

Water and Sanitation Initiative
AusAID CSO WASH Fund

Review of Oxfam's Women's WASH Platforms
in Bangladesh and Cambodia

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WWPs in Bangladesh and Cambodia

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Background

Oxfam has been present in Cambodia for more than 25 years. Oxfam Australia and Oxfam Activities deliver WASH services by using Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) and through the rehabilitation of existing water and sanitation infrastructure and construction of new affordable and disaster-proof WASH technologies.

Oxfam received funding from AusAID for programming in six countries including Cambodia and Bangladesh. The objectives of the Water and Sanitation Initiative (WSI) project are:

1. To increase access to improve water, sanitation and hygiene promotion.
2. To reduce gender related WASH inequities and empower women.
3. To strengthen the capacity of the participating villages and the district and provincial government WASH service providers.
4. To use the evidence from the project to improve the national WASH sector's knowledge and practices and contribute to the knowledge base of Oxfam International and the international and Australian WASH sector including AusAID.

The Women's Wash Platforms are an innovative and integral part of Oxfam's strategy for achieving the 'gender' goals of the WSI project.¹

Oxfam's Women's Wash Platform (WWP) Project Rationale

Raising women's ability to participate in the economic sector does not automatically result in an improved position socially or politically or to increased participation in decision-making (i.e. 'empowerment'). Research has suggested that failure to address the particular needs of women, or their ability to participate in decision-making, leads to less sustainable programs.² Oxfam understands that the multiplier effects of WASH deprivation are often structured by gender inequality that interacts with limitations in legal rights, discriminatory policies, wealth-based disparities, and cycles of poverty exacerbated by current trends in globalization, so that the poorest and most vulnerable women and girls suffer most.³

Best practice case studies suggest that gender-sensitive water programs can have a positive effect on women's empowerment—beyond the concerns of water and hygiene and beyond the usual focus on economic development.⁴ "Using WASH as an entry point is a beneficial way to achieve important gender and community outcomes in short term programming, while also linking into broader development policy and project influence."⁵

Working at the policy and grassroots levels simultaneously, the Oxfam WSI WASH Framework uses a system wide approach with three core, four enabling outcomes, and a commitment to gender sensitive programming. The Framework is designed to provide internal cohesion to country programs made up of a variety of projects, and consistency to the several programs in progress across a wide variety of political and cultural contexts around the world.⁶

1. Three core outcomes: improve access to water; improve access to sanitation; and hygiene improvements.
2. Four enabling outcomes: reference improved governance and effectiveness; improved gender equity; strengthened capacity in partner countries; and an improved WASH evidence and knowledge base.
3. Gender mainstreaming⁷ and other gender sensitive strategies are key.

Supporting AusAID's interest in stimulating grass roots advocacy, as an alternative to a 'women's rights agenda,' Oxfam asserts that this empowerment approach should increase women's self-esteem, self-confidence, and women-to-women networking skills/opportunities, and so their capacity for setting their own advocacy agenda.⁸

Guided by the WSI WASH framework, there is a very basic format and set of overarching goals from country to country, but each program has been developed out of the singular context in which it has been implemented.

Basic Description of the Women's Wash Platforms⁹

A major innovation in Oxfam's approach to address gender in WASH, the Women's Wash Platforms are teams of women established at the village level, working within their own villages to disseminate information on water and sanitation issues, encourage 'best practices,' and implement small Oxfam-funded projects that they design and implement themselves with the help of Oxfam staff and partners.

Each group elects a treasurer and chairperson and these are the only two posts required to be literate and numerate. The WWP are trained by Oxfam and its partners in WASH, project management, gender-sensitivity. Oxfam provides the WWP with 'seed' funding and the group designs and manages a gender sensitive WASH project through all stages of the project cycle. The WWP monitors the project with support from Oxfam and its partners. In the last 6 months of the WSI project the WWP elect advocates to present their projects, findings, and recommendations at the national level to the government and the wider WASH sector. In this way they contribute to advocacy for more gender sensitive national WASH policies.

Official Process for Establishing the WWP and their Organization in Cambodia

The WWP were initiated at the end of 2010, in 68 out of 71 WSI villages in which access to potable water was only about 27%, with 90% of the population without access to adequate sanitation.¹⁰ The programs for review were in Kratie and Takeo provinces.

- Oxfam WASH Program Manager and Gender Advisers mobilized one WWP in each of the projects' 68 villages
- Oxfam's Gender Advisers train WWP in gender in leadership, monitoring, project planning, proposal writing, WASH issues, and financial management
- The WWP prepared proposals. 32 were approved in the first round, issuing grants of between 100 USD and 500 USD
- Oxfam facilitated 2 WWP learning and sharing provincial forums attended by government officials at the commune and provincial levels (Departments of Health, Rural Development, and Education)
- Oxfam Gender Advisers, Oxfam senior Public Health Promoters and senior Public Health Engineer supported 4 WWP leaders to present at a national WASH workshop attended by civil society organizations and national level government representatives
- At the national WASH workshop, the 4 WWP advocate for more gender sensitive national WASH policies

Official Process for Establishing the WWP and their Organization in Bangladesh

The local partner's community mobilizers support the formation of one WWP in each of the 20 project villages in two hard-to-reach regions: the Char area (Naokhali) and the river basin area (Jamalpur).

- Oxfam's Gender Officer ran a 2-day training of WWP members in WASH and gender sensitive approaches and WASH monitoring methodologies
- 2 local NGO Financial Officers conducted one day basic training on project organization/financial management for WWPs
- Oxfam provided 20 small grants to the Women's WASH Platforms (WWPs)
- WWPs design, implement, manage and monitor their projects
- The 20 WWP group meet each month
- The 20 WWPs selected 4 to present their projects in year two at 2 of the quarterly WASH Cluster meetings in Dhaka
- Oxfam's Gender Officer, its Senior Public Health Promoter and Senior Public Health Engineer support the 4 WWP advocates during their presentation to the quarterly WASH cluster meetings attended by civil society organizations and the government
- At the national WASH cluster, the 4 WWP advocate for more gender sensitive national WASH policies
- Oxfam supports WWP project learning and sharing workshop for the 20 WWPs

The expected outcomes from both the WWPs are:

- Increased awareness of and support for a gender needs and a gender sensitive approach to WASH
- Increased women's participation in decision making
- Promotion of women's leadership
- Promotion of women's voices.

The WWP activities that support the expected outcomes are:

- WWPs prioritize woman's perspectives in their operations, projects and in community and other meetings
- WWPs persuade local authorities to promote gender sensitive local WASH improvements
- WWPs advocate with Oxfam for woman's WASH needs at the national level.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the WSI project funded by AusAID, Oxfam received funding from AusAID for programming in six countries including Cambodia and Bangladesh. Guided by Oxfam's WSI WASH framework, the Women's Wash Platforms (WWPs) are part of Oxfam's strategy for achieving the 'gender' goals of the WSI project.¹¹

They are designed to support AusAID's interest in stimulating grass roots advocacy, as an alternative to a 'women's rights agenda,' by increasing women's self-confidence, and women-to-women networking skills/opportunities, and so their capacity for setting their own advocacy agenda.¹²

This study of the Women's Wash Platforms in Bangladesh and Cambodia serves the 'Linking and Learning' component embedded in Oxfam's WSI program. Unique among the ANGOs funded by AusAID, the 'Linking and Learning' component is intended to ensure that "Oxfam's

approach and practices are evolving and improving” for ongoing “relevance to the organization, to the sector and to the donor.”¹³

The WWP

The Women’s Wash Platforms are teams of women established at the village level, working within their own villages to disseminate information on water and sanitation issues, encourage ‘best practices,’ and implement small Oxfam-funded projects that they design and implement themselves with the help of Oxfam staff and partners.

The WWPs were initiated in Cambodia at the end of 2010, in 68 villages. The programs for review were in Kratie and Takeo provinces. In Bangladesh, the WWP were established in 20 villages in the Naokhali Char region and in the Jamalpur flood-prone river basin region.

Goals, Methods and Limitations of this Study

This report is a review of the WWP as an approach to gender issues in WASH. It is not intended as a comprehensive review of WWP activities, Oxfam’s WASH program, or gender issues in Bangladesh and Cambodia. To fully answer the kinds of questions set out by the TOR for this study a full ethnography would need to be done using a constellation of anthropological methods that combine history and participant-observation to investigate what people actually have been doing, while including in the analytic field the impact of what people say they do, and examining the impact of the implicit and explicit agendas (ideas about what people should do). (See full report.)

Oxfam WWP and GAD Goals: Equity or Equality

British anthropologist Marilyn Strathern has noted that idealized gender roles—or any gendered problems—are not necessarily about men or women per se, or simply about relations between the sexes.¹⁴ At its best, the GAD approach is meant to recognize the entanglement of the social, the political, and the economic in the constitutive politics of everyday life, and to “create a framework of cooperation between men and women, so that the insights and abilities of both men and women are available to shape programs to meet their sector objectives.”¹⁵

Oxfam training materials assert the ultimate goal as ‘equality.’ In the Oxfam manuals, ‘equity’ is explained as a process that recognizes real life inequalities, attitudes, and the technologies used to compensate for difference across the categories of culture, law, ‘society’ and economy. But it appears as a path to an unproblematized ‘equality,’ rather than as a site of conceptual debate and an alternative goal that presumes no universal endpoint, but a future of ongoing change, persistent difference and situated goals, not just a process toward a known goal.¹⁶

Elsewhere, in theoretical discussions, the concept of ‘equity’ is used to interrogate different possible ways of imagining ‘equality’ and of negotiating the complex real world of uneven power and material relations.¹⁷ Another way of understanding that way of defining ‘equity’ is to see it referring to the possibility of different ways of being ‘equal’ that may not correspond to the liberal ideal many see built into dominant discourses on women’s rights and human rights.¹⁸ ‘Equality’ in the dominant liberal notion of ‘equal rights’ has been challenged by alternative visions of gender relations, significantly from Moslem feminists.¹⁹

The drawbacks of this include:

- 1. Exploring challenges to dominant vision of 'equality' is marginalized as outside of immediate concerns.*
- 2. The programs may contribute to the reification of the very forms of discrimination the program seeks to eradicate, or produce new kinds of discrimination.*
- 3. Program stakeholders, implementers and participants may miss the possibility for understanding the emergence of new gender relations, because unfamiliar ideas are easily dismissed as vestiges of miscomprehension (ignorance) or wrong thinking.*
- 4. If not part of a broader discussion, WWPs will not have any way to make informed decisions and will be subject to misuse should they become involved in more than small scale publicizing on hygiene or implementing technical projects.*

Recommendation: Bring conversations on the goals for gender relations in each country forward in-country, and across country programs, so debates that are already affecting the women in each program can be considered, and can inform trainings, conversations within groups, and program planning. This will also help the women in the WWP deal with the complex reactions their new activities ignite, and the kinds of decisions and advocacy in which they will be asked to participate. Include men in 'gender education' for men and women by considering the pressures and constraints on them in their roles as men. A solution for women must also be a solution for men.

CAMBODIA

What kind of a problem is 'Gender'? in Cambodia: The WWP, Women's Rights, and 'Tradition'

In Cambodia, the questions 'What kind of a problem is 'gender'?' and 'How appropriate is the WWP to address it?' have been shaped by 2 decades of extensive 'trainings' on women's and human rights launched by the 1991 Paris Peace Accords and the democratization process in Cambodia. The integration of Cambodia into the global economy took a heavy toll on women and children.²⁰

Today, advocates and writers are increasingly emphasizing the complexity and positive aspects of women's roles in Cambodian history and their ongoing relevance. But the history that made women the site of symbolic preservation of tradition for the newly independent monarchy, and the 'traditional oppression' of women part of the publicity for communist reform, has made it difficult for researchers, NGO staff, and women's advocates to access Cambodian 'culture' as a source of strong feminine images or see the flexibility of gender ethics.

In this context, very real imbalances and exploitative and discriminatory practices along with all manner of domestic troubles such as violence against women, have been attributed to factors explained as 'Cambodian tradition.'

Talking about what they want for the WWP, the Cambodian staff of Oxfam GB and Australia say they want "equal rights for women" In the words of one government counterpart working in Takeo Province:

“[I want] women to have equal rights like men, do work like men, have strong hearts and make decisions on their own and become leaders in organizations and government. They should be able to ask for what they need from government.”

However this apparent consensus, and a very real support for equal access to jobs, an end to domestic violence, and freedom from censorship, exploitation and oppression is only the surface of what, in Cambodia, as elsewhere, a complex, multi-sided conversation on ethics, the law, conflict resolution, the shape of ‘civil society,’ and what ‘rights’ are in actual global practice, and so how they are understood and supported in Cambodia.

The lead gender advisor for Oxfam GB asserted with the rest of the Oxfam staff that groups of all women were absolutely necessary. She also indicated an ongoing conversation in Cambodia on women-focused development strategies. The representative from the national Department of Rural Development at the Phnom Penh forum said: “In Cambodia, they [advocates for ‘gender equality’] forget about men. [They] concentrate on women because for a long time just men [have had power], but in the future, don’t forget. Don’t forget about men or they forget their role too.”

Ambiguity around the notion of ‘equal rights’ emerged in presentations of the Oxfam overall WSI project. The notion that women end up doing the WASH related work appeared as both a reason for advocacy to lighten women’s burden, and the foundation of their expertise legitimating their voice in matters of hygiene and water.

This kind of irony has been a problematic effect of a certain feminist approach to women’s rights that seeks to identify women’s roles and then inject previously denigrated ones with value. This approach is at least in part responsible for the repeated, but little investigated platitude that in “Cambodian tradition” women are “housewives” without ‘rights’ that glorifies and denigrates the past at the same time.

Chief of Commune, Khvay, Takeo Province told me:

“Women are national guiding ancestral spirit mothers/fathers (meba), strength of the nation. In the past, women didn’t have ‘rights/power’ (set). They had merit from virtue (bun).”

Two notes: First, this statement should be understood as an assertion of women’s symbolic role in nationalist discourse, a product at least in part of colonial governance and anti-colonial struggle. It is not a description of how men and women in Cambodia live, though it does become part of how some people and some national politics assert people should live. Second, the word for ‘rights’ can have many meanings when used by the same speaker.

The point here is NOT that the notion of ‘human rights’ or ‘equality’ are poorly understood in Cambodia. That conclusion cannot be drawn from these examples. The point IS that human rights, as ‘equal rights’ for women, taught as international and Cambodian law become--in some locations--an intervention applied from above, a tool associated with one kind of power (forceful power, aamnnac) associated in contemporary political culture with men, and opposed to an ethic of virtue. You might think from the commune chief’s statement that only women had this virtue, but that is far from the case.

Second, the word ‘rights’ and the debates on human rights and women’s rights cannot be understood without understanding an equally complex conversation on “merit” and “virtue”

that also, necessarily, play a part in how Cambodian IO/NGO staff and the people they work with translate, interpret, use, rethink the concepts of 'rights' and gender 'equality.'

That means there are multiple issues tangled up together when trying to understand 'traditional' gender relations, and gender issues in WASH through a discourse of 'women's rights' with a possible goal of women's 'equality.'

Three central points requiring explanation as they are short-handed as problems of "tradition" in quick explanations of gender in Cambodia and in assertions that groups of only women are needed to redress gross inequality.

- a. Women have no decision-making power. Cambodian society is hierarchical.*
- b. Cambodian tradition refuses girls an education.*
- c. Women have to stay home and take care of the house and the children.*

The difficulties WWP members said they have in performing their work in clean water, sanitation, and hygiene resonate with these 3 points.

But the assertion that "tradition" or "traditional roles" are the obstacles to both long term and short term goals for 'equal rights' for women in Cambodia obscures how people really live, and the more complex descriptions that the Cambodian Oxfam staff, as well as the men and women in the villages offer of obstacles to the WWP as a 'gender' intervention that focuses on women.

It also makes it difficult for Oxfam to think about the WWP as a site of change in 'gender' attitudes and gendered practices driven by grassroots desires, opinions, perspectives, and ideas rather than packaged ideas of 'equality' associated with the pedagogical intervention.

In the 1990s, efforts of Cambodian researchers to assert positive aspects into research reports without undermining the goal of program-oriented reports were rather meek.²¹ Today, advocates and writers are increasingly emphasizing the complexity and positive aspects of women's roles in Cambodian history, the often negative impact of a history of interventions cast as 'civilization,' 'modernization,' and 'development,' as well as 'equal rights,' on political culture as well as everyday life in Cambodia. Some assert the ongoing relevance of that more complex picture of the agency and high value of girls/women in Cambodia.²²

The Cambodian WWP and Decision-Making

The literature from before the Khmer Rouge period emphasizes the important position of women in the economic side of life. The single 'ideal' gender role cited for woman as passive, subservient to men and in everything less than them, is tied up with the history of nation-building as, in the process of de-colonization, women became symbolic sites of valued difference for many emerging South and Southeast Asian nations.²³

Responses by WWP members about decision-making in their homes reflect the rather positive findings of that 2010 Cambodian national health survey. But, framing the question of decision-making as a gender issue was challenged by a 3-part model offered by a WWP member's grandfather: 1. Meba (this refers not just to the mother and father but the ancestors) 2. Sankum (society) and this includes the government. 3. 'family'.

The division between the genders—with ‘gender’ as the primary determining factor—is often more rigid in the discourses of urban and upper classes (though how decisions are made within the home do not necessarily correspond), and, in the villages, at the intersection between village life and state-centered political culture. The situation may be different for Phnong, in Cambodia, an ethnic minority, and the situation also seems highly dependent on experiences/structures that emerged during times dominated by military life. The degree to which husbands and wives function as a ‘team,’ the women say, also depends on the way in which economic circumstances have them working together or separately.

WWP members report a strategy of silence, avoidance, or a non-reactive demeanor and restraint from argument. It can be a kind of ‘submissiveness’ that permits dominance and abuse. It is also a strategy of stoic non-violence, recommended to men and women alike, that contrasts strongly with confrontational rights-based approaches and with weakness. It is ‘feminized’ when offered as a diplomatic skill that women know better than men, or when pressures from male-dominated village structures emphasize that women should take the initiative in restraint.

When the men talk about women’s ‘rights’ on the other hand, making women stronger seems to involve a loss for men.

Education, Age/Generation, Staying Home/Going Out

There are as many ‘cultural’ practices, beliefs and sayings to illustrate the high value of women. The class-inflected ideal woman has obscured the higher value attributed to girls because they are perceived as the ones who will take care of ageing parents, the history of the switch to secular education, and the very practical link between valuing schooling and the perception of available jobs/usefulness to the family economy.

The WWP members speaking of the confidence as leaders gained from their participation in the WWP asserted they would not follow their mothers because they saw the advantages of schooling for the futures of their daughters. The point here is not the move from control to liberation, and ‘tradition’ to modernity as it is cast in familiar nationalist histories of progress. It is the changing strategy of people planning futures where the meaning of education, the economy of labor, and the relative importance of extended families and community sanction or support are changing.

Women in Cambodia can inherit land, and the youngest often inherits the family house because it is she who takes care of ageing parents. This can make it hard for her to leave if her husband is abusive. ‘Tied traditionally to the home’ is a different kind of problem understood from that perspective. The ‘head of family’ is an official government position, institutionalized through the family books through which each household is registered with the local police. Here and in Bangladesh, the English term ‘family’ can get confused with the term ‘household,’ making understanding who is in what group and who is not confusing in translation. Here, the head of the house (mepteah) most say, is the woman, but how the range of her power/agency reaches varies hugely and so, therefore, the relationship between/definition of these two positions.

There is now high percentage of girls in primary school. The reason I heard most often for girls being pulled out of school was not menstruation (linked by school staff to missing days but not drop outs), and not fear of love, but need for money. (They go to factories or stay home and watch young siblings while their parents are looking for food/money.)

Consideration of WASH issues for older girls when they can stay in school is still a need.

Deficient education is indeed a major factor in lack of confidence and exclusion from decision-making processes, and has a huge impact on women because, until now, since schooling of a particular kind became the most important path to certain kinds of 'freedom.' However, poor, uneducated men have the same problem.

The youngest members of the WWP, many of whom dropped out of school to help at home, see the group as a way to get a kind of educational opportunity. But being a woman is not in any kind of doctrine a reason for exclusion in Cambodian "culture" or for a dismissal of women's abilities in the practical affairs of daily life. (In fact, conclusions that women were of lesser value in Southeast Asia were once drawn on the fact they were relegated the management of the affairs of daily life, like business—and exiled from the realm of the monkhood).²⁴

Direct affect on WWP programming: The staff report that the women say the women's education is too low and the women themselves say the task of management is too difficult for them. National level studies in Cambodia suggest women working in development projects have proved themselves reliable with funds. WWP members are involved in a range of money-handling practices from holding/accounting regarding their husband's money to complex economic activities whether or not they have formal schooling.²⁵

Hierarchy, Wealth and the Link to the State

In both South Asia and Southeast Asia, the theoretical and methodological focus on very visible structural hierarchies have been critiqued as skewing analysis of social interaction.²⁶ Against that negative perception in early literature and its perpetuation in early studies failing to find 'civil society' or 'community' in Cambodia, researchers describe a kind of leadership based on an individual's reputation as moral and knowledgeable; their 'following' lasts the length of whatever project is initiated, their legitimacy associated with Buddhism, but not necessarily the hierarchy or other gendered modes of inclusion and exclusion of the pagoda.²⁷ Efforts in the 1990s to draw on these other modes of organization seem to have lost out to the strong work on linking to government, perhaps in part due to the emphasis on phasing out IO/NGO programs and shifting responsibility to the government.

The choice of the WWP to participate in and the way in which they are mobilized by the commune councils, response by WWP members and the commune chiefs show, could also help solidify unequal gendered divisions.

How do the WWP work with existing Government Structures and Government Partners?

