict planning in northern Sri Lanka", *Gender and development 12*, No.3, p: 60-69

★ **Gunatilake, Mana (2001)** *State of Women in Urban Local Government, Sri Lanka*, Report prepared for UNESCAP, UNESCAP and Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government ▪ Accessed January 2005; http://www.unescap.org/huset/women/reports/
This report has five main sections. The first one is a brief description of the country, including a socio-economic profile, an overview of the country's politics and governance and an outline of women's participation and representation in politics. The second section addresses the participation of women in urban local government and briefly discusses the existing gender sensitization programmes. The third section focuses on women's representation on local governments. The fourth section presents a short qualitative analysis of the experience of women in local government, including a socio-economic and demographic profile of the women included in the study and their perceptions of the problems they face and the impact they may have. Finally, recommendations for further actions are suggested.
SEE ALSO: similar chapters on Nepal (2001), India (2001), Bangladesh (2001) and Pakistan (2001).

⊠ **Kiribamune, Sirima, Ed. (1999)** *Women and Politics in Sri Lanka*, International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Kandy

★ **Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee and Shamim Meer (2004)** *Creating Voice and Carving Space, Redefining Governance from a Gender Perspective*, Royal Tropical Institute, KIT Development Policy and Practice, The Netherlands ▪
SEE REVIEW IN SECTION B.
One case study of intervention in Sri Lanka: "Redefining political legitimacy: Lobbying for a Women's quota in Sri Lanka: International Council for Ethnic Studies (ICES)" [p:79-84]
ICES is a gender research organization and works to advance human rights, national cohesion, peace and equitable development processes. This organization initiated an advocacy and lobbying campaign to build consensus for a legal quota to increase women's participation in local elected assemblies.

⊠ **National Planning Department (2000)** *Engendering the National Budget of Sri Lanka*, Colombo

USAID (2004) *Gender Assessment for USAID/Sri Lanka*, February ▪ Accessed January 2005 www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/ga_srilanka.pdf
This report is part of the background materials required by the USAID/Sri Lanka mission to develop a new country strategic plan for the period 2004-2007. It contains a gender conceptual framework and terminology, an overview of gender issues in Sri Lanka, proposals for gender mainstreaming in the country strategic plan and recommendations for monitoring. One section (p.32-35) is dedicated to the urgent need of improvements in the representation of women in political fora and at other decision-making levels and recommends a number of activities in this area.

F. Gender and Decentralization in Pakistan

F.1. Decentralization in Pakistan

★ **Akbar Zaidi, S. (2003)** "Updated Country Reports on Local Government Systems: Pakistan", UNESCAP.
Accessed January 2005 http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/index.htm

★ **Cheema, Ali; Ijaz Khwaja, Asim and Qadir Adnan (2004)** "Decentralization in Pakistan: Context, Content and Causes", Forthcoming in Mookherjee, D. and P. Bardhan, *Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Comparative Perspective*
Accessed January 2005 http://www.arts.cornell.edu/econ/75devconf/papers/cheema.pdf
This paper provides a description of the recent decentralization reforms in Pakistan under General Musharraf and consists of three sections. The first part provides a historical overview starting with the pre-independence period up to the revival of local governments under General Musharraf. Section 2 provides a description of the current decentralization reform. Finally, an interpretation the current reform is presented.

Dohad, Rashida (2002) *People's Assemblies on Devolution of Power: a case study on popular political participation in Pakistan*, PLA Notes 43:26-28
Accessed January 2005 http://www.iied.org/docs/pla/plan_04308.pdf
This short article argues that People's Assemblies on Devolution of Power were successful in revitalising a culture of public debate and analysis, enabling public opinion to influence public policy and helping to politicise civil society organizations and develop relationships amongst them.