Focus on Commune Level

Many of the Oxfam staff expressed the opinion that the concerns of government officials in 'gender' issues is only talk. The Cambodian National Council for Women and the Ministry of Women's and Veterans affairs (MOWA) are charged with overseeing 'gender' policy and programs. The Ministry has implemented a series of 5-year plans on gender mainstreaming since 1999. MOWA works closely with all line ministries. Both NGOs and Hun Sen call for more standardized collaboration. The National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NSDP) now has a

separate section on gender equality and asserts gender is mainstreamed into all its key areas. Like IO/NGO studies, government representatives speaking at the forums and workshops assert participation of women as necessary to national development.

The 2008 law on Decentralization (the Organic law) helps establish systems for implementing quotas for women representatives and requires the formation of a committee on women and children's affairs to be responsible for gender equity in the councils, at each level down to the commune level of government. These committees can participate in, and contribute ideas to council reports and to the board of governors.²⁸

The call by the WWPs made at the forums for more support from village chiefs was guided toward finding a way to link with the government at the commune level. One commune chief said the link between the WWP and the government should happen at the village level. In fact, village chiefs usually help to choose the initial women trained at the start of the WWPs (hygiene changers who in turn have been chosen by the Women's Ministry), and the WWPs either seek to work closely with village chiefs or complain that they do not help.

Focus on Village Level

It is required by law that one of the 3 village executives be a woman. The preference by village men, it is consistently reported, is that it not be the village chief, so a woman won't be above men. However, it doesn't seem a problem for men to follow a qualified female chief like the WWP member in Takeo. A program coordinator at Oxfam Australia in Takeo reported that Hun Sen has asserted publicizing about hygiene and clean water as a good task for women and that this is a charge of the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

The Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD) brings WASH services to 20 communes in Takeo province the PDRD and the Provincial Department of Health (PDH) deliver rural WASH services. Local, national and international NGOs deliver WASH services in both provinces.

The Oxfam programs use government counterparts for most of the village fieldwork. That means the government counterparts of various capacity receive training along with villagers, though some have been doing similar jobs for a very long time. The Oxfam project coordinator in the Phnom Penh office notes the WWP are now doing work that the government counterparts once did.

The core WWP members for WWPs in the 68 villages were chosen from hygiene changers and hygiene promoters. WWP members are often neighbors. They tend to be 'medium level' economically because, they say, the poor don't have time to come to meetings and they can't take care of latrines or build the outside part if they are given them.

Most if not all of the WWP said they rely strongly on the support of the chief of the village (in one it is a woman) to get villagers, especially the wealthier and better-educated members, to listen to them.

Do the WWPs add to Women's Burden or Alleviate it? An Economy of Energy and the Politics of Distributing Wealth

All the women without exception said they see the value in the WWP work.

1. *Care of new technologies usually falls on girls around age 10 and up.*
2. *Some husbands that say it is okay if their wives join the group point out that if their wives go out, they have to stay home.*
3. *Whether or not women can participate in the group is figured by a calculus of these three kinds of 'capital,' (wealth, energy, time). The same for villagers who attend meetings or activities.*
4. *The few educated women (in their 40s or 50s educated before Pol Pot) are called on to hold many committee 'jobs' including water and hygiene in the WWP that they may have held with different kinds of compensation across several regimes.*
5. *Some times of year are literally so busy, there may not be time for meetings. Transplanting the seedlings and harvest time are two, since in Takeo, for example, women do their own harvesting, then hire themselves out to others while husbands work at home thrashing the grain. Some women report having to do the thrashing by themselves too if their husbands work takes them away from home.*
6. *But "too busy" can mean 'I don't see enough benefit in my family to take the time from something earning a living, or to use my or someone else's energy in this way. They don't take the time. The very poor lack energy that may be expressed as "busy" or "lazy".*
7. *One WWP executive member said, "We choose families [women to be in the WWP] who know how to sacrifice. If we call, they come without thinking of their family."*

Accusations of corruption

1. *The ability to distribute goods enters into local politics*
 - a. *tensions within the groups emerge over who has the power to invite members or leave them out, who gets to go on trainings or to a conference (with hotel and per diem), and sometimes who speaks for the group.*
 - b. *'Medium' wealth women are in the group and receive some of the benefits, sometimes keeping 'left over' filters (for example) or buying small objects that appear as new wealth/benefits.*
 - c. *Some including husbands say the WWP benefits the ones who go to the trainings or get the goods. One group of men whose wives go to WWP meetings said their wives don't tell them what they do there, they just go and come back.*
 - d. *Having a 'job' like this is prestigious, and can draw the women into a political hierarchy.*

Highlights of Problem-Solving and WWP Recognition

- *When people don't come to meetings: we hold a meeting near their house or ask them to host a meeting so they can get some small incentive OR we go to talk to them at community festivals/gatherings.*
- *The problem of abandoned latrines: First have people make their own simple latrines and see who was really committed to using a latrine before choosing them to receive more from the organization.*
- *One WWP member's husband in Kratie said: "The chief of the village didn't think about the work in the village. He thought about the far way road. Now there are women doing this work from the organization and people are thinking about improving the near road...improving the village."*

Would the WWP continue?

The Cambodian WWPs express a desire to continue teaching about hygiene and water. But many say that if there is no NGO/IO, only themselves in the village, who would they ask? The Oxfam forums were trying to turn them toward the commune and encourage them to conceive of their own projects. One WWP thought contributing money little by little to save for latrines would take a long time, but then told of village projects that had been achieved when the villagers volunteered labor with their encouragement behind an inspiring village chief.

BANGLADESH

What kind of a problem is 'Gender' in Bangladesh? Nationalisms, Islam, Labor, 'Musclemen'

In Bangladesh, the question 'What kind of a problem is gender' and 'How appropriate is the WWP to address it' has been shaped by the battle for independence, and Bengali nationalist identity-building since the independence violence of 1971, distinct from, but tied up with, the class-inflected²⁹ politics of gender in Islam, the religious persuasion of about 90% of Bangladesh.³⁰ In Cambodia (above), part of the work Supra-national, International, national governmental, and local non-governmental organizations set for themselves has been a response to a perception of Cambodia's needs to deal in a particular way with its royal and communist past, and especially with the violence of the Khmer Rouge period—keeping it at the forefront of the news. In Bangladesh, the effort seems to have been the opposite—pressure to forget—at least in part. But for Bangladesh, too, women have become a symbol of the 'culture' that legitimizes the boundaries of sovereignty, linked to modernity, liberation and insurrection.³¹

Scholars studying Bangladesh say, political parties have included paradigms of masculinity and femininity in their politics, so efforts by NGOs to make changes become linked to class and party interests.³² "NGO programs offer an alternative to existing forms of madrasa education and to informal credit or money lending that serve as sources of legitimacy and areas of investment for members of the Islamist parties. So, development NGOs have been attacked, including NGOs working for women's rights and health."³³

Oxfam WASH staff and partners work within a complex, volatile political environment and, my sense is, are obliged to protect the project from Bangladesh politics even as they, their partners, and the women have had to cope with the issues of control and even violence in the setting up of the WWP.

Without exception, the government officials at what was called a "Linking and Learning forum" in Dhaka, the staff of partner agencies and of Oxfam, Bangladesh, and the women themselves, saw the WWPs as a powerful, radically innovative way to draw women into decision-making on WASH issues. This said, the obstacles they encountered are related both to the way 'equity' or 'equality' is being imagined and contested and the way the politics of nation-building are tangled up with perceptions of women in the target areas.³⁴ One sector team leader said: "...If there are men and women equal, I don't know what that will mean. But empowering. We think development is much more sustainable if it is done through the women."

Here, as in Cambodia, the language of women's rights often sets women against men, perhaps inciting oppositions highlighted in other discourses. For example, one female staff of a partner organization in Jamalpur district asserting 'equal rights' are the goal said, "Men know women are stronger, mentally, so they don't want them to get power more than them. They feel now that they are losing their power as women start moving out of the house, going abroad, earning money." The 'loss of power' resonates with the events of 1971.

The Oxfam's partner organization speaks of a history of intervention in the Naokhali area, tracing a gradual change from very strict restrictions on women in the name of 'purdah' (a spiritually-related modesty connected to the honor of men and women and requiring covering of the body). When Oxfam staff members describe the successes of the WWP in Bangladesh, referring to the Naokhali area, the progressive emergence from cloistering and veiling is a central marker of their program success too.

1. Scholars point to a struggle over the meaning of purdah by secularists and Islamists who, they write, both think rural women are just followers, when in fact, the women themselves redefine purdah "to bring it within their reach when they get jobs etc, defining it as a state of mind."³⁵

The WWP program is part of this process in its target areas. Joking with me about never having received any pay or incentives from Oxfam, the women in one Naokhali WWP asked if the organization would give them 'burqa'.

2. Men and Labor. Not just mothers, wives, and daughters, but fathers, husbands and sons are deeply embedded in relations of loving inter-dependence, and notions of privacy and intimacy disjunctive vis a vis notions of 'public' and 'private' in the dominant liberal conceptions of 'civil society' on the international stage.

Several of the groups had to replace members when women were not allowed to continue (though no domestic violence was reported by the WWP). Many of the WWP women report their husbands home sick and not working, and having learned to support their work, giving advice and recognizing the work they do is good for the community.

Referring to the rapes by Pakistani soldiers in the liberation war of 1971, and a 1990s trial that stimulated related reactions, scholar Nayanika Mookherjee asserts, a "de-masculinization of men, [occurred] through their loss of agency as protectors of the honour of their women, who are conduits for their own honour."³⁶ The 'scorn' (khota) they received from other men in their communities aligned that kind of 'living off of wives' with prostitution ('selling the women to live'). Mookherjee says, in the case she studied, effects on men included stopping work. Men reacted both with violence at home and by drawing on a different local image of non-violent, devote masculinity.

The men of the Naokhali region also reportedly receive insults if seen engaged in something slotted as 'women's work.' The women have had to struggle against efforts to co-opt their work (see WPP works with the partners and musclemen). One teacher substituting for an Imam interviewed in the Oxfam partner office, said men's unemployment can lead to beatings for women and/or to the man or both the man and woman joining the illegal activities of the 'musclemen'.

For these reasons, more information would be needed to understand the effect of the WWP in regard to the labor market for men. The WWP may bring national and local politics into

everyday life. How are the effects of contributing to the empowerment of women in this context are embedded in, shaped by, and productive within the existing politics?

Non-party politics are not always perceived as such in the fray.³⁷ Authors studying the entrance of Bangladesh women into paid labor argue that, although women are able to shift some of their responsibility for care-giving and reproductive work on to other family members, this has not visibly altered the gender division of work within the household and may even have led to a loss in women's welfare because of reductions in leisure time.³⁸ In the case of the WWP, women talk about redistributing tasks to make time to participate. As in Cambodia, men and women's responses suggest the frame of who has 'leisure,' and who is 'busy' may be a less useful frame than how is energy and time distributed on the one hand, and the problem of absent men, gone far away to work (Naokhali) on the other.

The women play on notions of masculinity and devotion to move into more public life through the WWP. One woman said she told her husband: "You didn't think about hygiene....Now you are inactive and now I am doing this. If you could earn, I could rest." Women's and men's ideas of masculinity might also be usefully explored to understand this dynamic.

Earlier WWP research reports men saying there has been little change in gender roles, on the one hand, but also that women do see their husbands are helping in some ways. This report can only suggest the possibility that, to the extent ideas of what is appropriate masculinity and femininity goes beyond 'roles,' the WWP may be having an impact more difficult to see and recommend investigation.

How Oxfam Bangladesh works with government

The Bangladeshi Government has no legislative barrier in the way of promoting gender equity in the sphere of social, political, and economic activities. There are women at 4 of the top posts in government, including the Prime Minister. Quotas and new laws helping to implement them lead some Oxfam staff to see the Union level were 3 women are designated as responsible for 3 wards each, as the site for linking the WWP to government, but this part of the project is just beginning and Oxfam staff are circumspect.

The departments responsible for WASH do not have links to the Women's Ministry and report little work done on mainstreaming 'gender' concerns, but At the Dhaka forum, the Oxfam WSI project manager reported, they said they would collaborate with Oxfam. "The government would do hardware and we can do the software." In interview, the DPHE at the local level said he already had long-term, working relationships with Oxfam and its local partners.

The problem in the Naokhali area is that because it is a relatively new 'char' (newly habitable land), there is no administrative structure for governing, so the government is not in control. The 'musclemen' try to extract money from the local people. For 6 villages, there is only one police station and, several said, they could not control the outlaws.

The partner organization in Naokhali, however, said they have good relations with them and negotiated a clear path for the WWP. The Oxfam staff responsible for the area say if the 'musclemen' are aware of the good intentions of a program, they do not interfere because they also are interested in taking care of the people. The staff of the local partner SSUS

reported "Sometime SSUS took help from some members of illegal armed forces, and added them to the distribution list. We kept harmless relation with the illegal armed forces."

Non-Party Politics

The WWP women express enthusiasm and courage. The way they describe their success subtly suggests the way they become part of the power politics of the village. About their own work, one WWP member said, "We are 11 people moving together. They are afraid of us now. Now they invite us to sit. They are supposed to ask the government representative [for hygiene/water-related things], but they ask us." (The word 'afraid' should not be taken too literally, unless referring to some kind of outside support.) One mother of a WWP member explained her neighbors respect them more seeing foreigners and city people coming to their house and ask them for help too. One Community Health Volunteer (CHV) working alongside the WWP and the partners (connected to the partner organization) said the "rich can build for the poor." One Jamalpur WWP member said, "I fought against open defecation like a liberation war!"

Trainings in Naokhali include examples of famous women scholars. (Some women scholars in Bangladesh are politically volatile figures). The partner agency staff in Jamalpur talks to the WWPs about women's rights advocacy and brings women from one village to another to talk about advocacy work to get access to withheld government funds, though the WWP have not been part of their advocacy events.

The WWP and the VDC: Strategy, The Distribution of Resources

Unlike Cambodia, where Village Development Committees (VDC) were active long before the WWPs, in Bangladesh, VDCs were chosen at the same meetings with WWPs. The VDCs do not receive funds to spend. The WWP does. Also, the VDC members cannot get benefits, but the WWP members can if they are poor, the Dhakah Asani Mission (SEWSI) representative in Jamalpur said. The VDC does not have any role with the WWPs. However, WWP members said they take their proposals to the VDC for approval.

One Oxfam staff described this as a strategy: "The men want to control the money. They feel disempowered. If the women ask them, they feel they have their power again. It is a strategy." This strategy is similar to the strategy women say they use in their homes with their husbands to get what they want.

Is the WWP a Burden on Women? An Economy of Time and Energy

Depending on the point being made, sometimes women are presented as the busiest (one reason for the WWP is to lessen their burden, hence the concern it actually adds to their burden). Sometimes, men are presented as "too busy" to do the kind of work the WWP do; the women in the WWP say this too.

In Jamalpur, men's schedules are more flexible than in Naokhali and, having visited Naokhali WWP, the Jamalpur women say they help more. In Naokhali, when asked about the participation of men in the kind of work the WWP do, many said, like one woman: "The men cannot give the time. Men are moving around so they don't have time to share information, but we are home. We can visit each other and give ideas for our children's health." She asked for more services and said: "Please, we give our labor."

Here, as in Cambodia, WWP members and their family/household or joint family members have to negotiate different schedules and rearrange duties when the women go out to do

WWP work. This touches on another kind of politics between husbands and wives and mother-in-laws.

Any added cleaning work for new technology tends to go to the young girls, and perhaps daughters-in-law.

Participation in the WWP may reduce pressure to 'marry off' a young woman or increase interest in her as marriage partner, an effect one family reported.

*Should the WWP continue? Sustainability and Unexplored Consequences*³⁹

The executive director of the partner in Naokhali would like to see the program continue for 5-10 years and the WWP become licensed NGOs. Some Oxfam staff members argue that the program is perhaps too new for the WWP members to expect them to continue on their own.

Two groups of WWP members said their members had contributed small amounts of money to put in their bank accounts to help the poor and thought to continue in this way if the project ends.

Highlights of Problem-Solving by the Bangladesh WWPs and Partners

When encountering resistance WWP women say:

- We are not a political party. We work for the poor.*
- You [political parties] have the means to get what you need for yourself. Please let us do this for the poor.*
- We are working for all the community. Everyone benefits.*
- If your latrine (rich people's) are non-hygienic, my family gets sick.*

To make the WWP job easier project and the Naokhali management talked with the family members, madrasa teachers, and members of illegal armed forces to "motivate" them.

Sometime the same partner management added members of illegal armed forces to the distribution list. "We kept harmless relation with the illegal armed forces."

Cambodia and Bangladesh WWP

Gender roles are not necessarily about men or women per se, or about relations between the sexes.⁴⁰ Gendered effects are not necessarily caused solely by wrong attitudes of men and women. The reverberations between politics and personal lives shape the effects of WWP projects in both countries.

1. In Cambodia WWPs were established in 68 villages and a small staff carried out the program. The staff had diverse professional training managing government counterparts responsible for the village-level interventions. In Bangladesh, WWPs were established in 20 villages, and the program was carried out by a staff with high level technical skills, partnered with NGOs long established in their respective regions.

2. Stakeholders see WWPs as innovative programs because they are designed to put women in charge of every aspect of development funds for discrete projects they choose, manage and implement for themselves. In both countries the WWP successfully accomplished the

gender-related WASH program objectives they set to a reasonable degree. By this I mean: In both countries WWP members say they are happy to be advocates for WASH because they see valuable results from new hygiene and safe water practices. In both countries, WWP members say that participation in WWP activities has brought them new recognition as people with access to outside resources, as people who can do high jobs (“work” outside of everyday household-related duties), and as people with knowledge in WASH issues that leaders and men should listen to. In both countries, stated successes are significant as indicators of consciousness of program goals and issues, even where the in practice obstacles to asserted changes have not been overcome. In both countries the degree of surprise at the women’s abilities is an indication of how strong negative stereotypes have been among program planners.

3. In both countries, emphasizing WASH as the province of women legitimates WWP activities, but can end up reifying a gendered rationale for different kinds of participation in emergent forms of ‘civil society.’

4. In both countries, humanitarian and gender programs already fight against old ways of seeing women as only ‘victims.’ In both, setting women’s empowerment against men, and focusing on women’s employment without considering the availability of satisfying prospects for their husbands and sons (who are not all village chiefs, commune chiefs, Imam, or other brokers of power/morality), risks turning problems that were once shared problems, affecting men and women differently, into problems between men and women. (In addition to the much discussed issue of the feminization of the workforce).

5. In both countries, the WWP are a job with some material and significant status benefits, given to women, not men, some families not others, and some women not others by outsiders perceived as powerful. As such, from the start, they bring local, national and international politics into the women’s daily lives and activate the women as agents in their micro-politics.

a. In Cambodia, they can bring pressure on a few educated women.

b. In both places this can bring accusations of corruption the WWP then have to dispel.

6. In both countries, they are an educational opportunity to compensate for other opportunities lost, like having to drop out of school.

7. In both countries the WWP are designed to accomplish a wide scope of tasks in addition to securing WASH benefits:

a. Extend development funds and /or minimize dependency on outside agencies by using volunteer labor.

b. Stimulate participation in community development ‘from below’ as an alternative to ‘top down’ methods (including human rights/law-driven interventions that can incite resistance).

c. Give women experience, education, leadership skills.

d. ‘Empower’ women as a stalwart against domestic violence and toward giving them decision-making power in their own lives (personal and on the political stage).

8. Through the WWP women take new roles in pre-existing hierarchies and politically volatile situations. In both countries the urgency and technical details of alleviating health problems

and suffering, can obscure the way they can become generative points or focal points of incitement and pressure in local politics and in the broad ranging politics around modernization and democratization that reach beyond WASH program intentions.

9. Both programs and their effects are shaped by their histories, the interests and orientations of their partners, and by their contemporary contexts.

a. In Cambodia:

- 1. Powerful competing national and international discourses on tradition obscure positive aspects of Cambodian life and ethics as resource for grass roots activism.*
- 2. Emphasis on integrating women into the state apparatus before the WWP began back-staged other forms of community leadership and motivation.*
- 3. An economy of time/energy means the village economic middle receives material benefit first.*
- 4. Strategies of persuasion, silent stalwartness and persistence, reasoning/persuading, are not 'female,' though officials interviewed have called them that, but are used by the weaker against the powerful, and in the exchange of energy for mutual benefit, for example. They may be 'feminized' when women are included in local government as a 'gentler supplement' to men's coercive power. However, this indication of appreciation for this 'gentler' leadership suggests there could be benefits in exploring the more 'organic' kinds of leadership based on individual recognized qualities. The WWP women, by the way, often report this kind of 'quality' criteria for being chosen or choosing their own leaders.*

b. In Bangladesh:

- 1. Encouraging WWP to participate in "non-party" politics/advocacy, has in the past ushered inadequately aware women into a world of volatile party-politics. Where in Cambodia, gendered discourses are more consistent across political parties, in Bangladesh, political party platforms may include controversial explicit or implied gender images that seem to link them to politics and politics to IO/NGO agendas.*
- 2. Community factions/individuals reacting to the WWP as a job, a source of resources, a source of leadership legitimacy, or a magnet for support of opposing interests out of their control, may be directed against the men in WWP households not the WWP directly.*
- 3. Focus on advanced technical solutions may replace, displace, or obscure the chance to support/develop viable already existing, positive practices/relationships between men and women.*

10. Trainings:

- a. Solutions to immediate obstacles in WWP projects involve decisions that can have larger political effects the women are not participating in, and may not be aware of (from advocacy at the national level to negotiations/compromise deals with local power brokers).*

Training on general 'gender concepts' is less important than helping them to analyze the way their WWP gendered goals are affected by and affect broader community concerns.

b. Exploration of differences in the treatment of menstruation issues from Bangladesh to Cambodia could benefit both.

11. In both countries, WWP women use non-confrontational strategies to help achieve short-term results that do not challenge the status quo in accomplishing WWP WASH projects. Do they position women to make such challenges if they desire in the future?

12. In both countries WWP women participate in conflict, and use familiar techniques for getting what they want and need in their communities, including using social sanctions and pressures on husbands and men.

13. Linking WWPs to government is one idea for an exit strategy for the WWP and suits the goal of grooming women for participation in political culture. This is a strong emphasis of the Cambodian gender advisors as seen in the 2 forums and workshop and corresponds to broader women's rights efforts. However, it is not necessarily the most direct path to developing wide participation in a grassroots movement, or for exploiting alternatives to male-dominated hierarchies or pressure on women to be the ones to give in or sacrifice in moments of conflict. For that, exploring other sources of legitimacy and helping women to develop other familiar, but informal techniques of leadership could help. The 2 directions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It does require a strong focus on building the WWP as a functioning group with strong internal commitment.

14. Ethnographic study. For both programs, the most dependable way to evaluate how the WWP actually work together and with the men, other women, and power brokers in their lives is to do a study in which speakers of the local language spend an extended amount of time in the villages, gain trust, attend regular meetings, and observe regular, spontaneous interactions.

Please see summary boxes for problems and solutions of women in the WWPs.

The impetus for this study

This study of the Women's Wash Platforms in Bangladesh and Cambodia serves the 'Linking and Learning' component embedded in Oxfam's WSI program. Unique among the ANGOs funded by AusAID, the 'Linking and Learning' component is intended to ensure that "Oxfam's approach and practices are evolving and improving" for ongoing "relevance to the organization, to the sector and to the donor."⁴¹

Goals, Methods, and Limitations of this study

This report is a review of the WWP as an approach to gender issues in WASH. It is not intended as a comprehensive review of WWP activities or Oxfam's WASH program. While quantitative studies assembling statistics or surveys of attitudes have their place, they share the problem that respondents are inclined to respond according to factors not related to the study goals, for example, to avoid embarrassment, or to please the researcher, especially when the researcher is perceived to have influence on the continuation of programs with desired benefits. In addition, in general, in the words of one researcher working in Cambodia, "respondents are more likely to slot their experiences or observations of conflict into a pre-existing interpretive and moral framework."⁴² In other words, not only do beneficiaries know what their benefactors want to hear, they often have a set of long

legitimized descriptions and explanations for their lives that may not reflect what they actually do. This is as true of researchers and NGO staff, where familiar discourses on 'tradition' and 'needs' have been accumulated, disseminated, reified, and taught in 'capacity building' projects and in broad-reaching efforts to develop firm country-specific knowledge bases for interventions.⁴³

The way men and women describe their lives in response to questions embedded in the agendas of others does not always reflect how they live. It can eventually effect how they see their own lives; it certainly affects interventions made in their name.

For that reason, I note: Humanitarian/development work has an inherent politics. It produces hierarchies of value among types of people, their opinions, and their experiences (who is expert, who is interpreter, and who is informant; who must be risked (a villager living among political unrest or 'musclemen') and who is to be protected by security regulations (a visiting researcher); who can be compensated and who will volunteer, who is victim and who is not.⁴⁴ Its army of workers are trained to 'find' specific problems within a field of suffering that are the kind of problem their kind of program can address. While interventions don't produce the original suffering or problem, they are in a very real sense producing the way it takes form as a country fact and a matter for intervention.⁴⁵ They also have multiple effects outside the immediate programmatic mission, intended and unintended, that may appear as either new or familiar problems.⁴⁶

While the methods used in this report can mitigate some of the above issues, this report can not completely avoid the limitations described above, but does attempt to distinguish between reports, received knowledge, and observations. To fully answer the kinds of questions set out by the TOR for this study (and offered in oral clarifications of desired results toward "understanding" and "linking and learning") a full ethnography would need to be done using a constellation of anthropological methods that combine history and participant-observation to investigate what people actually have been doing, while including in the analytic field the impact of what people say they do, and examining the impact of the implicit and explicit agendas (ideas about what people should do).

It is very difficult to separate the effects of the WWP on gender relations from other programs happening at the same time, in the same regions, and from broader trends and influences in each country. This report, therefore, makes a specific effort to locate the issues raised in the WWP review in those larger issues and activities.

Other limitations include: limited time in the field, exacerbated by traveling distances/times to the field sites and in Bangladesh, curfews, also the need for a translator for all interactions in Bangladesh, and (albeit only supplementary) translation necessary in Cambodia. In Bangladesh, while the review was for gender issues, and the known central interviewees were women in places where male-female contact was restricted, only male interpreters were available.

Also in Bangladesh, another issue of translation: translating for me to ask villagers questions that necessarily reflect my understanding of issues, concepts, and goals was a difficult challenge for those helping me; and the questions they asked, as one put it, in his "own way" had to be explained back to me under multiple constraints. For their efforts, and for the efforts of the Cambodians who worked hard to supplement my language skills there, I am humbled and grateful.

In Bangladesh, the research period coincided with end of year pressures and end of project pressures. In Bangladesh, staff had recently been charged with an extensive research project with a major 'gender' component, also interviewing WWPs. At the time of this research, they were carrying out an end of project review and another video project was underway. The research took place at harvest time in both countries. Planting and harvesting are the busiest times in rural areas, and these were an important factor putting pressure on research time, staff availability, and villager attendance at gatherings in both countries.

In both sites, the TOR included both fieldwork and observation of forums (3 in Cambodia in 2 weeks time, one in Bangladesh), which limited possibilities for fieldwork. In Cambodia, some ethnographic-type observation was possible, as I was able to stay overnight in the villages, but this was not possible in Bangladesh.

The methodology I used was, therefore, eclectic. I draw on the theoretical and ethnographic literature where appropriate—especially to help raise questions and suggest the need for further exploration when observations or interview answers seem like the tip of an iceberg.

For the Cambodian section, I draw on the information gathered at the 3 forums, and carried out group discussions and individual interviews there. In the villages, I had to rely on government counterparts for introductions and for some transportation, but was able to spend some time on my own with the women's groups or individual members and could walk through the villages in the early morning or late afternoon, talking with people on my own. I had 5 days and 4 nights in the villages, entered about 9 villages (several grouped in village 105 in Kratie), and conducted individual interviews both at the forum sites and in the villages. I interviewed 5 government counterparts, 2 officials above village chief, and entered many homes of villagers and WWP members.

In Bangladesh, I had only 3 days in the field, and much more restricted access to all stakeholders. I spent one night at one of the implementing partner sites near the field site, which enabled an extended interview with that agency head and a glimpse of its position as interlocutor. I entered 3 villages in Naokhali and 2 in Jamalpur, and spoke with their WWPs; also 2 adolescent groups and 1 children's group. I interviewed the Director and a program manager at Sagarika Samaj Unnyan Shangstha (SSUS), 2 staff of Dhaka Ahsania Mission DAM, and one government official, Mr. Rawsan Alam, Executive Engineer, DPHE, District office, Noakhali. I entered one home of a Hindu family in Naokhali, and a few homes on our walking route of non-WWP households. I interviewed 2 Imam, very briefly and 1 substitute Iman/madrassa teacher (more extensively). I talked with a group of men in the market in Naokhali.

Individual interviews were most difficult to achieve in Bangladesh, and, carried out in front of others, were often interrupted, constrained, and once, abandoned out of sensitivity to tears (of an adolescent girl remembering her deceased parents). (One technique for avoiding formulaic answers in an interview situation is to displace by asking one group to describe the work of another. This girl volunteered to describe the work of mothers, when, it turned out, hers had recently died.) Unable to gain access to previous Oxfam gender-research in Bangladesh carried out a few weeks before this research began, I note significant intersecting points with thanks.

In Cambodia and Bangladesh I interviewed national and international staff members as part of my charge to interview 'stakeholders.' I attended to their own experience of gender, and their hopes and concerns for the projects' beneficiaries, useful both for their take on the

programs and the diversity of gender and ‘cultural’ perspectives in play. I also looked at Oxfam gender-training materials.

I draw from the question-answer sessions in the forums focused on WASH, but rely heavily on more open questions in interviews and in the field to elicit gender-related attitudes and to inject clarifying content into assertions of problems or successes that might not be offered in more targeted, but familiar exchanges of the program and desired gender-related results.

All quotes in the Cambodian section are my translations. All quotes in the Bangladesh sections are the translations of my interpreters.

Citations are not comprehensive, only illustrative.

The WWP and Gender and Development (GAD)

While economic growth by itself “does not automatically translate into gender equality” the current consensus is that “Gender equality is good for economics” and, beyond economics, for development.⁴⁷ The Women in Development (WID) frameworks of the 1970s and 1980s development programs tended to target women, without sufficient consideration of how they are embedded in complex relationships, or challenging problematic universalized assumptions about women’s daily lives built into WID analyses.

Moving beyond the WID approach, Gender and Development (GAD) approaches to development sees the ideas and practices that constitute masculinity and femininity in a given place as a complex, intertwined, negotiated, emergent production, often inconsistent across a cultural field. That means recognizing that ideas of masculinity and femininity are not monolithic at any one place or time, and they are always changing. A GAD approach seeks to address both practical and structural inequalities, and considers the impact of both common practice *and* reformist interventions carried out by humanitarian, development, or governmental actors across sectors (economic, social, legal, environmental, rights etc).

Mainstreaming a GAD approach is intended to avoid ghettoizing women and their problems—marginalizing the concerns of women as only of concern to women. The drawback of mainstreaming has proved to be that resources and projects set to address gender issues get co-opted by other agendas.⁴⁸ Some international organizations (as of 2007) subsume the goals of ‘gender equality’ within those of participatory sustainable development (e.g. UNDP), but this fails to address issues of power hierarchies between men and women. Others either presume gender inequalities can be solved through attention to the rules of the market, or marginalize gender issues as ‘social issues’ separate from economic ones (e.g. the World Bank). Approaches to ‘gender’ that see social dialogue as an answer seem to over look the problem of unequal representation in available forums (e.g. ILO).⁴⁹ At its best, the GAD approach is meant to consider each of these issues, recognizing the entanglement of the social, the political, and the economic in the constitutive politics of everyday life, and to “create a framework of cooperation between men and women, so that the insights and abilities of both men and women are available to shape programs to meet their sector objectives.”⁵⁰

With the switch from WID to GAD, ‘gender’ is sometimes still reduced to ‘women.’ Men become generalized as “powerful, shadowy figures who need to be contained.”⁵¹ Biases

influencing GAD implementation include the assumption that men contribute the major share of the family's income and women's economic activities are subsidiary, and that 'work' is paid labor, valued higher than other contributions. The result has tended to be that social "care" activities cut from government budgets or social programs have been added to women's unpaid labor in the "care economy" because it doesn't show up as 'work'.⁵²

The WWP are women-only groups of volunteers. Whether the decision not to pay the WWP is one of 'sustainability' (less dependence on funding), to encourage self-reliance (linked to a concern to foster independent thinking for democracy), or to avoid 'commercializing' efforts that might otherwise become common daily habit, gender projects that recruit women as volunteers risk adding to the burden that intervention seeks to lighten.

Equality or Equity

British anthropologist Marilyn Strathern has noted that idealized gender roles—or any gendered problems—are not necessarily *about* men or women *per se*, or simply *about* relations between the sexes.⁵³

A very quick review of definitions in the 1994 Oxfam Training manual in English, a 2007 training manual for Oxfam, GB in Khmer, and English/Khmer manuals for gender trainings held in Takeo and Kratie Cambodia in 2000. In the areas I discuss here, they do not differ significantly. All assert the ultimate goal as 'equality.' In the language of the 1994 manual, here are three components to the Oxfam 'gender' agenda: welfare (equal benefit), equal access (to the means of production and to resources), and 'consientisation' [sic] (belief in sexual equality, which, the manual says, lies at the heart of the issue). 'Equality' refers to both participation and control (no dominance and no subordination).⁵⁴

In theoretical discussions, the concept of 'equity' is used to interrogate different possible ways of imagining 'equality' and of negotiating the complex real world of uneven power and material relations.⁵⁵ Another way of understanding that way of defining 'equity' is to see it referring to the possibility of different ways of being 'equal' that may not correspond to the liberal ideal many see built into dominant discourses on women's rights and human rights. The use of 'equity' in the Oxfam material is not offered as this 'site' of debate on the meaning of 'equality.'

In the Oxfam manuals, 'equity' is explained as a process that recognizes real life inequalities, attitudes, and the technologies used to compensate for difference across the categories of culture, law, 'society' and economy. But it appears as a path to an unproblematized 'equality,' rather than as a site of conceptual debate, or as a way to acknowledge gender differences that presumes no universal endpoint but a future of ongoing change and persistent difference and situated goals.⁵⁶ 'Equality' in the dominant liberal notion of 'equal rights' has been challenged by alternative visions of gender relations, significantly from Moslem feminists.⁵⁷

Ambiguity (or simply not spelling out specifics) can be useful in the implementation of programs across areas of broad differences because it permits a tacit (sometimes indefinite) deferral of confrontation whereby people can continue to hold, even deploy, dissonant interpretations, while accomplishing together the technical details that move the material aspects of a project toward a degree of completion. A long and controversial history of humanitarian and development interventions since the days of European colonialism demonstrates that perceived 'gaps' or disagreements can become—for better or worse,

depending on the issue and one's perspective-- both partial justification for future projects, and sites of new problems, obstacles, and proliferating difference.⁵⁸

The downside of focusing on 'equity' as a process of recognizing and dealing with real-world cases of injustice, suffering, and damaging discrimination toward a known end-goal 'equality' is that challenging the liberal vision of 'equality' is marginalized as outside of immediate concerns. Another danger is that the program will reify the differences the program seeks to eradicate, or produce new kinds of discrimination without noting them. A third danger is missing the possibility for understanding the emergence of new gender relations. Furthermore, different ideas are easily dismissed as vestiges of miscomprehension (ignorance) or wrong thinking.

In practice, men and sexuality are mostly left out of discussions on gender, except as problems for women, as are the politics of interventions targeting change and "non-party politics".

My point is NOT that the Bangladesh or Cambodia programs or staff members don't understand 'gender' issues. My point is that both Cambodian and Bangladeshi programs are deeply involved in 'inventing' gender relations, not surprising especially for programs seeking change, and that their staff members have much to contribute to/would benefit from debates on the gender goals of Oxfam and the politics of humanitarian interventions.

As the staff of the Bangladesh office noted casually, the structure of the international apparatus of humanitarian and development interventions promoting 'gender equality' illustrates that the privileging of men is a broader, more systemic issue. We can add that Supranationals, IOs and NGOs have a hand in globalizing it. Much of what appears as modern, (universal), gender discrimination is an EFFECT of earlier and present interventions and their modes of interpretation. These effects are unevenly distributed across the two countries, and in various sectors of life.

These points address central concerns of the TOR that this report addresses within all the limits articulated above:

- a. How is the goal of 'equality' under the rubric of 'gender' explained? How is it seen to be relevant at each location? What kind of problem is 'gender' in each locale?
- b. To what extent does the WWP focus on women's contribution further or hinder the GAD ideal of "a framework of cooperation between men and women"? Does this approach create a gender division where there has not been one, render 'gender' a more significant marker of difference than it has been, and/or reproduce the kind of discriminatory practices Oxfam seeks to end?
- c. Is the WWP appropriate to the Cambodia and Bangladesh context? Specifically, in what way does the WWP affect the burden women carry in the short/long term?

CAMBODIA

What Kind of Problem is ‘Gender In Cambodia?’ Women’s Rights and Goals for the WWP

In Cambodia, the questions ‘What kind of a problem is ‘gender?’ and ‘How appropriate is the WWP to address it?’ have been shaped by 2 decades of extensive ‘trainings’ on women’s and human rights. The intense intervention on human rights, women’s rights, and child rights was mandated by the 1991 Paris Peace Accords that launched the democratization process in Cambodia, following the bombing of Cambodia during the Vietnam War, the chaotic internal politics it helped precipitate, the American-backed Lon Nol coup, the disastrous triumph of the Khmer Rouge, and the decade of embargo against the Vietnamese-backed government that ousted them. In the 1990s, Cambodia was asserted to have no tradition of human rights. Teaching about human rights became a centerpiece of the democratization movement mandated by the Peace Accords.

There are two related, remarkable ironies about the contemporary study of gender in Southeast Asia in general, and the study of gender and the rhetoric around women’s rights in Cambodia, in particular. First, while the anthropological literature from the 1960s and 1970s makes a strong case for relatively equality and strong equanimity in value between men and women in both the pre- and, in Cambodia, early post-colonial past, at least in rural areas,⁵⁹ humanitarian and women’s rights interventions from WID projects to contemporary GAD projects since the 1990s have tended to present a picture of historically persistent women-oppressive ‘tradition’.⁶⁰ Second, Cambodian government officials in the 1990s (albeit rather unconvincingly) evoked a tradition of strong women to render women’s rights a Cambodian, rather than a foreign-imposed venture, and in order to assert a claim of Cambodian participation in the genealogy of human rights. In fact, educated Cambodians usually cite 1947, the date the first Cambodian constitution was drafted, as the date human rights law was introduced to Cambodia, not 1991.

In Cambodia, as in other places once colonized by Anglo and European powers, consecutive regimes on the way to independence and since, have made ‘women’ a highly politicized symbolic center pole of modern nationalism.⁶¹ The same history made ‘traditional oppression’ of women part of the publicity for communist reform. Women refugees returning from a decade or more in the U.S.A., France, and Australia, and other elites took up the banner of women’s rights, but, with the shift in funding emphasis to children’s rights in the 1990s, found themselves fighting for women-centered reform against child-centered reform that separated ‘children’s issues’ from women’s issues. Meanwhile, the integration of Cambodia into the global economy took its well-recognized, even anticipated, heavy toll on women and children (trafficking, factory labor and labor migration, prostitution, poverty).⁶²

In that context, Cambodian women’s rights advocates built a place for themselves in debates on what ‘civil society’ would look like in Cambodia. The questions ‘Can ‘equity’ be just?’ or ‘Is there only one way to imagine ‘gender equality?’ may be asked behind the scenes, but the discourse of equal rights for women is so strong, the ‘gender’ question dominating professional discussions is: ‘What are the obstacles to women’s equal rights?’ Oxfam staff report that lessons about gender teach about the law, for example, the law against domestic violence.

At the same time, real imbalances and exploitative and discriminatory practices along with all manner of domestic troubles such as violence against women, have been attributed to factors explained as ‘Cambodian tradition.’

Asked what do you want to see come of out of the WWP program and what are the goals of Oxfam gender programming, Oxfam staff had 2 responses.

1. They wanted equal rights for women. In the words of one government counterpart working in Takeo Province:

“[I want] women to have equal rights like men, do work like men, have strong hearts and make decisions on their own and become leaders in organizations and government. They should be able to ask for what they need from government.”

‘Equal rights’ were further defined as equal participation in decision-making, equal representation in governmental bodies, equal access to resources, equal responsibility for domestic burdens and equal treatment in the job market.

2. They wanted women to expand their knowledge and speak with confidence on hygiene and clean water issues for Cambodia’s development and to become leaders of the country.

Oxfam staff, Cambodian officials and villagers often asserted the need for an all women WWP as deeply embedded in Cambodian “tradition,” with tradition as something either inherently exploitative of women, or glorifying them--sometimes both at once in the name of national identity/strength.

One Chief of Commune, Khvay, Takeo Province told me:

“Women are national guiding ancestral spirit mothers/fathers (*meba*), strength of the nation. In the past, women didn’t have ‘rights/power’ (*set*). They had merit from virtue (*bun*). They took care of the children.”

A few notes:

First, this statement should be understood as an assertion of women’s symbolic role in nationalist discourse. It is not a description of how all men and women in Cambodia live, though it does become part of how some people and some national politics assert people should live.

Second, the word ‘rights’ and the debates on human rights and women’s rights cannot be understood without understanding an equally complex conversation on “merit” and “virtue” that also, necessarily, play a part in how Cambodian IO/NGO staff and the people they work with translate, interpret, use, rethink the concepts of ‘rights’ and gender ‘equality.’

Third, the word for ‘rights’ can have many meanings, even when used by the same speaker. For example:

While many of the women of the village (about 30 women) were gathered in the festival house for the lending group, we talked to some of their husbands down the road. The men laughed that now women have the same rights as men, and then they added, they have more rights than men because they can have the men put in jail. By ‘rights’ he explained he meant the ability to do things. Men have the ‘right’ to go out and make money. Women

have the right to take care of the house. One man from another village shouted that women don't have the same rights as men, but the men from this village tried to get him to be quiet. One man from this village said, "when we come back from doing our duty and they haven't done theirs, then we get angry." Another added, "but hitting is not from 'rights' it comes from anger."

The point here is NOT that the notion of 'human rights' or 'equality' are poorly understood in Cambodia. That conclusion cannot be drawn from these examples. The point IS that human rights, as 'equal rights' for women, taught as international and Cambodian law become--in some locations--an intervention applied from above, a tool associated with one kind of power (forceful power, *aamnac*) associated in contemporary political culture with men, and opposed to an ethic of virtue. You might think from the commune chief's statement that only women had this virtue, but that is far from the case.

That is several different issues tangled up together when trying to understand 'traditional' gender relations, and gender issues in WASH through a discourse of 'women's rights' with a possible goal of women's 'equality.'

The ambiguity around the notion of 'equal rights' and the problematic role 'tradition' plays as a catchall explanation emerged in presentations of the Oxfam overall project. The notion that women end up doing the WASH related work emerges as both a reason for advocacy to lighten women's burden, and the foundation of their expertise legitimating their voice in matters of hygiene and water. This kind of irony has been an ongoing problematic effect of a certain feminist approach to women's rights that seeks to identify women's roles and then inject previously denigrated ones with value. This approach is at least in part responsible for the repeated, often poorly explained, and profoundly misunderstood platitude that in "Cambodian tradition" women are "housewives" (whose role, it might be assumed it is to just stay home, and take care of the house and children, as if they were since the beginning of time 1950s suburban American housewives.)

Three central points designated as problems of "tradition" that appear short-handed in reports or 'sound-bite' summaries of gender issues in Cambodia and in the WWP in particular, should be taken up with caution.