Haqqani, Husain and Bushra Asif (2003) *Two Reports from the CSIS Project – Pakistan's Future and U.S. Policy Options*; Includes: "Pakistan's Internal Divisions" and "Local Government Reforms in Pakistan"
Accessed January 2005 http://www.csis.org/saprog/031201.pdf
HAQQANI – PAKISTAN'S INTERNAL DIVISIONS. This document presents an historical overview of Pakistan's Internal Divisions, including policy recommendations.
ASIF – LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS IN PAKISTAN. This report includes an overview of Musharraf's devolution plan and its implementation in four key areas – governance decentralization (district administration, development and service delivery), political impact, financial authonomy and policy reforms.

★ **Keefer, Philip; Narayan, Ambar and Tara Vishwanath (2003)** *The Political Economy of Decentralization in Pakistan*
Accessed January 2005 http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/decentralisation/Pakistan.pdf
This study analyses the political conditions for a successful decentralization in Paksitan. The first section explores the implications of the existence of distortion in central government decision-making states, especially in the social service provision. The second section describes the complex arrangements of Pakistan's devolution, questions whether decentralization mitigates or enhances the incentives of politicians to undertake targeted spending. The next section is the main analytical part and explores the conditions under which distortions could be relieved by decentralization; if focuses especially on clientelism and the credibility of political competitors; corruption, electoral rules and the institutions of intra-governmental decision-making and political horizons. The main conclusion is that although on some, frequently studied dimensions, decentralization may improve outcomes, other sources of policy distortion may be stronger under decentralization.

Lou, Donna (2002b) "Pakistan. Rebuilding the Nation through Decentralization" in ARCD, *Sourcebook on Decentralization in Asia*, Philippines ▪

This section of the sourcebook briefly describes the political system and local government institutions in Pakistan. It includes a short history of decentralization in the country (until 2001) and identifies issues, concerns and lessons learned.

F.2. Gender and Decentralization in Pakistan

Amnesty International (2002) *Pakistan: Insufficient Protection of Women* ▪

Accessed January 2005 http://web.amnesty.org/library/

This report summarizes the commitment to uphold women's rights made since October 1999 when the current government came into power. It then describes instances of abuse of women's rights in the family, in the community and in custody which have occurred despite such assurances. Next, the difficulties women face in the criminal justice system when they seed redress are addressed, and it is argued that there has been a systematic failure of the Pakistani State to prevent, investigate and punish abuses of women's rights. Finally, a set of recommendations are presented.

★ **Graff, Irene (2004)** "Quota Systems in Pakistan under the Musharraf Regime" in *NIASnytt Asian Insights No.1*, Women and Politics in Asia, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, March ▪

This short article provides an overview of the quota systems in Pakistan, both at the Federal and the Local level. In addition, it briefly explores the effects of such quotas, critiques the quota size established and explores the political accountability of elected women.

★ **Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee and Shamim Meer (2004)** *Creating Voice and Carving Space, Redefining Governance from a Gender Perspective*, Royal Tropical Institute, KIT Development Policy and Practice, The Netherlands ▪

SEE REVIEW IN SECTION B.

One case study of intervention in Pakistan: "Strengthening the National Commission on the Status of Women in Pakistan: Aurat Foundation and Shirkat Gah" [p:131-138].

Aurat Foundation is a national civil society organization established to develop an enabling environment for women's empowerment in Pakistan. Shirkat Gah aims to advance women's empowerment in the country. Both organizations set up a consultative process involving the National Commission on the Status of Women in Pakistan (NCSW), policy makers, women's rights activists with the objective of ensuring that the NCSW would be accountable to women and that it would have enforcing authority.

★ **Naz, Rukhshanda (2001)** *State of Women in Urban Local Government, Pakistan*, Report prepared for UNESCAP, UNESCAP and Aurat Foundation ▪

Accessed January 2005; http://www.unescap.org/huset/women/reports/

This report has four main sections (section 2 on women's participation in urban local governance is not considered as it consists of only one paragraph). The first one is a brief description of the country, including a socio-economic profile, an overview of the country's politics and governance and an outline of women's participation and representation in politics. The next section addresses women's representation in local government, including an overview of the training and support mechanisms for elected women. Section 4 presents a very short qualitative analysis of the experience of women in local government and their perceptions on the problems they face. Finally, recommendations for further actions are suggested. SEE ALSO: similar chapters on Nepal (2001), India (2001), Bangladesh (2001) and Sri Lanka (2001).