- d. Women have no decision-making power. Cambodian society is hierarchical.
- e. Women have to stay home and take care of the house and the children
- f. Cambodian tradition refuses girls an education.

The reasons Oxfam staff give for needing an all-women WWP and the difficulties WWP members said they have in performing their work in clean water, sanitation, and hygiene resonate with these points. Describing program rationales, Oxfam staff members explain that women bear the brunt of water-related tasks, but their needs are not met because the decision-makers are men. They have lower levels of education than men, and very low confidence because they are raised only to stay at home and take care of the children, so special attention is needed to bring them up to the level of men.

The Oxfam staff says the WWP is valuable as an all-women's group because if even one man spoke with confidence, the man would dominate. Describing the vast inequality of representation in Cambodian government, the gender advisor for Oxfam, Great Britain argued to get balance there required exclusive attention to women for now.

This section does not contradict these points but seeks to reposition them. WWP members themselves often designated hygiene and clean water as crucial to them because of their role as caretakers.

“The most important goal of the WWP is that women know about taking care and managing the children and the hygiene of the child and taking responsibility for their family. We do it in our own family and publicize it in the village to change what isn’t good to what is good.” – president of the WWP, Phum Thoamada Khvav, Takeo

The challenge is NOT to hear this as evidence of monolithic, backward ‘tradition,’ NOT to understand it only through the interpretations generated through national discourses deploying a particular vision of gender roles, or permit observations regarding one sector/problem to cancel out the expressions/evidence of teamwork, interdependence and appreciation of different social roles that also appear in the research. A distinction should be made between identifying points of discrimination or bias expressed in culturally specific terms, and identifying ‘culture’ as a problem, since the thing represented as “enduring culture” is inevitably actually highly time, place, and sector-situated practice.

The history that made women the site of symbolic preservation of tradition for the newly independent monarchy, and the ‘traditional oppression’ of women part of the publicity for communist reform has made it difficult for researchers, NGO staff, and women’s advocates to access Cambodian ‘culture’ as a source of strong feminine images or flexible gender ethics, or to acknowledge a masculine voice speaking with equanimity.

The men and women I interviewed often reminded me when discussing the reactions of men to the WWP, in the words of one husband of a WWP member, “People have hearts/minds different from each other.” The representative from the Department of Rural Development at the national level I interviewed at the Phnom Penh workshop said:

“In Cambodia, they [advocates for ‘gender equality’] forget about men. [They] concentrate on women because for a long time just men [have had power], but in the future, don’t forget. Don’t forget about men or they forget their role too.”

The assertion that “tradition” or “traditional roles” are the obstacles to both long term and short term goals for ‘equal rights’ for women in Cambodia makes it difficult to hear what the women and Oxfam staff are saying about gender relations when they talk outside formal discourses. It makes it difficult to come up with a way to mobilize the WWP without ‘forgetting’ about men. It also makes it difficult for Oxfam to think about the WWP as a site of change in ‘gender’ attitudes and gendered practices driven by *grassroots* desires, opinions, perspectives, and ideas rather than ideas of ‘equality’ associated with the pedagogical intervention.

The literary evidence and the limited ethnographic, and other pre-Pol Pot scholarly work presents a much more complex and so encouraging picture of the agency and high value of girls/women in Cambodia. In the 1990s, efforts of Cambodian researchers to assert positive aspects into research reports without undermining the goal of program-oriented reports were rather meek. Since, advocates and writers are increasingly emphasizing the complexity and positive aspects of women’s roles in Cambodian history, the often negative impact of a history of interventions cast as ‘civilization,’ ‘modernization,’ and ‘development,’ as well as ‘equal rights,’ on political culture as well as everyday life in Cambodia. Some assert the

ongoing relevance of that more complex picture of the agency and high value of girls/women in Cambodia in the search for solutions to evolving problems.⁶³

Decision-Making

One of the successes asserted by many of the WWP members is that in the past, if they had an opinion about where to put the latrine, for example, the men would not listen to them.

Not all the husbands of WWP members were supportive of their work. Many noted their husbands did get upset if the rice was not ready when they came home at dinnertime. One man in Sambo, Kratie explained, “if we come home from doing our duty and they have not done theirs, we might get angry.”

However, men and women, both, also insist when asked about who makes decisions, in the words of one Kratie WWP member husband: “Like in farming, if we don’t work together, we can’t get the job done.”

“I want men and women to be equal, but “[Women] can’t do it alone. If we don’t have the ideas of men, [we] won’t be able to complete the work. Like in our families. We listen to the ideas of men. If what he says is true, we agree. If our husband says something that is not progress for our family, we have to talk to him to change his opinion. We help him to compare his words and our words. We keep talking until he agrees.”

The literature from before the Khmer Rouge period emphasizes the important position of women in the economic side of life.⁶⁴ Current studies revisiting the literature on relative equality, emphasize the complexity, and identify both an ethical lexicon and the everyday practice of women in contemporary Cambodia to challenge reductionist representations of Cambodian culture.⁶⁵

A CDRI study completed in 1999 noted that women held important decision-making roles in the home and in some agricultural decisions, though they did not have control in sexual matters.⁶⁶ This study concluded that overall, men were the decision-makers.⁶⁷ But the 2010 Cambodian national health survey reiterates the strength of women in decision-making, particularly in areas like the disposal of their husband’s and their own income and in matters of their own health care.⁶⁸

The mistake is to permit the conclusion ‘men are overall decision-makers’ because they make certain ‘public-life’ or officially sanctioned decisions, or are designated legally dominant by registration as head of the family in the family book, to obscure the decision-making women do, the kinds of self-determination they have in the day to day interaction, other distinctions between political/legal ‘culture,’ elite ‘culture,’ and the diversity of everyday life.⁶⁹

Here the interviews with the staff of Oxfam, Cambodia about their own families and their own lives were fruitful, since among them, across urban-village and class lines, are examples of strong women in mothers who manage household economies and participate, even dominate, decision-making regarding affairs of the family, often reaching beyond the walls

of the family compound. There are examples of fathers who taught the profound value of moral integrity and learning (against the pressures of the economic rationality of his wife). There are assertions of equal love and desire for opportunity for girls as for boys (constrained by practicality like the availability of certain kinds of education facilities, jobs, and the need for help at home). There are examples of couples making decisions together, working together as a team.

Many of the village men I spoke with asserted, when asked about decision-making with their spouses: 'Like farming, if we don't work together, we can't complete the task.'

Women in the WWP say poor men and women have to work together in order to survive. The problem for them comes when the men have to go far away to work. (This can include men with jobs in local government or who work as teachers and the like. (See Kratie box: WWP member and village chief) The risk is that he will forget his family, become more involved in outside matters (or other women). Husbands of the WWP women expressed the same worry (that their wives would take lovers), at the prospect of their wives going far away to 'study' in WASH workshops.

As in the 2010 national health survey, a very common answer among WWP members and other villagers was that decisions relating to family life were made by them (as chief of the house or *mepteah*) or together with their husbands. More men than women said the ultimate decision is theirs, a few men said their wives have decision-making power because they give it to them. My sample is obviously very small, but important here is that women don't always see becoming submissive as a sign of having no power.

Women's power is subtly applied in a household where drink and anger might drive the situation to violence. When asked what happens if a husband and a wife, making decisions together, cannot agree, the women say they use the same strategy they use when their husbands become drunk. They say they become silent or passive and then "talk and talk" until they get what they want, only when the issue is not avoiding violence, it is both men and women who are exercising restraint (in functional families). Women exercise a strategy of diplomacy and reason. "I compare his reasons with mine, until he understands."

When it works—and apparently it often does—becoming submissive temporarily is perceived as an effective strategy for both keeping peace in the family and getting what you want. This strategy is echoed in the Bangladesh research, not only used by women, but by men, women, and partners in dealing with powerful agents in their work areas. One commune chief cited it as a skill that women's distance from paths of forceful power (*aamnac*) permits them to use, and that it is useful for getting development projects done. (See how Oxfam works with structures of government, below).

On the one hand, in all the villages I entered, people responded to questions about changes in gender roles with well-practiced statements on the equal rights of women, attached to lessons on national and international laws especially against male on female domestic abuse.

A common refrain regarding the virtue of women as leaders was, "Before we [or they] didn't understand, but now they have explained and we [or they] do." Or "some have not corrected themselves, but only a few, maybe 3 or 4 families." Several women described gradual changes in their husbands who, they say, have been made to understand by doctors too that beating their wives, or not helping them so they are too exhausted, is an expensive

waste of their money for doctor bills.” In some cases, it seems that the younger husbands have learned by seeing other ways of being husbands modeled by their elders.

When asked straight out if it bothered them that their wives were becoming leaders, a common response was the response of a group of men in Sambo province who talked to me while their wives, including several WWP members, were in a lenders’ group meeting. In the words of one: “Women have equal rights with men. Women have more rights than men already. They can put men in jail. [Everybody laughed.]” Other men answered they would be bothered only if it meant they could not be [leaders]. Equal was okay, but women should not be above them.

Several points:

1. The single ‘ideal’ gender role cited for woman as passive, less than and subservient to men is tied up with the history of nation-building as, in the process of de-colonization, women became symbolic sites of valued difference for many emerging South and Southeast Asian nations.⁷⁰

2. The degree to which husbands and wives function as a ‘team’ also depends on the way in which economic circumstances have them working together or separately.

3. Responses by WWP members about decision-making in their homes reflect the findings of that 2010 study national health survey. Their power is subtly applied in a household where drink and anger might drive the situation to violence. Silence, avoidance, or a non-reactive demeanor and restraint from argument can be a kind of ‘submissiveness’ or ‘passivity’ that permits dominance and abuse. It is also a strategy of stoic, non-violent resistance recommended to men and women alike, that contrasts strongly with confrontational rights-based approaches and weakness. It is ‘feminized’ when offered as a diplomatic skill that women know better than men, or when pressures from male-dominated village structures emphasize that women should take the initiative in restraint.

4. Decision-making and the ability to participate in projects that might be considered ‘civil society’ is not just dependent on ‘gender’. In Cambodia it depends on age, marital status, regional history, education, class, location in the family and composition in the family, who else can help you with your chores, whose family gave the land a person is living on, whether a woman’s kin live near enough to give her support, the kind of support or sanction applied by the local leaders and neighbors, and individual initiative.

Education, Age, Gender, Wealth

The low attendance in school of girls past elementary level,⁷¹ and this collapsed into the redactions of ‘Cambodian culture’ that assert women cannot go out of the home, or versions of ‘arranged marriages’ that see them as the dark opposite of romantic love forcing girls into oppressive marriages, are sometimes counted, with a few often repeated proverbs, as evidence for the general lack of value of girls and women.

There are as many ‘cultural’ practices, beliefs and sayings to illustrate the high value of women. But they have not been collected the way the negative ones have. And there is no space to illustrate how the negative redactions came to stand for the most salient points of Cambodian culture. I can only note that schooling (with the end of Buddhist-based

education) was an early site where new lines between public and private, religious and political, traditional and modern, rural/backward/poor and urban/modern/progressive were being drawn.

Lack of education is a major factor in lack of confidence and exclusion from decision-making processes, and has a huge impact on women because, until now, since schooling of a particular kind became the most important path to certain kinds of 'freedom', but being a woman is not in any kind of doctrine a reason for exclusion in Cambodian "culture" or for a dismissal of women's abilities in the practical affairs of daily life. (In fact, conclusions that women were of lesser value in Southeast Asia were once drawn on the fact they were relegated the management of the affairs of daily life, like business—and exiled from the realm of the monkhood).⁷²

A consistent request among WWP members was the request for more training. The stronger their knowledge about WASH matters, the easier it would be for them to dare to offer opinions on WASH decisions, especially in front of men (who claim to know things even when they don't) and in front of the wealthier members of the village, who presume the poor are poor in part because they have little knowledge and, the implication is, little capacity to know or use knowledge.

But as equal education in itself does not eradicate structural inequality, since lack of education, is not the only cause, so the problem of 'shyness' and lack of confidence is not completely determined by the fact of being female. Age, marital status, wealth, and recognition by some institutionalized system of authority also count (e.g. relations, government, NGO, Wat). The younger members of the WWP who had all dropped out of school already say they join to learn about hygiene but also to meet people, to get experience with foreigners and NGOs, and, it became clear in the fieldwork, to give their families access to benefits. But they asked at the conferences "How to get people to listen to us if we are young?" One married man in the Phnong village in Kratie noted, "I don't know how to read or write, so I won't dare speak out. If they gave me something to read, I would be ashamed."

Kratie: A WWP member, a village chief, and a commune council member

The village chief's wife is the bookkeeper for the women's group and his cousin is the female vice president of the commune. The women's group was not voted in; they all volunteered. There are 7 who live nearby and one who lives far way. All are cousins in the village. This WWP member talked about how easy it is for the men who go to Phnom Penh to work and how hard it is at home. She thrashed 70 'bey' of rice stalks on her own. When I asked about whether her husband minded when she had to go study for the WWP, she responded that her husband went to Phnom Penh to study 7 times in one year. When they both go, the kids watch each other. (The youngest is about 3). In the course of our conversation she interrupted him to correct him in an annoyed voice several times.

The biggest water issue here is that for 2 months of the year the river on which the village sits is closed at the head. The buffalo defecate in the water and their feces just sit there. Even boiling the water won't get rid of that. The other issue they raised was domestic violence. The village chief asserted that only 3 or 4 families have that problem when the husband drinks.

I stayed overnight in this village. That evening there was a ceremony (see below) and many villagers stayed overnight. The next morning, a woman approached and told me about her abusive husband, now deceased. Her mother-in-law was sitting beside us and had just finished saying how great everything was.

In the morning, I walked around a bit alone and stopped in the home of a couple across the road. The husband turned out to be a member of the commune council. I sat with he and his wife. They talked about equal rights and husbands helping wives for about a half an hour. Then he and his wife said, he doesn't help in the house except on the weekends. He just goes to the commune to work.

Hierarchy, Civil Society, Gendered Political Culture

In both South Asia and Southeast Asia, the theoretical and methodological focus on very visible structural hierarchies have been critiqued as skewing analysis of social interaction.⁷³ In addition, while 'western' social practices and rights based relationships are used in urban sectors to counter the hierarchies of political patronage, seniority, and cronyis,⁷⁴ historically they played a role in producing the contemporary, gendered forms of those hierarchies. These various structures of power represent ongoing confrontation, accommodation and negotiation. However, the emergence of contemporary male-dominated, state-centered politics, as Cambodia emerged as a modern state, did not succeed in stamping out other more flexible and complex forms of relationships, though of course these too have new forms. This aspect of contemporary Cambodian life has not been sufficiently studied.

In the 1990s, a debate raging in the humanitarian/development sectors questioned the existence of any kind of cohesive 'community' sentiment or practice in Cambodia. Against that negative perception, one important study describes village-level 'community' or 'civil society,' distinct from the NGO networks usually referred as 'civil society' in development circles. Casual, spontaneous leaders, sometimes called '*mekejal*,' emerge for specific

projects. Their leadership is based on their reputations as moral and knowledgeable; their 'following' lasts the length of whatever project is initiated. My own ethnographic work, interviews for this review, and recent published work describes the 'community'-creating function of kinship networks on the one hand, and on the other, all manner of publicly carried out ceremonies from major Buddhist celebrations to weddings, funerals, healing ceremonies (where women hold important roles as mediums, patrons, cooks), and the activities of village-based monks.⁷⁵

Who should stay home?

Women in the WWP, talked about whose husband complained about WWP activities and whose did not. In the process they told stories of domestic violence. One story was about a woman's inability to escape from an abusive husband because she would have no way to support herself. Her 'lack of mobility,' however, was as much due to the fact that the house and land was hers. It was her husband who had come to live with her side of the family. The fact that girls inherit equally with their brothers, and are, in fact, often the one to inherit their mother's house (because the one to care for her parents in their old age) is a marker of the high value of women.

This is only one area in which the interpretation of 'culture' has had a powerful effect on the idea of 'traditional' woman as the symbolic hearth or center pole of the Cambodian home as a negative.

In the past, married women were more mobile than unmarried ones, but factory work has changed that. Three WWP members in Takeo province noted that poor husbands and wives have to work together. The problem comes when the husband goes to work far from the home. One joked with a saying, "Far from the home, bachelor already," pointing to the likelihood he would take another wife.

Many of the husbands I asked how they felt if their wives became leaders had similar worries. The words of one "I don't mind as long as she doesn't take another husband [is not unfaithful]." And several pointed out, if the wife goes, the husband has to stay at home.

Challenges for capacity building:

1. National level studies suggest women working in development projects have proved themselves reliable with funds and to differing degrees, manage family economies and enterprises with or without schooling.⁷⁶ The Oxfam staff report that the women say the women's education is too low and the women themselves say the task of management is too difficult for them.

How can the knowledge that Cambodian women have a long 'tradition' of economic management of household affairs and of participation in exchange transactions (money-based and trade-based), and that, depending on age and position in the household, today's rural women 'family leaders' are deeply embedded in the accounting of family resources and decision-making even if they do not have experience with written accounting methods, be used to facilitate their adaptation to the accounting technologies of development programs in general and the WWP in particular?

2. Work for an understanding of 'gender' as intersecting with status/wealth hierarchies, the changing practice, interpretations and effects of 'traditions', and familiar strategies and associative leadership principles? Would this help WWP be leaders organize their women's groups and rally communities in WASH issues, and through WASH issues, beyond?

3. Create exercises to help WWP women leaders and their communities see what the women can already do as foundational knowledge in areas that have come to seem like 'high' knowledge gained only through special schooling and *generalize* this knowledge and skills to other areas (as an alternative to just adding hygiene to 'women's knowledge').

How do the WWP work with existing Government Structures and Government Partners?

"Hun Sen set up a new structure...with pressure from foreign donors.... He said women can do publicity on hygiene and water....What Hun Sen says, everybody has to follow, but the law flows like the river."

--Takeo Program manager, Oxfam Australia, Cambodia

"Women are the backbone of the economy and society."

--the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency, 2008⁷⁷

"Why do organizations or government officials care about hygiene and clean water? If we have our health, we can do anything."-Woman official, Provincial Office of Rural Development, also head of an NGO working on WASH issues

Focus on the Commune Level

The Cambodian National Council for Women and the Ministry of Women's and Veterans affairs (MOWA) are charged with overseeing 'gender' policy and programs. The Ministry has implemented a series of 5-year plans on gender mainstreaming since 1999. MOWA works closely with all line ministries and has cooperated with 17 to promote gender mainstreaming strategies such as Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs); 14 Ministries also have allocated specific budgets to gender mainstreaming. The National Poverty Reduction

Strategy (NSDP) now has a separate section on gender equality and gender is mainstreamed into all its key areas.

Assessments of the government system have found a lack of standards.⁷⁸ The government in turn, according to the speaker from the Department of Rural Development, national level interviewed at the Phnom Penh forum, asks IOs and NGOs to standardize their own assessments, statistics and guidelines. Hun Sen, he said, wants a national standard and is making gender mainstreaming national policy. This representative noted that his own office has no access to the village level. He can only go as far as the commune level, so he is dependent on reports.

In 2008, the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency, Phase II was established. The Strategy asserts, "women are the backbone of the economy and society".⁷⁹ In line with this, the government representatives from the Departments of Rural Development and the Offices of Women's Affairs at both forums emphasized the importance of the work of the WWP and their work in hygiene and clean water to national development. For example, at the Takeo forum, the speaker from the Department of rural Development, herself the head of an NGO working on clean water and hygiene told the gathering:

"Why do organizations or government officials care about hygiene and clean water? If we have our health, we can do anything. Some people say if we have medicine and food, this is enough, but it isn't enough. If we have enough food, but we don't know how to eat, this is a problem for health too....People say, 'All this time to now we haven't had it [hygiene].' But if you drink the wrong way, this is bad for your health too. ...[She talked of illnesses of women and children and added] People think you have to have a husband to get all these [gynecological] illnesses, but this isn't true either...Is your kitchen near the bathroom? This can also be unhealthy."

The Cambodia Millennium Development Goal (CMDG) states that by 2015 women should hold 30% of government positions at National Level and 25% at Commune Level. COMFREL (The Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia) reports that as of the 2008 elections, even though 53% of eligible voters are women, women representatives made up only 22% of the fourth mandate (2008-2013) and women commune councilors only 16.8% of the second mandate (2007-2012). The Government (RGC) appointed 24 women as Deputy Governors in all (24) municipalities and provinces. In the total 185 districts or *Khan* - there were 169 women appointed as vice-chief of district/*Khan* and 388 (12%) women were elected (by commune councilors and members of the national assembly) at the sub-national level. Only 3% of village chiefs are women according to COMFREL. Numbers for 2011 are just becoming available for these and the commune level.⁸⁰ The law requires that at least 1 of the 3 village executives be a woman.⁸¹

No party has an official gender policy in writing.⁸² COMFREL reports that the prime minister, during a forum on promoting women's participation in leadership at the sub-national level, asked all government institutions to appoint women to vice chairwomen or deputy chief positions. He also appealed to political parties to place women on their party lists for the upcoming Commune and National Assembly Elections. Because the electoral system in Cambodia is a party list or proportional system, people vote for one party. Winning candidates are taken from party list. In Cambodia the party leaders are decision-makers regarding whether or not to insert the candidates (man or women) into the party list for elections.⁸³

At the Takeo conference, the chief of a commune in District Preah Kebah, referred to this call as a policy of his party (CPP). He explained that there are currently 7 people on the commune council, but no women. He and his colleagues had a woman in mind who they believed could do the job, but she is currently a village chief and would have to quit that job to take a seat on the council, so they will wait until the next election, in 2012. They will arrange it so she is automatically one of the commune council [when/if they win] by putting her up for the vote and then placing her at number 3 in the line of people who received the most votes no matter how many votes she gets (See village level for more).

In late 2004, the top five commune council priorities across all sectors (as presented and temporary agreements signed at the District Integration Workshops) included violence against women. A 2006 assessment of Cambodia's progress in decentralization and gender mainstreaming activities notes that Article 19 of Sub-decree 22 asserts that every council must appoint a woman councilor to be in charge of women's and children's affairs. If the council does not have a female elected member, it should appoint a woman from the commune to undertake this task.

The 2008 law on Decentralization (the Organic law) required the formation of a committee on women and children's affairs in the councils at each level of government to the commune level to be responsible for gender issues. These committees can participate in and contribute ideas to council reports and to the board of governors.⁸⁴

There were members of the committees on women and children from the provincial and commune levels at the forums. The break-out group of WWP members and a representative from one of those committees seemed to be working particularly well together and the WWP members were later convinced he would be responsive to them when they went home. Other WWP members also thought the commune representatives at the forums would now listen to them. One said she could talk to him "like to a father."

However, in late 2004, a Ministry of Women's affairs assessment found that the Women and Children Focal Points (WCFPs) depended on where there is no female councilor are not always active in councils and in some commune councils there were no female councilors.⁸⁵ The lead gender advisor at Oxfam, Great Britain pointed out that the gender focal points do not have a vote on the council and WWP members noted that the focal points are just as intimidated by the wealthy and by powerful men as any of the other village women.

The Oxfam GB lead gender specialist asserted that the Organic Law permits the women in the women's groups to speak at commune meetings.⁸⁶ For this reason, she sees linking the WWP into the government at the commune level as the best exit strategy for Oxfam.

Many of the Oxfam staff expressed the opinion that the concern of government officials was only talk and not heart-felt. The Oxfam Australia gender advisor notes two central problems in working with mid-level government. 1. They change position often, and they do not care about gender issues when they arrive, so training has to start from the beginning over and over again. 2. Even if they do care about gender issues, they don't know that they have to separate out this issue in reports or in agendas to make that clear.

Reflecting findings of an earlier study on the ability of council committees on women and children to act effectively,⁸⁷ WWP members across the Oxfam programs asserted that the easiest way to get people to listen to them was to have the chief of the village accompany

them. This was true of even the wealthier of the WWP members. Some said what they need to accomplish this is “a big house.”

Finding a way to legitimate the women’s groups’ activities, for example by securing an official letter of recognition from the commune, were central questions in both the Takeo and Kratie forum, with strong guidance from the lead gender advisor. Her explicit “exit strategy” for the end of Oxfam WWP was to integrate the WWP into the government structure by establishing them as an official linking mechanism between the commune and the village. The goal was to get the WWP plan for hygiene and safe water entered into the commune plan.

Two commune chiefs pointed specifically to women’s skills of persuasion as the way they have proved themselves useful supplements to the work that men do in government. (See ‘What has changed’ below).

This approach reflects the past 2 decades of restructuring of previous government-connected women’s social action. The woman official from the Provincial Department of Rural Development (quoted above), speaking at the Takeo forum, was a head of the women’s association in the province in the 1980s. In 1993, this organization split in unequal parts. This means that some people who were involved in the government association became part of government, some opened NGOs (with mixed success) and others did both. Her current NGO (Association of Cambodian Women for Peace and Development) has links at every level and they do credit, hygiene, and safe water, and are linked with the Ministry of Women’s affairs and the UNDP. She also validated the work of the WWP and women’s claim to participation in government around this issues by asserting their expertise in water and hygiene issues because they are the ones on whom the responsibility usually falls for food preparation, cleaning, water use, and care of the sick. This echoes the statements of women as the symbolic moral and ‘cultural’ center in other statements of their role in WASH, and the ambiguity of whether the rhetoric around women as legitimate leaders on that basis will help alleviate gender discrimination or contribute to it.

Both provincial forums were geared toward stimulating an exchange between the WWP and commune level government, with break-out groups tasking WWP members and government representatives to make a plan or answer a question together. The commune chiefs at the Kratie forums said they were happy to join with the WWP and have them help the work of the commune, but while several said there is money to publicize, they all said there no money for materials. One commune chief suggested that the link between the WWP and the government should occur at the village, not the commune level. In fact, village chiefs usually help to choose the initial women trained to start WWPs in their village.

Focus on the Village level

As described in the proposal, Part C., Activity Details, Kratie province, the Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD) is funded by the IMF to deliver services to 20 communes and by UNICEF to conduct a provincial vector control campaign. USAID funds an integrated health program to bridge the gap between the formal public health system and villages. In Takeo province, the Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD) and the Provincial Department of Health (PDH) are funded by UNICEF to deliver rural WASH services. Local, national and international NGOs deliver WASH services in both provinces.

The Oxfam programs have a very small staff and, in an arrangement separate from the government's own WASH program, use government counterparts for most of the village fieldwork. That means the government counterparts of various capacity receive training along with villagers, though some have been doing similar jobs for a very long time. The counterparts who accompanied me to the villages and who facilitated at the forums come from several different departments and when asked about their concerns and their visions for the WWPs, their responses reflect their professional areas of interest. The core WWP members for WWPs were chosen from hygiene changers and hygiene promoters.

In interview, the Commune Chief, H.S. from the Sambo district gave a spontaneous, quick history of the involvement of women in local government and his district, beginning in 1975 when the Khmer Rouge placed women in charge of some of the work groups "in the way of their politics." In 1979, the Cambodian state (the Heng Samrin government that came into power when the Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees from Vietnam ousted the Khmer Rouge) used women in the Women's Association, but their role was not as 'open' or 'broad'. Beginning in 2002, there was one woman in the 3-person village leadership and 1 among the 5-person commune committee. In 2007, there was another vote, and now 2 of the 5 are women.

A Commune Chief in Takeo responsible for 9 villages said in the commune council of this commune, there are 7 people but no women. I noted above that the way in which his party (CPP) was trying to get a woman they liked into the commune council. The woman that the commune chief supported to join the commune council is the chief of one village with an Oxfam WWP, and was a representative at the Oxfam forum. At the time she was chosen to be the chief of her village, she was a poor fish seller, not making a decent living, but everyone liked her, she said. Her husband works in Phnom Penh, coming back just twice a month. She has one child. When men complained about her being village chief saying, "don't let a woman be higher than us," the commune chief asked them "Can you do the job." They said they could not.

For the women in the WWP, in general, the more involved the village chief, the more positive the women's impressions regarding their reception by fellow villagers. At the Kratie forum, when individual women stood up to talk on the second day about the plans they had made with the representatives of the commune, several of them said that any questions should be addressed to the village chief. One said, "I am the helper." One commune chief said, "This is the plan for the village and for the Health Promoter, not for the commune," the Oxfam staff reminded him that the goal was to find a way to get the woman's platform into the commune plan.

In village Daun Peu, the WWP says, the village chief uses the WWP to call the villagers together when he wants to meet. In another village, the WWP report, the village chief rides his bicycle around to call people for the women's group.

In Cambodia, the village development committees (VDC), set up by the Seila/CARERE2 initiative for decentralization in 1996, have a quota system for women participants, and are said to be more responsive to grass roots concerns than other governance structures because they are elected.⁸⁸ Some of the women on the WWPs also serve on the VDCs, however, membership did not always translate to more confidence or voice. For example, in Sambo district one WWP member, a widow, who was also the president of the VDC spoke passionately about the needs of her village (latrines and a school), but when I asked if she would be able to speak with such strength to the commune, her entire manner changed. Her

voice became soft and her body language submissive and she said, she would not dare if she were not invited.

Especially before they have been able to demonstrate their competence, the more involved the village chief, the more positive the women's impressions regarding their reception by fellow villagers. Gender, age, wealth, knowledge and association with powerful or important people/structures/institutions are the facts impacting recognition and confidence.

Women rising in rank become part of existing power structures and hierarchies. (See also the section on women's burden, below.) Rising in those hierarchies for women can mean working within generally held ideas about how to avoid conflict. These strategies can work for them in the short run. The question is will they work against them in the long run? The women also not claim innocence in violence at home. Some say they insult or yell at (*chey*) their husbands. Peace-keeping, they say they use a strategy of initial submission and "talking a lot" to get what they want.

Reports on the VDCs question their success as sites of budding democracy since they have a tendency to be about passing on information, not soliciting community participation.⁸⁹ 'Back stage' complaints among WWP members regarding a president of a WWP putting herself forward as presentation candidate, and the process described by a few of the WWP as an "election" process, detailed as a combination of authoritative selection and voting as confirmation of the selection, suggests a combination alternative voting system and the internal and village politics of the WWP.

Reports on the VDC also note that their invention diverged from other paths of community organizing possible, more closely linked to the emerging of community-supported rather than government-selected leaders (such as *mekejal* (spontaneous leaders), but also taking greater advantage of monks, *achar* (learned) and *Doun Chii* (lay nuns) and other elders and older women contributing to the pagoda). These sites generate a very different hierarchy with different gender roles and leadership based on reliability and morality, and the possibility for relatively equal exchange that permit a more flexible engagement between people.

In what way do/can the WWPs draw on this kind of 'organic' leadership? To see what the actual dynamic is in these meetings and among these various actors, an observer who speaks the language should attend the meetings more than once.

What has changed?

All the WWP members report a change in hygiene behavior and better health, talking most about drinking water, though it seems the problem that men drink 'raw' water when far away from home in the fields is pretty wide spread.

The greatest change reported by all has been a reduction of illness. According to the women, realization of the link between hygiene and clean water, a huge part of the WWP work, has been difficult to achieve in places, but also a huge step in gaining them respect in the village.

Regarding this respect from men in particular: answers range from their husbands respect them the same as before, but the village chiefs listen to them more, to their husbands at first did not understand about their work, but now they do. A few of the women reported

their husbands do or did show anger about it, especially when drunk. But the anger was not necessarily specifically about the women's participation in the WWP. The men become angry about problems more generally, especially the lack of food and poor conditions of the family. That the work of the WWP is non-paid likely factors in there. Anger could also be ignited if the women didn't complete their regular duties on time, especially cooking. The failure to cook, not the meeting was identified as the problem. (See below)

One village chief said that the women know more about hygiene and more about lending and borrowing money than the men do now. This is because there are groups for that with women as members. He also says they have not yet put the WWP plan into the commune plan, but "everything is fine now that the government has told us that women have the right to join [in making plans].

The government officials say they have now learned that women are able to do important work in the village. The WWP are perceived to have brought more development to the village. They seem to be thinking about bringing them in as a way to complete work that they have now realized could only be partially successful without them because certain skills particular to women were not engaged.

"In the past, the chief of the village didn't think about the work in the village. He thought about the far way road. Now there are women doing this work from the organization and people are thinking about improving the near road...improving the village."—*husband of one WWP president, Kratie.*

"Since the forum in Takeo, I think the commune chief will call the women's group into the commune to help make the plan because he has recognized/accepted (received knowledge) of this already, though in the past he did not."—village chief, Saman Krom, Takeo⁹⁰

At lunch during the first day of the Takeo meetings, several women said their husbands respected them the same way as they ever did, and most of the men are not interested in water or hygiene issues, but now, thanks to the WWP, the officials listen to them better than they did before.

In the past, the Commune Chief of Sambo District said: "We did not know that women had the ability to do this work. Then they joined with us....Before there were women, we had work '10' but could only do '8'. Now we can do all. For example, if there is violence in the family, we send someone to deal with it. Men use power (*aamnac*).... People are afraid, but when we are there they respect, but when we go they do it again...We have to have women. Some work is work that men couldn't do. For example, we had them help with getting people to make a road. Even the road was going in front of their own house, they didn't want to do it. The woman had the plan from the Village chief. She went to talk to the village chief who said the people did it already [contributed] but not all, only 40%. Men use power (*aamnac*). To illustrate he offered a man's a voice: 'If you don't contribute, you can't use it [the road]'. But women say, 'I am not a man with power. Whose road is it? Isn't it our road?'

The Commune Chief of Sambo said, "to make a plan, we have to call them to come, but even only a few of the women understand about the meetings...Now, after 3 or 4 years [sic] that there are women's groups helping with gender, they understand

more and they come and the husbands let them come to do what they want to become leaders.”

The groups work as a support group for more than WASH issues.

The president of the WWP in village Thoamada Khvav said before, the women in their WWP didn't really help each other, but now, they talk about their problems together a lot.

The women see a major role of the WWP to raise their children with good hygiene and some use their youngster's good habits as a measure of his growth/development:

E., age 36 from Takeo has 3 children. She measured her youngest son's readiness to stay without her, with his grandmother, when she went to Thailand to work in a factory (earning \$200-\$300/month) by his ability to use the latrine, dress and eat by himself.

One point that seemed important to the WWP members: while they wanted to learn, and the most assertive of them were actively pursuing a path of self-improvement and the possibility of becoming leaders through the group, the problems they raised spontaneously and the benefits they sought were focused on village or family development. For example, the women's group members in this village often talk about the work of the group as helping 'families' (or meetings attended by families) even though it is the women who are members or who might attend. In one household in Kratie village 105, for example, the member was a very shy 18-year old. Asking her questions, it was often her family that answered. Her mother and sister were making rice flour cake near us. Her grandfather sat on the slat bed with us. They said the benefits were better health, and the ability to grow vegetables thanks to access to water. They were planning an Orchard behind their house as "continuing the work of the WWP." The individual family project was perceived as "developing the village." In turn, the grandfather suggested, the village was always part of 'family' life. His granddaughter said she joined the WWP to learn about hygiene. Her grandfather answered the question about who decided who should do what in the family (and who should be in the women's group) by talking about meba (the male and female ancestors), society, and school as 'traditional' elements in decision-making for any family.

WWP members say they have gained confidence in speaking out in front people who hold power. They are proud of what they can do. They say that without an invitation to speak at official meetings, this will continue to be difficult. They see this is difficult for poor men, also.

It is difficult to attribute everything completely to the WWPs. The villagers too didn't always distinguish the effects of one from the effects of another program or group where there have been more programs and women are members of several kinds of groups.

In Sambo district, the women's group described the leadership of a new village chief in inspiring the villagers to build a road and added, "Not just the chief, there was also Oxfam's WWP for getting villagers to work together."

See box Problems and Solutions box and Positive Changes box.

Positive Gender-Related Changes

1. The women have gained an awareness of WASH problems in their village, and the ability to analyze village WASH conditions.
2. Members of the WWP talk to each other about their problems at home, as well as WASH issues, where in the past they did not talk about their problems.
3. Ability to analyze what went wrong and finding a solution: the women in Sambo, for example were working to solve a problem of abandoned latrines by finding ways to get people to demonstrate commitment before choosing them to receive more from the organization., including having build and use their own simple latrines first.
4. Confidence in speaking out to the powerful especially where some kind of invitation has been extended.
5. Men and women say that women now have equal rights and they can do the same job as men. They can be leaders. Sometimes the men are of “two heart-minds” about this, because they want to do it, but also don’t want. Since the government says it, they feel obliged to follow, but this also builds resistance. However, many of the chief’s of the communes, village chiefs, and village men say they see that they see particular women who can do the job.
6. “The WWP allowed me to become a leader in my village.”—WWP president, Kratie, also a village executive
7. The president of the WWP, who later came to the Phnom Penh forum and was so awed at first she wanted to sit on the floor instead of at the tables set for them, but who was with the commune chief at the Kratie forum said, she can ask the commune chief like he is her father.

Trainings and Choice of Projects

Oxfam gender advisors, program managers, and a hired training firm, Amara, trained the groups in gender, in leadership principles, WASH monitoring, project planning and financial management. Review of the training materials I was able to see, and after questioning the trainers, staff, and villagers, raises the following points about the content of the training and cascade system. The focus is on the ‘gender’ concept and ‘leadership’ training as a set of methods for getting people to participate in a meeting, but the likely structure of meetings (informational and then a call for volunteers) and the tasks set out for the group, may not give much opportunity to practice them. Not all the members of the executive core start with the same capacity and, when the groups are larger, the other members don’t get the same degree of training since out-of-village trainings usually only include 1-3 women.

The thoughts here are articulated without having seen a ‘training’ or assessed anyone’s actual WASH knowledge:

There may be a cascade of diminishing returns in details of knowledge but especially in confidence in what is taught and so in a woman’s ability to pass the information on to intimidating people. This can make them reluctant to say anything for fear of ridicule. This DOES NOT mean they do not know the information. IT IS AN ISSUE OF CONFIDENCE and the FEAR that they might be asked a question they cannot answer. (This is a concern of illiterate and poor men also.)

The cascade method seems to put pressure on a few and contributes to the hierarchy within the group of women. Bringing more of the WWP members to trainings and training all in all the tasks could permit them to relieve each other from duties and/or help each other to complete duties, increasing team work, and building confidence of more of the members.

The hygiene and sanitation training does not include anything about the particular hygiene/health issues particular to women. Both the Oxfam GB program officer and the trainer from the Amara Institute said the women did not receive training on women's menstruation/gynecological health issues. The training manual I was shown on hygiene discusses water, feces, washing and the like, but not menstrual or other gynecological matters. In Bangladesh, this was an issue raised by community mobilizers (staff of local organizations working in the villages). Is it an issue discussed at some point in the Cambodia process? Should it be raised more here? (See section on children).

The choice of projects for proposals seems to be strongly related to the substance of the trainings, the orientation of the government counterparts (and possibly Oxfam staff) who it seems have the same training, and the tendency of the government to assert publicizing hygiene and clean water as appropriate for women, also the kinds of options and manner of presentation to the women.

The best way to assess this is to observe the process. If it seems to Oxfam that other kinds of projects might be done, but aren't being chosen, someone with this knowledge prepared to teach about the available options might be present at trainings.

Again, these points are based on the designated manuals and interviews only.

The Cambodia Forums:

Takeo (11 Communes), Kratie (9 Communes), Phnom Penh (all)

Two major messages, both crucial for the development of Cambodia:

1. The WWP need to publicize about hygiene and clean water and improve sanitation conditions in rural Cambodia.
2. A system is needed to link the WWP with government officials

From the perspective of gender, there was one exciting, major benefit of the forums: The WWP members could participate in a task with men and women in high ranking positions.

Kratie: The lead gender advisor of the Kratie forum and the staff working as facilitators had a clear vision of what she wanted to accomplish for the forum, but she was aiming also at a more general “exit strategy” for the time when Oxfam would end the WWP program. So there was a strong sense of mentoring (and more facilitators) at the women at the Kratie forum. Sometimes that included guiding them to develop a half-formed goal. For example, in preparing the women for a question answer session, one women suggested it would be good to have a system to communicate what the WWPs were doing to the Commune. The mentor asked how. The women answered that they should give the report to the village leadership or to the gender focal point and they should bring it to the commune. The facilitator asked: “Who wants to take it directly?” The women understood they should follow the hierarchy; the gender advisor asserted that the 2008 law on Decentralization (the Organic law) gives them the right to talk directly to the commune level, and this was the exit strategy she was leading them toward. At the Kratie forum, groups and exchanges were organized around the roles of hygiene changers, hygiene promoters and government counterparts, and more time was allotted to discussion.

Takeo: This forum was organized more around villages, recognizing across villages and communes that the WWPs shared the same problems and a common concern for hygiene and clean water, and passing crucial messages from the WWP to the commune and provincial levels on the one hand, and from those upper levels to the women on the other (with speeches from the provincial level.)

Asked ‘what is the role of government?’ all the groups said:

1. To teach about hygiene and clean water, and if possible
2. To give money from the budget to the WWP
3. To put the authority of their status behind the joint government and WWP message.

When asked what they need:

1. Pictures to use to teach
2. Teaching sessions every 3 months because people forget
3. A way to report to the commune council so they know what the groups are doing
4. The village chief to help
5. Schools close enough for the girls to go while living at home (Sambo)
6. A canal for irrigation, latrines, wells, for the kids to study English (Takeo)
7. A big house [sign of ability/legitimacy] so people will listen to what they say

The major obstacles WWP Women and Staff say they encounter

The women say:

1. People said they could drink raw water like their ancestors.
2. There was no system for them to bring their ideas to the authorities.
3. The commune office was far away.
4. ‘We think we are lower than them, so we don’t dare’.
5. “They don’t respect our knowledge” and “Our knowledge is weak, so they don’t listen.” This was especially a problem for the young single members. All asked for more training.
6. We sent a proposal to the commune chief, but he didn’t answer.
7. We don’t have the right to join or to talk.
8. We don’t know how to make a proposal.
9. People can articulate the importance of clean water and hygiene, but if you ask them to buy something toward it, they don’t because they say they can survive as they are.
10. People won’t follow us if the Chief of the Village isn’t there. (Authority legitimizes knowledge)
11. It tends to be the people in the middle economic level who come and ask for a latrine after learning about hygiene.
12. People are too busy to come to meetings.
13. Women’s group members in several groups said talking among themselves that they are old and forget things, but they didn’t want to write that. I think they were referring to their own difficulty in explaining with confidence the source of the problems with dirty water.
14. All the women say some have changed habits and some have not. The habits:
-use soap, drink boiled water, bottled water, or filtered water, wash hands, use a latrine.
15. One group specifically mentioned that they were having trouble making a proposal with a budget.
16. The rich say there is corruption because only the poor get something. The poor say only the medium people get something.
17. Men’s drinking—linked to ritual demands among the Phnong, but I would hesitate to blame ritual for alcoholism—was raised often as a reason for men’s lack of engagement with the needs of the household, water or otherwise, and for violence.

The Staff add:

1. Concern by the government for gender issues is often just words not sincere and not implemented.
2. The Government doesn’t want teachers to spend class time on hygiene and water issues.
3. What Hun Sen says everybody has to do, but the law flows like a river.

Problems and Solutions from the Phnom Penh Forum and Village Visits

One WWP member reported the solution they found to the problem of people not coming to meetings: hold a meeting near their house or ask them to host a meeting so they can get some small incentive.

The problem of abandoned latrines: The WWP in Sambo said that they would avoid this problem by first having people make their own simple latrines and seeing who was really committed to using a latrine before choosing them to receive more from the organization.

The president of the WWP in village Thoamada Khvav said before, the women knew each other, but didn't really help each other, but now, the members of the WWP talk about their problems together a lot.

One WWP said to reach people who don't come to meetings, we go to talk to them at community festivals/gatherings such as Prachum Ben.