★ **Reyes, Socorro (2002)** *Quotas for women for legislative seats at the local level in Pakistan*, Stockholm, International IDEA ▪

Accessed January 2005 http://www.idea.int

This study investigates the kind of quotas in use in Pakistan and provides some examples of the difficulties and challenges confronting their implementation, including interesting insights into the proposed implementation of these quotas at the local level, as well as the provincial and national levels. Finally, some strategic methods for ensuring the full citizenship of women are explored.

G. Gender and Decentralization in Bangladesh

G.1. Decentralization in Bangladesh

Ahmed, Sabbir (2001) NGOs and Electoral Participation in Rural Bangladesh▣
Accessed January 2005 http://www.bath.ac.uk/cds/enbs-papers-pdfs/ahmeds.pdf
This paper explores the conditions under which NGOs can contribute to electoral participation. First, it analyses the current electoral participation at the local level, considering also the national scenario. Second, it explores the activities that NGOs have been undertaking in the area of electoral participation. Finally, problems and prospects for activities in this field are identified.

★ **Boex, Jamie; Gudgeon, Peter and Roger Shotton (2002)** *Role of UNDP in Promoting Local Governance and Decentralization in Bangladesh,* Report of the initial SPPD Scoping Mission, UNDP ▣
Accessed January 2005
www.uncdf.org/english/countries/bangladesh/local_governance/other_project_related_reports/scopingmissionrptexternal.pdf
This report is based on a scoping mission for the SPPD on Promoting Local Governance and Decentralisation in Bangladesh (May 29-June 11, 2000). It includes six main sections. The first one provides a broad assessment of the status of decentralization reforms in the country. The second describes UNDP's programme commitments to decentralization and local governance. The third section argues for Fiscal Decentralisation and Local Service Delivery as a tactical "technical" entry point for the UNDP. The next section further elaborates the various issues and challenges that need to be addressed in such decentralization. The fifth section provides a framework for disentangling different "levels" of policy issue (each requiring a different strategy for change). Finally, a proposed strategy is proposed to UNDP aimed at promoting policy on fiscal decentralisation and local pro-poor service delivery.
SEE ALSO:
Boex, Jamie and Roger Shotton (2002) *Promoting Policy on Local Governance and Decentralization in Bangladesh*, Update on the Report of the SPPD Scoping Mission, UNDP ▣
Accessed January 2005
www.uncdf.org/english/countries/bangladesh/local_governance/technical_review_reports/UNCDF-bgd_techsupportSept02.pdf

⊠ **Hossain, Moazzem (2003)** "Development through democratisation and decentralisation: the case of Bangladesh", *Journal of South Asian studies* 26 No.3, p:297-308

⊠ **Khan, Mohammad Mohabbat (2002)** "Myth of administrative decentralisation in Bangladesh" *Asian affairs 24 No. 1,* Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh, p:5-23

Lou, Donna (2002a) "Bangladesh. Decentralizing Governance" in ARCD, *Sourcebook on Decentralization in Asia*, Presented at the Second International Conference on Decentralization "Federalism: The Future of Decentralizing States?", Asian Resource Center for Decentralization, Philippines ▣

This section of the sourcebook briefly describes the political system and local government institutions in Bangladesh. It includes a short history of decentralization in the country and identifies issues, concerns and lessons learned.