One WWP member's husband in Kratie said: "The chief of the village didn't think about the work in the village. He thought about the far way road. Now there are women doing this work from the organization and people are thinking about improving the near road...improving the village."

One WWP member from Kratie said the women's group but also others have changed their attitudes toward hygiene practices like using soap. Her group has gained in bravery in speaking out. She is very confident that her community council will listen to her because one of the members at the forum promised.

One WWP member said they focused on change in a minority group area. She told a story of a 56 year old widow who has the children wash their hands before they come into the house.

A WWP member from Kratie told about her work with a Phnong family. There was so much disease and more than 200 deaths one year. The people thought it was caused by a *tmoe*, (a kind of sorcerer), or spirits so they wanted to move out of the village. Now they use bamboo to carry boiled water to the field and dig a whole and cover it when they defecate. She also said the WWP allowed her to become a women's leader in the community. It "showed them I can take a leadership role."

In Preah Kbah, one WWP member reported, last year it took 3 hours to get water that was only available at the Pagoda. Men would get it and carry it home on the way back from watching the cows. This has now changed.

Every WWP, in every village emphasized how much less stomach problems and diarrhea they suffered thanks to the work of the WASH projects.

Beyond Clean Water and Hygiene

Sometimes WWP members disagree about what to do with the grant money. What the women say they need beside clean water and hygiene:

- Many want schools nearby. Boys can stay in on pagoda grounds far from home, but the girls cannot. They want their girls in school.
- One WWP member said should buy rice for planting.
- One young president of a WWP wanted to plant trees on public land in her village.
- Some suggest building a house.

Do the WWPs add to Women's Burden or Help Alleviate it? An Economy of Energy and the Politics of Distributing Wealth

*"[We choose women to participate in the WWP] who know how to sacrifice (lahbong). If we call they come without thinking of their family."
–WWP president, Kratie Province, describing how the women members of the WWP are chosen.*

The first point that should be made is that all of the women, without exception, expressed the opinion that they wanted the WWP to continue. The young ones emphasized both the difficulty in getting elders to listen to them, and that they consider the WWP an opportunity to learn and gain experience with things and people outside their village. This seems to be seen as a major benefit for all members.

The members all said they did the work of the WWP because they saw value in it for themselves and their families and villages. But they worried about their chores and responsibilities to their families when they were doing it.

The bulk of the burden of the group work seemed to fall most heavily on the three or four leaders of each WWP and sometimes on the one or two who are able to go to the distant trainings and meetings. These members are often on other committees.

Time and energy

"Too busy" is a catch phrase for many different explanations. In terms of who has time to join the group, women with children under 5 don't seem likely to join the group unless they have a mother or elder daughter living with them to watch the kids. Mothers seem to send their teenage daughters so they can learn something and, get some benefit, though they say the reason they don't go themselves is that they are "too busy."

At some times of year, people are so busy, they have a hard time coming to meetings or sending someone if they need all hands to work, such as at harvest time.

However, two commune chiefs and a WWP member clarified the issue of time. They said, people say they have to watch the children, or if you are living hand to mouth, you may not have time to do this work. However, what is really happening is they don't think it will have

'benefit'/interest (*brawouic*).

The commune chief from Sambo said they are too busy attending to their own family livelihood and don't change the way they divide up their energy." As the WWP member at the Kratie forum put it, "they do not take the time/sacrifice" (*minlahbong*).

The cleaning of the materials given out, that falls to young girls in the families. Older children at home mean less of a burden on the women.

Age, gender, time

The young girls say they become members when someone, like the village chief or the head of the women's group recognizes their 'value'. Middle age women who join the group say they have grown children who are out finding money (*rok sii*) to help them. (Since family economies in families with many children grow as the children grow, families with lots of children may be poor and struggle when the children are little, but not willing to stop having children. Grown children are sources of cash, help raising younger siblings, and security for old age).

For women with children over the age of around 10, the new tasks of cleaning latrines and water filters usually falls to the youngsters, often the girls. Most of the women members I spoke with had husbands who helped by cooking or sending children off to school when they were not there. Some had sick husbands or husbands who were at home for some other reason.

The husband of P. in village 105 said, "No problem. She can go. But if she goes, I have to stay home." People don't like to leave the house with no one to watch it.

Several of the women from this WWP and neighboring ones in their 40s and 50s joined in a roundtable at the Kratie forum. Like P., they said the pressures on the few educated women were great. One said, since there are few people and especially few women with some degree of education, so many roles fall on them. One women, voted to be treasurer of her village and member of the WWP talked about the many committees she was on but said "I can't quit this job. This job is big."

Several had studied before Pol Pot time. Several had experience working for the state in the 1980s and other NGOs since 1990, one publicizing about diseases since 1989. Their parents were in favor of education for girls, but still they said women are lower than men and the poor are also disrespected, so no one will listen. Even the gender focal point officially appointed will not dare to speak to the rich in the village or those who take care of the budget. They also commented on an attitude that could be related to what the staff have said is people rejecting cheaper model latrines. That is, if you cannot do something completely, it is better not to do it at all or people will look down on you.

The Politics of Distribution and the Problem of Corruption

In the morning in Takeo, I walked through the village and met women preparing their children for school. Most were preparing to go to help others with the harvest. One woman was rushing to close up her tiny thatched house. She said

she had no time to fill her big water storage jar, but took water straight from the neighbor's well. Her Oxfam water filter was broken. At this time of year, she had no time to boil water. (She also had no place to store boiled water). Fuel may also have been an issue. She was going to harvest for the WWP president earning \$3/day). That WWP president had two water filters. (This was the house where I stayed. Her daughter said there was extra after they gave everyone in the village one.)

P. bought a phone with money she was given for her per diem for the Kratie conference. To observers in the village, this likely looks like a 'benefit' from doing her job. The small per diem and the trip to a hotel in the town the women get is considered a benefit.

A very common report from the women's groups in the forums and later in the village was that people didn't come to meetings if they didn't see some immediate benefit for themselves/their families. This should be understood in the context of several other points that usually are talked about together, but often get reported separately. The first is that the group is perceived as a group that sticks together and helps each other (*sahakneir*), something not bad in itself, and a plus for the WWP members. However, factored into how others evaluate what will happen at the meetings the women call, and that people expect each other to be seeking a means of helping their own families as they themselves weigh opportunity plus time spent—a kind of cost effective analysis—it can lead people to dismiss the WWP meetings as a low-priority time/energy investment.

They are also very familiar with the phenomenon of nepotism or cronyism in its positive (helping family) and negative (corruption) forms so the women's groups will be interpreted through this multi-faceted lens. The women's group says the poorest can't take care of the latrines or build the parts they need to build on their own, and that is why they aren't chosen, but when it is the women's group members and other mid level families who they know who benefit, it is called corruption by the wealthy and the poor.

Some of the men whose wives have gone to study about hygiene said that the benefit of studying goes to the ones who study. This doesn't necessarily mean the women don't use their knowledge in their families, but that the fact of having studied itself changes people's perception of you because of your apparent connections on the one hand and any demonstrated actual beneficial knowledge on the other.

Economy in the villages is not just a money economy or a market economy. People trade cash, goods, and energy/strength. They work for each other based on established relationships (counting on each other back and forth). Like all of the tasks in their lives, deciding what would get done and who would do it requires a calculus of the expenditure of energy on the one hand and possible 'benefit' either immediately, or in the long term, since building a relationship of 'counting on each other back and forth' is a kind of insurance policy against hard times. (The poor don't only have less money, they also have less energy to share with others in order to establish mutually beneficial relationships, and this is a factor in their ability to participate in meetings or take care of equipment too.)

The trick here is to work on the perception of 'benefit'/interest in proportion to the expenditure of energy and valuable time. Is there a way to help the poor have something to offer in a community project?

Important here in terms of a 'burden' specifically for women, though, is that the ability to distribute benefits is a highly political one that impacts the women's group members as they are embedded in the interrelations (not just the hierarchies, but the networks of interdependencies that help people survive).

This is a politics of everyday life that can be exacerbated by integration into the hierarchical politics of political culture, even as that integration will make some tasks easier.

The local government offices get latrines and other things from Oxfam. The women who have 'jobs' through the WWP become part of the village elite (depending on their individual assertiveness and education). WWP do not necessarily challenge the criteria of hierarchy, including gender hierarchies.

Would/should the work of the WWP continue after Oxfam leaves? What role for them?

Asking this question at the forums and the Phnom Penh conference got nearly unanimous affirmative answers; the women at least expressed a desire to continue.

And yet, one village chief at the Kratie forum told the group that he thought the work would likely not continue if Oxfam stopped. He repeated that point in our interview. He asserted that if the organization stopped the program, people would "forget."

Asking individuals in the village I also received tentative affirmations and several people said straight that they would not continue if, as S.S. put it "there is no one but us in the village." She explained that she would "continue to publicize what we know already," but "there is no one who could go and have contact with the government...If they don't help in the Commune, we can't do anything."

I asked the WWP with the passionate female president of the VDC as member, if they could raise money themselves to build the school they wanted so badly for their girls, the same way a WWP member in the neighboring village had saved money (for 4 years) to build herself a big house. They were dismayed at the thought of how long it would take. But then they told the story of the village chief who rallied the village and the WWPs contribution to that effort.

A 19-year-old secretary of one of the Kratie WWP asserted she would be brave enough to talk to the authorities. So did president of a Takeo WWP.

BANGLADESH

What kind of problem is 'Gender' for the Bangladesh WWP? Nationalisms, Islam, 'Musclemen'

"Maybe not 'equality.' If there are men and women equal, I don't know what that will mean. But empowering. We think development is much more sustainable if it is done through the women."—*Sector Team Leader, Bangladesh, in response to my question about the viability of a goal of 'equality'.*

"Men can't protect women anymore."-- *Oxfam engineer*

"Men know women are stronger, mentally, so they don't want them to get power more than them. They feel now that they are losing their power as women start moving out of the house, going abroad, earning money."—*female staff of implementing partner organization, Jamalpur district.*

"I fought like a liberation war to stop open defecation....Before I wasn't doing anything for the community, but now, no force can stop me."—*WWP member, Jamalpur*

"We have received no incentives, not even t-shirts. Would you give us *burqa*?"—*Joke of WWP member, Naakhali*

In Bangladesh, the question 'What kind of a problem is gender' and 'How appropriate is the WWP to address it' has been shaped by the battle for independence, and Bengali nationalist identity-building since the independence violence of 1971, distinct from, but tied up with, the class-inflected⁹¹ politics of gender in Islam, the religious persuasion of about 90% of Bangladesh.⁹² In Cambodia (above), part of the work of Supra-national, International, national governmental, and local non-governmental organizations set for themselves has been a response to a perception of Cambodia's need to deal in a particular way with its royal and communist past, and especially with the violence of the Khmer Rouge period—keeping its memory alive in the present. In Bangladesh, the effort seems to have been the opposite, at least in part. There too, scholars write, women have become a symbol of the 'culture' that legitimizes the boundaries of sovereignty, and also modernity, liberation and insurrection.⁹³ In the liberation war of 1971, this helped precipitate the rapes of more than 200,000 Bengali women by Pakistani soldiers. In an important sense, the literature suggests, finding a way to transform those rapes —and this seems to have meant 'forget' or erase signs of them-- has been important to the effort to make women strong participants in civil society in the new nation-state.⁹⁴

At the same time, fairly amazing changes have been reported in a short amount of time. The ratio of females to males in primary schools has steadily increased from about 83% in 1991 to 96% in 2000. At the secondary level, thanks largely to the Bangladesh Female Secondary Stipend Program (FSSS), there are already more girls enrolled than boys.⁹⁵

However, though trends in employment and income, as well as opportunities for mobility changed between the 1960s and 1980s, (with women getting better wages, becoming more involved in union activities for workers' issues, and some getting educated and moving out to other jobs) with structural adjustment, women's exploitation as unpaid family labor

continues to be linked to profitability and cost-effectiveness. Women, the literature asserts, now get equal pay as men, but the other side of this is the increase in hiring low-paid casual women laborers.⁹⁶

Some writers argue that, although women are able to shift some of their responsibility for care-giving and reproductive work on to other family members, this has not visibly altered the gender division of work within the household and may even have led to a loss in women's welfare because of reductions in leisure time.⁹⁷

A staff member of the partner agency in Jamalpur district said that there were no residual effects of the 1971 rapes. "All the babies were adopted to [sic] foreigners. Everything is normal now. Everything from that time is gone." Yet this reference to the adopting out of the infants refers to the agitation ignited around what it would mean for women to mother offspring of the liberation war enemy,⁹⁸ and a rather oblique comment by one Oxfam engineer, during our conversation on women's empowerment, that "men can't protect their women anymore" resonates poignantly with that earlier time and the assertion of the Jamalpur partner that men are losing their power.

Political parties have included paradigms of masculinity and femininity in their politics, so efforts by NGOs to make changes become linked to class and party interests.⁹⁹ "NGO programs offer an alternative to existing forms of madrasa education and informing credit or money lending that serve as sources of legitimacy and areas of investment for members of the Islamist parties. So, development NGOs have been attacked including NGOs working for women's rights and health."¹⁰⁰ The Fatwas of the 1990s are commonly named a backlash against women and IOs/NGOs.¹⁰¹ One recent report suggests earlier resistance to IO/NGO intervention has been alleviated with the help of the media giving positive images of garment workers.¹⁰²

Ongoing concerns raised by the literature, the volatility of the current scene in Bangladesh, and references to the liberation struggles by partner staff and WWP members, suggest a few points.

First, the volatile politics of the past decades, with the difference in governmental and non-governmental engagement with gender issues in Cambodia and Bangladesh, contribute to the different forms of the WWP programs in both countries.

Second, the Oxfam WASH staff and partners work within a still complex, volatile political environment and, my sense is, are obliged to protect the project from Bangladesh politics even as they have had to cope with the issues of control and violence in the setting up of the WWP.

Finally, without exception, the government officials at the Linking and Learning forum in Dhaka, the staff of partner agencies and of Oxfam, Bangladesh, and the women themselves, saw the WWPs as powerful, innovative ways to draw women into decision-making in national WASH efforts. This said, many of the obstacles the WWP members reported are related to both to the path of nation-building so far, local politics, and to the way 'equity' or 'equality' is being imagined and contested in the country.

The Oxfam staff made it a point to distinguish the Islam of Bangladesh (and the politics of Islam in Bangladesh) from the volatile, violent, and often feared and vilified Islam of so-called "extremists" or "fundamentalists" that, unfortunately, dominates the publicity on

Islam on the global stage. In interviews and casual conversation, they, and the staff of partner organizations presented a wide diversity of stances and experiences on the importance of devotional practices to struggles for positive change in gender relations.

Some members of partner organizations asserted the ultimate goal as equal rights (the staff of the partner NGO representative in Jalampur). For example, one representative from Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Oxfam's partner in Jamalpur, asserted (in English), "equal rights" are the goal. She said:

"The men didn't recognize that the women have equal rights. They need to see them as human beings....Our goal is to show them that women can do what men do. Men in the village had the belief that women could not do anything, but now they see they were wrong....They are afraid if the women come outside the house, they will be clever and if they are clever they won't respect their husbands."

For her it was important that the women participate in decisions, are able to do outside work, and participate in higher education so they can take care of their children better.

In Naokhali, the seasoned director, and son of the founder of SSUS, the partner agency, said his vision was "gender equity." He said this means equal access to jobs with the same salary. The family, he said, is different.

Others (like the sector leader quoted above) were skeptical about "equality" as a realistic goal. The staff of Oxfam praises the way in which men and women work together as a team without discrimination or discomfort. The one woman staff member I was able to talk with saw progress in Bangladesh for women, since her mother had little education, but she can hold a professional position. The male staff I interviewed both talked about strong, decision-making mothers and discussed the question of 'equality' of the women in their families in the terms of husbands and sons, sisters, mothers and wives who are deeply embedded in relations of loving inter-dependence, and notions of privacy and intimacy disjunctive vis a vis notions of 'public' and 'private' in the dominant liberal conceptions of 'civil society' on the international stage.

Perhaps even more intensely than in Cambodia, the independence of persons to which 'equality' in liberal political theory is subtly, but profoundly linked, is not the same kind of virtue. 'Public space' does not indicate a secular space leached of spiritual affiliation. 'Strength' is not necessarily signaled by the same actions or attitudes. Bringing Moslem women into 'civil society' may mean something different from what it means, for example, in the secular discourse of contemporary France where hair covering has been banned from schools. That should come as no surprise, but bears mentioning in a report of this nature, as does the point that IOs and NGOs entering the fray enter politics even without entering party politics.¹⁰³ With the extensive, well known literature on development programs in general, the anthropological literature on gender in Bangladesh notes unruly consequences of past interventions:

"While on the one hand women [have since the 1980s] experienced greater integration into the economy,...it was commonly perceived that women were taking away jobs from men and thus the natural role of primary breadwinner. Religious groups...denounced the women."¹⁰⁴

There has been a trend replacing marriage payments to the bride and her family with the ‘demand dowry’ that favored the groom and his family (though apparently also an increase in at least promised amounts of ‘security money’ from groom to bride among the upper classes), also a perceived increase in the fragility of marriage and divorce.¹⁰⁵ While a quick exchange with the Oxfam staff challenges the idea, this literature suggests a connection to a rise in violence against women including acid attacks.

The literature also asserts these various changes indicate the deterioration of both women’s status as women and the “patriarchal contract” (men’s obligations toward women).¹⁰⁶ Some note the ability to keep purdah is considered by many to be a mark of high status and suggests that this status accrues to male household heads but the loss of status for not maintaining purdah in the face of growing economic pressures reflects directly on women, not on men.¹⁰⁷

One Oxfam engineer, a member of the Bangladesh team interpreting for me, expressed this concern when he asked a group of people gathered in one Jamalpur village why the men insulted the women they saw bathing or caught in compromising situations. ‘Isn’t it men’s responsibility to take care of the “dignity” of their women?’ The word he used for “dignity,” he explained, was “*morta*” (covering).

The challenges to the WWP were often associated with the need to keep purdah in both regions, though with much different degrees of intensity. But as ‘gender’ is not always just about men and women, *purdah* is not always just about religious devotion.

Some points of concern/interest:

Purdah, Burqa

“We have received no incentives, not even t-shirts. Would you give us burqa? (Instead of t-shirts).” Naokhali WWP joking in response to a question about volunteer work.

When Oxfam staff describes the successes of the WWP in Bangladesh, especially in the Naokhali area, the progressive emergence from cloistering and veiling is a central marker of program success. When they first began working in the region, the women were not able to come out of their houses to speak to them, and the male staff could not enter. Now the WWP women not only come out, but also go to market. The WWP also speak easily with the Oxfam male staff about matters of menstrual hygiene.

The head of SSUS tells a longer history of efforts to reach women in the area on issues of health, education, and hygiene. He recounts the struggle his agency had in gaining the trust of the men, who then permitted the agency to meet with the women and even transport them to doctors. He notes too his father, the founder, having to use female family members since there were no other women to hire to do this kind of work at that time.

The two sets of experiences emphasize the way in which the separation of women experienced by the WWP members is also their protection (whether one sees the way it is acted on as positive or not)—not just adherence to a ‘religious’ or patriarchal rule and not just a question of purity or covering.

The comments by the mother of one of the young WWP members in Naokhali suggests the

link between the politics of liberation from Pakistan, current efforts to bring changes in gender relations and perhaps a politics between generations. It also shows how the issues of trust, religious rigor, and community support/sanction and habits of patriarchy interact.

Asked about how she feels about the less strict rules today, this mother of a young WWP member said, in the interpreter's words: "I am old enough. I get ready for death...but nowadays the girls want freedom." She said she and her family are coping with the present environment. It is changing, so they cope. She doesn't mind because everybody is doing the same thing. Asked what kinds of changes she would like to see in her society, she says first, "My son to earn more money; my husband to build a building." Then she said, "I am from Pakistan time. We aren't used to thinking about things like that." Would she like her daughters to become leaders? "If my daughter can be happy, that is good...When my daughter goes with the WWP group, it is only women. She likes it. If it was male and female, (my/her?) husband wouldn't let her go."

In both areas, some women walk with only a hair covering. We saw women walking with umbrellas (one way of keeping purdah). We also saw women, some in *burqa*, in the larger market places or working on roads with male crews during the day, though most were men. In the smaller markets in the villages, only men were to be seen. In my visit to Naokhali, entering houses/compounds arbitrarily on a village walk-through, we found some women hidden inside, only able to speak with us, out of the dark, through the doorway. It is relevant to the problem of marking change in the area that people seem to be highly mobile.

Joking with me about never having received any pay or incentives from Oxfam, the women in one Naokhali WWP asked if the organization would give them burqa. The Oxfam staff member confirmed that they meant, if they had the face- and body-hiding clothing to put over their own, they would wear it.

According to the literature, there is a trend among university students and other newly mobile women to take on the burqa.¹⁰⁸ One author describes women who, while treated harshly under local law, still join NGO women's groups. This author found that, "contrary to the charges of Islamists and the wishful expectations of secularists, such women do not see themselves as either rejecting religion or embracing a secular modernity."¹⁰⁹

Similarly, scholars point to a struggle over the meaning of purdah by "secularists" and "Islamists" who, they write, both think rural women are just followers, when in fact, the women themselves redefine purdah "to bring it within their reach when they get jobs etc, defining it as a state of mind."¹¹⁰ The WWPs, Oxfam's partners, and so Oxfam itself are together engaged in just such a project.

The importance of 'trust' and 'community/intimacy' in understanding both the meaning and practice of purdah, and the challenges of helping WWP women to participate in public life, are also suggested.

Non-Party Politics

Since the 1990s launched a movement for global civil society advocated by the UN, World Bank, and other international governing bodies, observers in Bangladesh write, NGOs do what 'left' parties used to do under the banner of "non-party politics." That is: they organize public demonstrations for distribution of government land, and for a pro-poor budget. They also sponsor NGO women in villages and increase participation of poor women in public

rallies.¹¹¹ Class-inflected liberation politics, images of masculinity and femininity, and multiple nationalisms have been linked in Bangladesh.

Oxfam is not at the moment doing advocacy work with the WWP, but at least one of the partner groups, the Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), does women's rights work, organizes women from nearby villages in rallies, and, according to one of their staff, bring women from those groups to talk to the groups in the Oxfam villages.

In Naokhali, partner staff reports examples of women scholars are used to inspire the WWP women. One Jamalpur women asserted: "I fought like a liberation war to stop open defecation...Before I wasn't doing anything for the community, but now, no force can stop me."

The energy, courage and enthusiasm of the WWP members I met are signs of the success of the WWP in helping women see themselves as actors in a public sphere. However, non-party politics are not always perceived as such in the fray.¹¹² They can bring national politics into everyday life.

The point isn't only that Oxfam WASH programs might become tools in local politics, though the women have had to struggle against efforts to co-opt their work (see WPP and Musclemen, below). The point is also that the effects of contributing to the empowerment of women in this political context are embedded in, shaped by, and productive within the existing politics. This is not new information. But ethnographic 'participant observation' would help understand what it means in the current environment, for the Oxfam WWP program, and with the current Oxfam partners.

Masculinity, Strong Women in Public and at Home, Work

"If our husbands go out to work, our husbands would earn. This is good for our family. But if we work for WWP, this is good for all."—Noakhali WWP president whose husband doesn't work.

"You don't have a salary, but you are 'doing'....You are not cooking. What am I to do?" —words of husband cooking for his wife, reported by his wife, president of Noakhali WWP

"You are inactive and now I am doing this. If you could earn, I could rest." — wife to her husband, reported by the wife (WWP member)

"The men experience criticism if they are seen doing women's jobs."—SSUS Director

The WWP women talked about how once the villagers understood that what they were doing was for the good of the community, the bad comments stopped. The men in the market in Naokhali said that they had come to understand that what the women were doing was for the community so it was okay, as did two Imam and one teacher/substitute Imam I interviewed. Some WWP women said the comments continue, but not necessarily directed at them.

But according to two women from one WWP I spoke with in Jamalpur who were proud of the way their men assisted them, the Naokhali women said the men in Naokhali were so

often away working, they could not help. Several of the woman in the WWP's I talked to in Naokhali said their husbands were home sick and so could help at home when they went out to do WWP work.

The SSUS director noted that the men experience criticism if they are seen doing women's jobs.

This raises some questions:

Referring to the rapes by Pakistani soldiers in the liberation war of 1971, Nayanika Mookherjee asserts, a "de-masculinization of men, [occurred] through their loss of agency as protectors of the honour of their women, who are conduits for their own honour."¹¹³ Mookherjee's research found renewed effects of the 1971 rapes in 1992, ignited by the trial of a war criminal,¹¹⁴ and argues that the attention to women had a much neglected affect on men, which in term affected women. According to Mookherjee, when the raped women were heralded as 'war heroines' and invited to talk in the city, village men shamed their husbands by saying they were 'living off their wives.' The 'scorn' (*khota*) aligned that kind of 'living off of wives' with prostitution ('selling the women to live').

The loss of masculinity made it difficult for them to act effectively. On the one hand, this precipitated beatings for the women--as a response to other men. On the other hand, Mookherjee saw men refusing to work or to take payment from others as a result. What was happening, she concluded, is that the men who stopped working were coping by accessing a different masculinity: based on an honorable but passive, non-dependent, self-reliant, non-violent, moral self.¹¹⁵ Mookherjee also notes wives out of control of husbands blamed on the existence of a woman Prime Minister.

Along with rationales that they are contributing to the well being of the community, thus engaging local ethics to legitimate their actions, the WWP women expressed subtle means of challenging their husbands through their husbands' ability to care for their family. So one woman reported she tells her sick husband, in the translator's words: "[You did not have hygiene.] You are inactive and now I am doing this. If you could earn, I could rest."

Earlier Oxfam research reports some men say: aside from a few who help collect water now that it is close to their homes, helping women save time so they have more time to cook, there has been little change in roles.¹¹⁶ This finding is a clue and points to the difficulty in assessing the kinds of affects or changes beyond the identified role-based activities that might be going on in relationships between men and women around the work of the WWP, by questioning through translators in public and time-limited situations.

What men and children say (see also Children's Group box and Adolescent box):

"If Allah wishes the girls to do it, they will do it.

Answering the question about 'dignity'/'covering' asked by the engineer, the men in one village in Jamalpur said they hadn't given much thought to how difficult it was for the women to protect their 'dignity'/'covering.' In some cases though, people had put bags up around the well and in the water area they have built some walls so people could not see from the road. They said that they would do their best using straw and other things to help.

Women in one WWP reported that they have spoken to their husbands many times about helping. They don't have time to help, but they try to give advice. One woman in Naokhali

said her husband counseled her: “if you go here, you will get one kind of experience, if you go there, you will get another.”

When I asked a group whose life was harder, men’s or women’s one answered (and no contradiction was translated), that women’s lives were harder.

Interviewer: What can you do to make their lives easier?

About 9 men together: Help them.

One man joking: “you think your job is harder, I think my job is harder.”

Interviewer: What do you do if the food isn’t ready when you get home?

About 9 men speak and the interpreter says, they say: Sit down and rest first until the food is ready.

The youngsters in the children’s group mostly said men’s jobs were harder, but all the girls but one said they would rather be a boy than a girl because boys can make money. The girls in the children’s group also said that when they get home from school they help with cooking, cleaning latrines and getting water. Their brothers will help if asked, but in the time it takes to ask, the task could be done.

From this, it seems:

Women (with Oxfam and partner agencies) are redefining purdah.

“Non-Party politics” nevertheless draw women into a world of party politics and a vocabulary of words and images with political histories and associations through which they begin to frame their own desires and experiences.

Husbands, brothers, and sons are not only a potential obstacle to the WWP or a target for program goals. They are also subject to the affects of WWP activities without the support of the agencies or a group.

Given the tension between ‘musclemen’ and the work of the WWP and also the suggestion of sick or unemployed men, links between the WWP as a kind of ‘job’ (with status benefits, small material benefits, and high visibility and ties to outsiders), affects on men in the labor market might be worth exploration. (See box on Naokhali family with daughter in WWP.)

The women engage a positive community ethic put also draw from the lexicon of community sanction and role pressure to gain the ability to reframe their own roles.

The question for capacity building on gender issues in Oxfam Bangladesh

1. How to take advantage of the diverse experience and perspectives of the staff on gender to improve Oxfam's understanding of/engagement in the complex conversation there, necessary for long term planning?
2. How to help the staff integrate their theoretical knowledge and knowledge of the history, current politics and government structure in responding to the concerns of the WWP members day to day, and in their upcoming task of linking the WWP into existing and emerging government structures. Including interrogating possible connections between issues separated by units in the Oxfam organizational structure. Is there a place for the women's ministry (see 'How Oxfam works with Government' section below)?
3. How do the WWP activities affect their husbands' relationships with other men? What different ideas of masculinity do men and women in the target areas hold? How do these different ways of being men change as women's roles change? Affect their ability to function in the labor market? To respond to threats? To get support from others?

Additional Questions about affects of changes in women's roles in Bangladesh:

1. In the past women bathed when the men were not at home. They would gather at someone's house. Now they go to the location of the cubicle in some areas often located inside another family's compound. How has this changed their social lives?
2. How many and who actually use the cubicles on a regular basis?
3. The women may use their husbands' sense of masculinity to motivate him or get permission. What are the women's notion of masculinity and femininity? What are they seeking from their husbands and community and what does that mean for what they want from the WWP?
4. Does substituting store-bought materials purchased by women and using labor hired by women miss a chance to build on things some men were already doing to help women or bring hygienic practice in a way difficult to sustain once the outside funds disappear?
5. How are the WWP women reinventing purdah and how/who are the players in that process between the Oxfam, Oxfam partners, Imam, husbands, women and the other groups?

How Oxfam Bangladesh works with the government and the counterparts

Girls can study to level 12 for free, but boys cannot. This is the achievement from international pressure (UNDP and World Bank) and also from the women [the Prime Minister and the 3 others in the upper levels of government].—*Oxfam engineer*

"There are 4 women in major national positions including the Prime Minister, but they are not making decisions on their own. All the men all around them are taking the decisions—influencing them." — *the same Oxfam engineer*

The Bangladeshi Government has no legislative barrier in the way of promoting gender equity in the sphere of social, political, and economic activities. There are women in the top posts in government, including the Prime Minister. The constitution gives guarantee of equal rights to women.¹¹⁷ A separate ministry on women's affairs was established in 1978. A Local Consultative Group on Women and Gender Equality (LCG WAGE) report on mainstreaming gender recommended Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs withdraw from project management and instead facilitate, oversee, monitor gender mainstreaming across ministries.¹¹⁸

In the elections of 2008 more than 50% of voters were women. In 2009 the Awami League (AL) came into office with election promises that included "restoring women's rights to inheritance through legal reform in family laws and to place women in key governance positions by enforcing the reservation of seats for women in Parliament, local government, and all levels of government service." Among policy efforts in particular sectors, the government created a National Policy for Advancement of Women in 2008, and a National Action Plan (which was prepared in response to the Beijing Platform for Action), and Bangladesh's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which is now the main document for Bangladesh's national development, incorporated sections to ensure women's participation in social and economic life.¹¹⁹

USAID says the Awami League is pushing for the implementation of the National Women's Development Policy, meant to "establish gender equality at all levels of national life, and help to ensure the economic and political empowerment of women."¹²⁰ A Local Government Law has reserved seats for women to be directly elected. The government has also promoted women to the level of Secretary in ministries (the highest civil administrative position), including that of Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs. Also appointed are women Members of Parliament (MPs) as chairs and members of important Parliamentary Standing Committees. New identity cards are intended to give women a new identity, not as a daughter or wife (only), but as individual citizens who are part of a larger society.¹²¹

The Ministry of Rural Development manages a National Sanitation task force that includes several ministries and NGOs. It is the lead government agency for WASH, with a goal set in 2008 for safe water for all in Bangladesh in rural areas by 2013. A major natural disaster negatively affected accomplishments reported in 2009.

The government in rural areas comprises four tiers, Gram Sarkar, Union Parishad, Upazilla Parishad and Zilla Parishad. (In the urban areas they are Pourashavas and City Corporations). Each level has a sanitation Task force. The Oxfam 'Linking and Learning' forum in Dhaka was directed at the national and lower levels. (Attendance at the forum was smaller than hoped because there were 2 other WASH conferences in town on the same day).

In an interview at the Dhaka Linking and Learning forum, the Superintendent of Engineers from the national DPHE said his department doesn't consider 'women's issues,' except perhaps for a seminar or something like that. "The Women's Ministry takes care of women's things." But both he and DPHE representative from the Union/district government level asserted the government's strong commitment to WASH issues, and interest in the WWP, a completely unique idea for them. In interview, the Union/district DPHE, for the Naokhali area who already had a working relationship with local partners and Oxfam staff, said he would be working with them to include the WWP in the department's activities.

The extra problem for the chars is that, as it is a newly settled area without formal administration by the government, and no services yet, even the most basic entitlements.

Here as in Cambodia, the official position is full participation of women is necessary for development.¹²² But representation does not necessarily translate to more voice.¹²³ Earlier acts had set quotas for women's participation in local government; an act passed in 1997 set out a way to make it happen: direct election of women to reserved seats in *Union Parishads* (UPs). Three seats are reserved for women in each Union Parishad. The basic difference from the previous amendment is that women candidates should be elected by direct election with women voting (Sultana, 2000).¹²⁴ The Unions are divided into 9 wards. Each had has 9 members (men or women), and women can stand for election there. But these 9 are divided into 3, with an additional woman responsible for each group of 3.¹²⁵

Some of the staff see linking to that position as a place to institutionalize the WWP in the future. Others suggest the women representatives there are reduced to assistants of the men responsible for each ward. This reflects what observers say is ongoing confusion of their roles and the challenge to be effective of newly added female officials overall.¹²⁶

The lead officer on the WSI project is more circumspect about the path that will emerge, but notes that at the Dhaka forum the DPHE from the Rural Development Department, national level, said they would collaborate with the WWP. He wanted to have solid results to show officials before beginning efforts to link with government. Now, he reported, they have said they can do hardware and the WWP can do software. He saw this assurance as a major accomplishment. "If you can convert the government people you can do anything."

At the District and Other levels

While the official recognition of the WWP came at the Dhaka forum, the Union/District office DPHE interviewed, the sub-district officer, the Oxfam staff, and the partner agency SSUS were all well acquainted and have been cooperating for a long time (though not necessarily on the WWP). The DPHE said office does not have a link to the Women's Ministry offices. They do attend to hard core poor, and to women-headed households. Site selection for sites has considered women's needs and has seen no conflict with satisfying men's needs.

The DPHE said his department requires upper levels input to take decisions on how to link up with the WWP, but he has indicated he is impressed with the idea and will bring it to the upper levels of government. This level, he said, can help motivate the villagers, for example, with 'water days' and 'sanitation campaigns', 'courtyard sessions' that provide technical ideas and focus on women.

Oxfam partners say, there are now some funds available but no one asks for it, it may not be used. The representative from the Dhaka Mission, the Jamalpur partner reported that her agency assembles village women to protest in front of the government offices if the request for some of that money is turned down, though this has not yet occurred with Oxfam WWPs.

Is there a role for the Ministry of Women and Children's affairs?

At the Village level

Political Parties, Oxfam Partners, Police and the local “Musclemen”

"We are 11 people moving together. They are afraid of us. Now they invite us to sit. They are supposed to ask the government representative, but they ask us." –*WWP member Naokhali*

“Sometime SSUS took help from some members of illegal armed forces, and added them to the distribution list. We kept harmless relation with the illegal armed forces.”—*SSUS staff*

A: “It is like we are occupied...The jobs for the boys and men are hard to find. In Naokhali, they cut earth or do agriculture or fish. If they don’t have a job, sometimes they get involved in illegal things like drugs. When they don’t have a job, there are problems in the family. Fighting, maybe knifing the wife because they cannot feed the family. When they join illegal teams, then there can be trouble. The wife wants the husband to do good. The husband does bad. But sometimes the wife also joins with the bad ones. We cannot do anything. We are almost occupied by them. They have attacked the Imam and beaten him. Everybody is in danger.”

Q: When the men go to work, are women in more danger?

A: We have some problems. Not all, but some marriageable girls cannot be left alone.”

—*Madrassa teacher, substituting for absent Imam, interviewed inside the SSUS dorm/office in his village.*

The problem in the Naokhali area is that because it is a relatively new ‘char’ (newly inhabited land), there is no administrative structure for governing, so the government is not in control. The ‘musclemen’ try to extract money from the local people. For 6 villages, there is only one police station and they cannot control the outlaws, said the Madrassa teacher quoted above.

According to the Oxfam staff responsible for the area, however, if the ‘musclemen’ are aware of the good intentions of a program, they do not interfere because they also are interested in taking care of the people. The partner group SSUS has a good relationship with them.

One group in Mohammedpur Gaam, Naokhali explained how they heard of an event that happened in another village. This was the story told by a WWP at the Dhaka forum. There were 28 houses in one area. The women’s group was going to put up a bathing corner. They bought the materials but when the men saw the materials they thought it was too much. They didn’t know it would be so big. ‘If the women are doing such a big, nice thing, why should they put it here and not in my part?’ They put a latrine in that place first. There was a widow’s house nearby. The people complaining destroyed the widow’s house. She went to the police and the police came and said this work is good for the community. The police made the people who destroyed the house rebuild it. Now they are all using it.

About their own work, the group who told related that story said "We are 11 people moving together. They are afraid of us. Now they invite us to sit. They are supposed to ask the government representative, but they ask us."

This is a success story for the WWP in terms of the immediate problem of getting hygiene and water-related tasks done. But with the description of the problems from SSUS and the teacher/Imam substitute quoted above, and the suggestion from some women that criticism still occurs, it also suggests that the WWP are not separate from the other power politics going on in the village and competing lines of authority--important for the broader issues of gender and the effect of the WWP.

A Community Health Volunteer (CHV), a WWP member and an SSUS program manager reported similar problems. One SSUS staff offered the following list of obstacles:

- 1) In organizing WWP obstacles from their family.
- 2) In developing distribution lists of any material support, social elites and illegal armed forces created trouble and obstacles.
- 3) Members have dropped out of WWP and child group members due to migration and pressure of illegal armed forces.
- 4) A few madrasa teachers created obstacles regarding working with female students in the madrasa.

To make the WWPs' job easier, SSUS management took initiative to talk with the family members, madrasa teachers, and members of illegal armed forces.

One SSUS staff said: "Sometime SSUS took help from some members of illegal armed forces, and added them to the distribution list. We kept harmless relation with the illegal armed forces."

Oxfam Bangladesh's Local Partners

In Jamalpur and Naokhali, at first, there were no female community mobilizers (staff of the partner agencies working in the village). In both areas, these are often people who come from the region. In some cases they stay in the villages where they work. Oxfam staff members say the partner organizations have a very strong daily presence in the villages.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission was established in 1958. They work in health (WASH issues in the Oxfam village I visited), education, social justice and human rights, and livelihood (credit). Their goal is to get access to water and sanitation for the poor. The staff member I rode with to the village spoke from the perspective of 'women's rights' and her family's memory of the liberation war.

She says the community people did not know where to display their demands when their organization first arrived in the area. The government allocates money to the local government, but doesn't always distribute it. "Water is a basic rights for a human. The government must give them." They organize workshops or human chain type protests before elections to put pressure on the government offices that hold the funds. For this they invite men and women from rural villages, paying their way to go. They have done this in the Jamalpur region, but not yet in Oxfam villages.

They meet with the WWP every month (or when the Dhaka Mission calls the WWP) to discuss with them. At those meetings they talk about WASH issues. They also talk about this kind of advocacy and groups from other villages where they have done advocacy might come and talk to them.

In Naokhali, the director of SUSS said that they have been working against early marriage, polygamy and dowry since their founding in 1970 and have seen significant changes in early marriage. Dowry and polygamy are still problems, especially with the poor. He describes many of the same changes the Oxfam staff described they saw, in some places since the WWP began, coming slowly since microcredit began in the year 2000. But, he says, giving the WWP money to use on their own is a completely new idea and he is very proud of the women.

The dream of the Director of SSUS would be that Oxfam would support the WWP for 5 to 10 more years. He says then the WWP will grow the way this organization did and take a license from the government.

Trust was raised by Oxfam staff, SSUS, and DAM as all-important and slow to build.

The WWP and the VDC

“The men [in the VDC] want to control the money. They feel disempowered. If the women ask them, they feel they have their power again. It is a strategy.”—*Oxfam engineer*

“[This WWP] doesn’t ask permission [of the VDC]. But when the VDC made a decision on t-wells, they asked the WWP.”—*WWP member in Naokhali*

“Imam don’t like [the WWP]. They prefer us to be in the household. They say what is being done is good, but why women?”—*WWP member Naokhali*

“The women should work for the women. The men should work for the men.”—*three different Imam, Naokhali*

In both Jamalpur and Naokhali, the WWPs said that the actual tasks of purchasing materials and going to the bank they did on their own. They also said they work together with the VDC. This seems to mean different things from site to site, though there can easily be tension between the VDC and the WWP, since only the WWP has funded.

The WWP and the VDC in Jamalpur: Description by DAM staff and WWP members, interpreted by and additional explanation by Oxfam staff:

First the partner agency, Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), called a community-led total sanitation meeting (CLTS). They explained roles to the community, divided the village in 5 clusters, and, for the WWP, picked 2 women from each cluster. The members should not be related (eating from the same pot), at least two should be able to write their own names, and age 16-45. They get executive committee through an election process. The women volunteer to stand for election.

At the first meeting for one village in Jamalpur, local leaders, the village elders and a total of about 50 people were present. In the second meeting they chose both the VDC and the WWP. The elders did the choosing. The woman chosen to be president had education to level 7, so everyone decided she could be the leader. The VDC has 9 members, 4 are women and they include 1 Imam and 1 teacher. They have no official role with the WWP and no power to say no to the WWP and are a completely different WASH project, but I was told that in practice they monitor and guide the WWP.

The women said they take their proposal to the VDC and, when they get approval, they start their project. Describing the process, the WWP and the CHV said the VDC and the WWP have to share. If the VDC denies their idea, they have to convince them. For example, when they proposed the bathing corner, the Imam on the VDC said the Imam needed a bathing corner. The women convinced them by saying the women needed it more.

The CHV explained how they decided where to put the bathing corner. The VDC, the WWP, and the CHV selected a place in the middle of the cluster of houses, thinking of the number of women, and then calling the project people in the organization to see if it is possible. (While we were talking a man called from the back that they didn't really need bathing corners. Another, possibly someone on the VDC said, if something can't be done now, since there are special requirements like a minimum amount of space needed, then [it is] put it on a list to do later.)

The VDC does not have a budget, but the WWP does. A staff member in the Dhaka office noted this as a site of tension too: the VDC was "ashamed." This point referred to the men dominating the VDC.

The VDC members cannot get benefits, but the WWP members can if they are poor, the Dhakah Asani Mission (SEWSI) representative said. "Poor" means "work one day, eat one day." "Very poor" means don't work everyday and maybe don't eat everyday."

In this village, when the WWP first proposed a bathing cubicle, the Imam on the VDC said that the Imam should receive one first. The WWP member who fought "like a liberation war" (above) said they had to convince the VDC that women needed it more.

One Oxfam staff interpreted seeking approval from the VDC as a strategy (similar to the strategy the women use when their husbands are angry). "The men want to control the money. They feel disempowered. If the women ask them, they feel they have their power again. It is a strategy."

Is it the men or the men and the women in the VDC who feel "ashamed" for their committee's lack of money? (gender/money=power axis?)

Is the WWP a Burden on Women?