G.2. Gender and Decentralization in Bangladesh

★ **ADB (2001)** *Women in Bangladesh. Country Briefing Report* ▤
Accessed January 2005 http://www.adb.org/Publications/year.asp
This report includes four chapters.
CHAPTER 1 is an overview of the situation of Women in Bangladesh and consists of 7 sections. The first one is a demographic background of women in the country. Second, relevant social and cultural issues for women are identified and briefly explained, such as patriarchy and violence against women. Third, an overview of the legal rights and political participation of women is presented. The next three sections focus on gender asymmetries and interventions on health, reproductive health and nutritional status; education and training; and women's economic participation. The last section addresses women's participation in politics and decision-making, including women in political parties and participation at the local level.
CHAPTER 2 elaborates on the current issues for women in Bangladesh, including issues of the gender dimensions of poverty, women's access to social services (i.e. water, health, education) and the role of women in Environment Conservation and Disaster Management.
CHAPTER 3 focuses on the gender dimensions of policies and programmes, including Government Development Policies and Plans for women (such as the declaration of the National Policy for Advancement of Women and the adoption of the National Action Plan for Advancement of Women: Implementation of the Beijing Plattform for action), National Women's Machineries and NGOs, Bilateral and Multilateral Agencies.
CHAPTER 4 identifies gender issues relevant to ADB's Operations.
SEE ALSO: similar chapters on Nepal (1999) and Sri Lanka (1999).

⊠ **Akhter, Salma (2002)** "Status of women's leadership in Bangladesh: problems and prospects ; a study of elected woman members of Union Parishad" *Pakistan journal of women's studies: Alam-e-Niswan 9*, No.2, p:1-29

⊠ **Asia Foundation (2001)** *Voices of Women: A new era of political leadership in Bangladesh,* Dhaka

⊠ **Chowdhury, Najama (1998)** "The Politics of implementing women's rights in Bangladesh", In: Kershen, Anne (ed.) *A question of identity*, Aldershot, Ashgate

★ **Islam, Farzana (2001)** *State of Women in Urban Local Government, Bangladesh*, Report prepared for UNESCAP, UNESCAP and Jahangirnagar University▤
Accessed January 2005; http://www.unescap.org/huset/women/reports/
This report has five main sections. The first one is a brief description of the country, including a socio-economic profile, an overview of the country's politics and governance and an outline of women's participation and representation in politics. The second section addresses the participation of women in <u>urban</u> local government and highlights the absence of gender sensitization programmes in these issues. The third section focuses on women's representation on local governments. The fourth section presents a short qualitative analysis of the experience of women in local government, including a socio-economic and demographic profile of the women included in the study and their perceptions on gender discrimination in work environment. Finally, recommendations for further actions are suggested.
SEE ALSO: similar chapters on Nepal (2001), India (2001), Sri Lanka (2001) and Pakistan (2001).

Islam, Nazrul (2003) "Updated Country Reports on Local Government Systems: Bangladesh", UNESCAP.

Accessed January 2005 http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/index.htm

★ **Mukhopadhyay, Maitrayee and Shamim Meer (2004)** *Creating Voice and Carving Space, Redefining Governance from a Gender Perspective*, Royal Tropical Institute, KIT Development Policy and Practice, The Netherlands ▪

SEE REVIEW IN SECTION B.

Three case studies of interventions in Bangladesh:

- *"Enhancing the role of women elected to local government: Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) [p.94-98]*
  BMP (mass-based organization) developed an intervention aimed to address two important problems of women representatives – their isolation and the hostility and disregard from male representatives, male officials and family members, by developing support groups and support networks.

- *"Enhancing the participation of elected women members in development committees of decentralised local government: PRIP trust" [p.117-122]*
  PRIP trust has worked with women elected to reserved seats in Bangladesh's local government structures. PRIP worked with eleven women-headed Union Parishad committees in partnership with a local NGO to build women's capacities in development planning from a gender perspective; enable them to mobilise resources to implement development plans and to create a gender sensitive environment to support the planning and implementing of gender development programmes.

- *"Ensuring accountability of local health authorities and service providers to women in Bangladesh: Naripokkho" [p.122-127]*
  Naripokkho is an NGO founded to advance women's rights and have worked as an advocacy group. In this project it worked with a local NGO, Sankalpa, in one sub-district (Pathorgatha) with the objective to resuscitate an accountability committee which provided for civil society representation in holding health authorities to account.