"[Doing the work of the WWP] is easier when the husbands are gone."
—*WWP president in Naakhali where husbands are home 1 week, gone 3 weeks for work.*

"It is not just the 2 of us in the household, so the other people who live there could also help. So now we are habituated."

—husband of WWP president, Jamalpur

“Women’s job is harder....If no one is there to help them [when the men are gone] it can be a problem.” *Men in a group of men at tea stall, Naokhali.*

You think your job is harder. I think my job is harder.” *Man joking in same group of men as above tea stall, Naokhali in response to my question “Whose job is harder, men’s or women’s?”*

“Without taking responsibility, it was not possible to develop the village. She said also that to do this work for the poor, providing latrines, T wells, platforms, bathing corners. I can work for these things and I feel peace.”—*WWP member in her 20s, 2 children, Jamalpur*

“Why are you doing this? You are not getting anything and you are not getting your housework done.” *WWP member, reporting on the criticism of others. She said, to come to our meeting she had to get up early to prepare both breakfast and lunch. Her 12-year old daughter would have to take her lunch by herself.*

“You will get benefit when you die.” —Partner organization to WWP member, reported by WWP member in a group including staff of partner organization.

The neighbors ask us for things....[I can see] more interest in my daughter.--mother and father of WWP member (see Naokhali family box).

The Oxfam staff and partners stand strongly behind the idea of just women because if it was a more equal number of men and women, as one of the government officials at the Dhaka forum suggested it should be, the men would dominate.

Benefits, Corruption/Distribution of Wealth

The VDC members cannot get benefits, but the WWP members can if they are poor, the Dhakah Asani Mission (SEWSI) representative in Jamalpur said. “Poor” means “work one day, eat one day.” “Very poor” means don’t work everyday and maybe don’t eat everyday.”

In Jamalpur, one older woman addressed herself to the three women in the woman’s group, saying “since the program is not covering everyone, when you continue, please consider us.” I was told, only 1 person on the WWP in this village didn’t get any benefit (3 poor and 8 ultra poor received some benefit, plants, platform, latrine).

Others standing around as we talked were saying what they needed. Others were explaining that there was no money. The Oxfam staff/interpreter said that we are not the government.

The CHV said they need to extend the project; the rich can build for the poor.

One father and mother in Naokhali and several WWP members noted that now people come to them asking for things instead of “community mobilizers” because they see important people coming to visit them. The father said he sees a change in interest to marry his divorced daughter, a WWP member.

One WWP said people still criticize them. Those who receive a latrine or t-well don't criticize or stop criticizing.

A man in Jamalpur said, women get more time to do their household work, so mostly the women benefit. Prodded to think of benefits to all, one man said, "health."

The WWP in Sanondabari Village, Jamalpur said when they asked the project people for some kind of incentive, the local organization said "you will get benefit when you die." (Likely a reference to heavenly reward for moral behavior.)

Pressures

Sometimes if they cannot get the food cooked in time their husband gets angry. Sometimes they do it later. Sometimes they take some food from a neighbor. [She smiled and used a gesture to show the secret handing over of a plate of food.]

At first, also, people criticized them saying that they were trying to be leaders.

But one man (Jamalpur) said at that point, "if they can do something, we accept them as leader."

A CHV later said that the women at first had to be motivated to do the cleaning and fixing, but now they see the benefit so it is not a burden. She added, the job of cleaning is a woman's job. You can't depend on the men to do it.

Participation in the WWP may reduce pressure to 'marry off' a young woman or increase interest in her as marriage partner.

An Economy of Time, Energy: Control, but also....

Husband of wife hidden in the house: "She could [join the WWP] if she has time."

Interviewer: Does she have time?

Husband: "No she is too busy."

The Oxfam staff indicates that it is important to make appointments with the women or it is difficult for them to come to a meeting.

Asked in Jamalpur if men could do this work the answer was always, the men have not been asked, and they are busy going out of the village to work.

In Jamalpur, however, men's schedules are apparently more flexible than in Naokhali and the women report that together they find a way to habituate to new demands on the women's time (and presence). (See box on joint family).

In Naokhali, one woman, asked about the participation of men in the kind of work the WWP do said, "The men cannot give the time. Men are moving around so they don't have time to share information, but we are home. We can visit each other and give ideas for our children's health. She asks for more services and says: "Please, we give our labor."

Women said, when they go out to work for the WWP someone else has to stay home. One woman quoted above said her husband cooks and stays home, but it's a good thing the program is stopping because her husband says she would have to stop. One woman said her father-in-law took care of her son when she went on a visit to Naokhali district, and that her mother-in-law also helps and gives her permission.

Another says she has neither a mother, nor mother-in-law, only a nuclear family so there is no one else to do the work if she goes out. One man pointed out this situation as most difficult for women too.

The husband of one in Jamalpur said that, in their compound, there are many people living, not just 2, so at first they had a problem of who would care for the domestic animals when his wife went to work, but then they sorted it out and got used to the new distribution of chores.

One WWP president in Naokhali who seemed to have much support from her group but also more time because her husband stayed home, said, right now it is harvest time. Everyone is busy. To do the banking and things like that, she goes alone if people are busy.

Another WWP we met whose president also seemed to have a lot of support from her group also seemed to be well connected, and/or better educated.

The question here, as it became clear in Cambodia: What are the kinds of issues hidden under the explanation 'too busy' since in most cases, there are many people living together and sharing tasks. I am not arguing that women should NOT be given relief of these burdens. I am suggesting the question of 'time' is less a question of who has more or less than it is, in addition to 'control,' about the distribution of energy, recognition, mobility (including negotiating purdah), and perceived value of the activity.

Sentiment and Sustainability

In these villages I passed at least one 'structure' made out of local natural materials near a pond with very little water in it, not used in the dry season. People have also used other local materials and built walls to protect the women in their household from view of people on the street. We visited one household near an Oxfam-donated t-well where they had built a wall, and helped build a path for a Hindu family to be able to access the t-well without disturbing their property. Some people mention having hung bags and built walls for women's privacy before the WWP.

Pros of the new bathing corners are that women can hire people to build them and buy materials thus having the experience and accomplishments for themselves. Placed near the t-wells they are convenient. They likely last longer than the natural materials.

Possible Cons of the new bathing corners are that they may be replacing inexpensive structures with less sustainable ones and missing an opportunity to encourage some already-existing supportive activities of the men. See 'additional questions' box above.

Decision-Making, Leadership

“Men and women have to work together. If we differ it will be conflict.”—WWP member interviewed at Dhaka Forum

“If one is angry the other should be calm.”—everybody explaining how to keep the peace.

“In the past they couldn’t go out. Now they ask permission and they can go.”—SSUS director

“If the husband is out of the village for 3 weeks home once a month, they are free to do.”—SSUS director

The Oxfam midterm report asserted that in Jamalpur the men paid more attention to women’s opinions regarding WASH than the men in Naokhali. The Oxfam presentation at the Dhaka forum provides a chart of a change reported by women in decision-making. The chart shows a change from 52% of decisions made by “husbands” and “self” and 26% of decisions by “self” alone, and 22% by the “husband” alone, to 90% by “self” and 10% by “husband.”

The questions raised are: People live in households with many people. How do the others influence decisions? Is the change attributable to a change in attitude or habit or to other factors like the time-bound absence of husbands? And most important, depending on the kind of decision, is it always a positive move from joint decision-making to “self” decision-making?

All of the women talked about the same kind of strategy used by the Cambodian women to have an influence in decision-making in their homes and as part of their strategy to get necessary permissions: if he gets angry, the women act submissive. When the anger passes, they talk and explain. (See this strategy as WWP work with VDC, above).

Decision-making within women’s groups; age and inter-generational politics:

“She is young. She can do more. She can talk. We can carry 40 cases. She can carry 120.” -- *One older WWP member explaining why the WWP president is one of the younger women.*

“She is just married. She is too busy to do this job.”—*WWP member about her daughter-in-law*

“She has no children, so she can give more time, and her father is in Chittagong, so she learned to speak English and bought land.”—*about Naokhali WWP president, explaining why she was chosen to be president*

“In our country if we give permission for the daughter in-law, then they can go [out of the house, for example to join a WWP]. My daughter-in-law is very new. She has some jobs to do at home, but I m old. I can go.”—*mother-in-law in a household with no one in the WWP.*

“I have no husband but my sons, grandsons and granddaughters made a struggle. They said, ‘You are old. What knowledge do you get? Why do you need it? [She comes herself because her daughter is married off already and her daughter-in-law is new, and so, very busy.]—older WWP member, Naokhali

In Naokhali one group said “We come from different parts. We say we need this, we need that. We tell the president and the president makes a proposal.”

Another group said they walk around the village, looking, and then talk about what they saw, and decide.

Another group in Naokhali brought out a giant drawing of a “problem tree” one of their agency advisors had helped them create with problems of the village and solutions available as leaves.

Note: In discussion with the Oxfam/staff in Naokhali about the women’s difficult journey to convince their husbands/men that hygiene is important, the question was raised, why not train the husbands at the same time (might also train Imam)? Would giving them minimal training help the women they don’t have to do that first bit of convincing on their own, since once they accomplish it, it seems the men accept them?

Joint family compound, WWP president, Jamalpur WWP

One of the three women we were talking to from the WWP got a platform for a well. Another, the president of the WWP said the bathing platform was on the land of the joint family she was part of. We went to see that bathing corner. It was deep inside their family compound, so when other women wanted to use it, they had to come inside the family compound. Putting it by the road would have been a different kind of problem (privacy). Here, it was near the t-well.

The husband, his sister who lives in a compound nearby, and the wife, were present, among many other neighbors.

Her husband said, he is happy now that he can see his wife can do some good work. But when his wife goes out, the problem is the domestic animals, because he works in a tailor shop during the day.

I asked how do they solve that problem? First he said he is cooperating to do it. Then he answered, actually, it is not just the 2 of them in the household, so the other people who live there could also help. So now they are habituated.

The WWP member said sometimes the rice isn't finished in time for lunch because of a meeting. Then she takes some cooked rice from a neighbor or her "mother" and uses the rice she is cooking for later.

The husband's sister said, "What they learn, they can transfer to the children. This is knowledge for the future. Their children will do something good for the community, "When they will be like me and do."

The husband's sister said: "All rights come from women...Every decision in the household comes from women." Already women in the village have asked her to compete for [a kind of public position].

When she needs advice or assistance with a problem, she goes to her husband's elder brother. When the wife needs advice, she also goes to her husband's elder brother (as does the husband).

Adolescent groups: Menstruation Education Re-making Relationships

Some of the groups in Naokhali started adolescent groups with teenage girls. They give them menstrual pads (cloth) to use and teach them how to clean them properly.

They say that because the young girls are not close to their mothers, they don't know about menstruation. When they were young they were not close with their own mothers. They were close with their sister-in-law or their girl friends or maybe grandmother. They did not dare speak directly to their mothers.

Interviewer: So why did you want to change that?

Answer: As there was not a good direct link, they suffer from diseases. They don't want the girls to suffer for that.

Interviewer: Do their mothers come to the groups?

Answer: No, but they can council their mothers. The WWP meets with the mother first. No one ever said no. At the beginning the mothers asked, why are you taking my daughter, but after, it was okay.

There are two issues. One is knowledge about menstruation that this group is well addressed to solve. The second is about how the women feel about relationships with their own mothers, about the dynamics between mothers, daughters, grandmothers, and daughters-in-law. The question is how can these groups address the stated desire to improve mother-daughter relations this way? Consider inviting/including their mothers at least a few times?

Effect of WWP on Family with daughter in the WWP: Naokhali

This family has a bathing corner in their compound. There are 11 people living there. A couple in their 50s or 60s, 3 of their 6 daughters, 3 sons, 1 daughter-in-law, and 2 grandsons. Their sons are all working or studying in Dhaka (2 at a quilt factory). The husband of the daughter-in-law comes twice a month. They had “married off” 4 of their daughters, but recently brought one, the 19-year-old who is on the WWP, back to their house. Her husband died. She only had one child and no father-in-law, and was living in an eroded house. For these reasons she didn’t have to stay there, so they brought her back. Her father said that he can tell people’s interest in marrying her has increased since she began attending meetings. In addition, her mother added, she keeps herself neat and clean.¹²⁷

There are also changes for the household. The grandsons know how to use latrines. People respected them before, but now they respect them more. For example, people come to the house [people from Oxfam]. People can see that. The villagers are watching, so they feel they are respected. The villagers come now too. We have bathing cubicles. The villagers come and ask, can we have something too. They say, this doesn’t cause them to feel pressure since they don’t have any power to do anything because they just refer them to the Oxfam partner ‘community mobilizer.’ Those other villagers don’t feel jealous because they can also use the bathing cubicle.

They don’t worry about her because she is not alone. It is an opportunity for all the girls. (Their daughter-in-law once worked as a CHV).

When her husband went to help at evening prayers, we talked to the middle-aged mother of the WWP member:

The mother of this household remembers her life as a young woman during the Pakistan time. Purdah was very strong. You could not see us.

Asked about how she feels about the less strict rules today, she said, in the interpreter’s words: “I am old enough. I get ready for death...but nowadays the girls want freedom.” She and her family are coping with the present environment. It is changing so they cope. She doesn’t mind because everybody is doing the same thing.

Her husband makes all the decisions. The Oxfam staff says, “If he didn’t permit it, we would not be there.”

Asked what kinds of changes she would like to see in her society, she says first, “My son to earn more money; my husband to build a building.” Then she said, “I am from Pakistan time. We aren’t used to thinking about things like that.”

Would she like her daughters to become leaders? “If my daughter can be happy, that is good.....When her daughter goes with the WWP group, it is only women. She likes it. If it was male and female, (my/her?) husband wouldn’t let her go.”

Would/Should this work continue if Oxfam closes the project?

One WWP in Shohagchondhury said they want the WWP to continue. They already have a bank account, so the members can maybe contribute to help the poor.

A WWP in Naokhali put 20 taka a month in the bank. They plan to continue.

One young woman in the first Jamalpur WWP says, if there is nothing to implement, they won't continue. Maybe they would meet once in a while, but not regularly.

One WWP member said her husband would only let her do it now because he knows the project would end in December.

The outspoken woman from Sanondabari village, also in Jamalpur said:

"I fought like a liberation war to stop open defecation...Before I wasn't doing anything for the community, but now, no force can stop me."

The SSUS Director thinks if the Naokhali groups continue to get support for 5-10 more years they will grow the way his organization did and take a license from the government as a community based organization.

Some Oxfam staff are concerned that the groups haven't been going on long enough to be able to continue on their own.

The teacher/Imam substitute said that there is money from the outside the country, so the WWP could do this. If there are no more donations, there is no other resource. He and the other 2 Imam I spoke with said, "women should work for women; men should work for men."

Training as Learning, Training as Intervention in Households, and Choice of Project

"The difference between microcredit and the WWP is different objectives. Microcredit didn't empower the women to decide on their own. They want to buy a cow, we give money to do it and the president says, 'yes' buy a cow....[With the WWP] we give training, and transferred the money to their account."—*SSUS director*

"The difficult thing for the WWP was to see the problems."—*SSUS project coordinator*

"During the training it was new. We learned to see the problems....Some understood more quickly. Those with education understood early. Those who have no education understood by their heart, not by sense, so showed them at a practical level. Showed them by taking them to the field."—*President of WWP, Naokhali*

"We were asking, asking. We have no education, so our brain is less. By doing the work we began to understand. Previously, we didn't know where the illness came from. We thought bad spirits. But now we know it is uncleanliness and due to the water. [Now when they go out to the people who have the same ideas they use to have] they use the same methods. Show them how to keep clean and say next time we come back to visit, we should not see it like this....At the beginning, people

became angry. They said, 'It is our house. We can do it on our own time.'—2 older women, WWP members, Naokhali

"The...Madrassa was very critical because we had a training there (in the meeting room near the Madrassa). They said you are coming here to show your face to men. But then they came and listened to the meeting and said it was okay."—Naokhali WWP

The project coordinator at SSUS said the difficult thing for the WWP was to see the problems and solutions. The bathing problem in the dry season was easy for them to see, he said. It is obvious. But the other problems they don't see. The Oxfam staff adds, "they are inside the problem but they don't see it. For example, they don't know that you can get gynecological problems from unhygienic menstrual materials. They follow what their mothers teach them."

The WWPs were trained twice, once at the beginning, for 2 days and then a refresher training. They studied basic WASH concepts, basic gender in WASH, and financial management. The trainings were carried out by the Project Coordinator, the Public health promoter of the project, the Finance officer, and the Community mobilizer. SSUS says at first the women didn't see the problems they were 'inside of them'. They had to be taught to identify gendered WASH problems and solutions (2 days). One WWP showed me the "problem tree" they then used (with assistance) to write down the problems they saw in their village and solutions they could use. In the 'Financial management' training (2 days a group exercise taught keeping accounts. All members got the same training.

SSUS reported that the main topics were: 1) What is WWP and why WWP 2) What is total sanitation and how can it be achieved. 3) Gender issues in Bangladesh especially in char area and what is the relation between gender, sanitation and poverty. 4) What is hygiene practice and what is the role of the women in enhancing hygiene practice in family and society. About 1 hour was spent on menstruation and modesty issues 5) Women in family, disaster management and environment preservation. 6) Women's health hazards and the role of WWP. 7) What is monitoring and the process of monitoring?

In the two-day-long 'Financial management' training topics were 1) What is a WASH project and how to implement a project. 2) How to keep account of project 3) How to maintain a bank account. 4) How to make a financial statement. 5) How to keep registers.

Some of the issues covered were: 1) Personal experiences of women health hazards, 2) Discussion of women, freedom and what they can achieve, with examples of many women scholars. 3) Women's rights in the religious and social point of view.

The community mobilizers received 10 days of foundation training and 3 days of refresher training and 3 days on child to child campaign.

Oxfam staff reports they did not initially discuss menstrual hygiene, but the community mobilizers in Naokhali brought it up. The women in that area are very vulnerable for lack of water for bathing, and the smell and other hygiene difficulties at this time of the month, especially, was making them uncomfortable with their husbands.

The Jamalpur women identified the need for a separate chamber for changing. When 2 women from Jamalpur WWPs went to visit the Naokhali WWPs and 2 from Naokhali went to

Jamalpur, they got ideas from each other. Naokhali women decided to work with adolescents on menstrual hygiene. Oxfam staff said that the different conditions of each village influenced the possible choices for projects.

The Problem Tree: Activity to Identify Village Problems. WWP drawing observed in Naokhali

Branches:

1. dry season bathing and public bathing
2. Menstrual management
3. Girls no friendly relations with mothers, so no knowledge about menstruation
4. No hand-washing facilities
5. Women and girls collect water but wells are beside the road with men passing.

Root of tree:

1. bathing cubicles,
2. menstrual things,
3. establish friendly relations mothers-daughters,
4. Tap to pitcher for hand-washing,
5. Facilities for women

Hindu women in a Moslem area¹²⁸

While the two project areas are usually talked about as all Moslem, near the SSUS offices a small Hindu temple is being built.

We heard of two Hindu families in the villages we visited and entered the home of one.

It was difficult to have a very productive conversation with them because we were strangers and, as they had never been approached in this context before, were focused on finding a way to gain access to some kind of benefit.

They mentioned some kind of discrimination because they are not Moslem vis a vis benefits, but the Oxfam staff thought they were possibly just inventing in an effort to get benefits.

They said Hindu women had no special needs, but since the WWP women did not “see” any special needs at the beginning of the project either, this does not tell us much.

We heard of a second Hindu family at the next house. In that house, the women (Moslem) were not allowed to come out to talk to us. We talked to them through the doorway.

That family had built a wall to protect the women from the regard of men coming to the public well. They said they also built a path for a Hindu family who lived behind them to come to the well without walking through their fields and damaging their crops.

The Hindu women may have some hygiene and ‘purity’ related WASH needs. Their situation and that of any other ‘minorities’ represented in the area, if there are any, are not yet factored into the project.

Problems Reported by Bangladesh WWPs and Partners

Problems Reported by Bangladesh WWPs

- In several groups women said they had to drop out of the group, either because they moved, or their husbands didn't want them to participate. This meant it took a longer time for at least one group to start working well together. SSUS adds, pressure from illegal armed forces. An example in what seemed like a stable group, in Shohagchondhury, Naokhali: They had to replace the secretary.
- Pressure from political parties and local 'musclemen' and some violence.
- Resistance from some teachers of the Madrasa regarding having girls in class
- Comments from people that this was not the work of women.
- Imam say, women should work for women, men for men.
- My Husband says I can do this job only because it will stop soon.
- Older children challenge the younger ones, saying 'How can you stop me?' (from defecating in the open).
- Girls do water chores when they get home, but boys only help if they ask them and that is too much trouble.
- Some in Naokhali said the criticism continues, but not directly to them. For example: "Why are they doing this? It is a Moslem area [Meaning they should keep purdah by staying home]."

Problems reported by SSUS

- People didn't understand that bad hygiene causes gynecological problems. Go to *kobirj* (traditional healers).
- Men don't think women have "personality".
- Women didn't see problems or solutions. Need certain knowledge to see a problem and know of technologies for certain solutions.
-

Problem-Solving by the Bangladesh WWPs in response to criticism

- We are not a political party. We work for the poor.
- You [political parties] have the means to get what you need for yourself.
- Please let us do this for the poor.
- We are working for all the community. Everyone benefits.
- If your latrine (rich people's) are non-hygienic, my family gets sick.
- I am not alone. We walk in a group of 11.
- You [husband] have not used hygienic practices. Now you are inactive and I am doing this [working with the WWP for hygiene].
- "We are doing not for the money, but we don't want to spend \$500 for medical bills. Your open defecation is killing my family members. (WWP member, Sanondabari village).Then we began fixing their latrines and giving latrines.

Problem-Solving by Partner Organization and Oxfam

- To make WWP members' job easier, project and SSUS management took initiative to talk with the family members, madrasa teachers, and members of illegal armed forces to "motivate" them.
- Sometime SSUS took help from some members of illegal armed forces, and added them to the distribution list. We kept harmless relation with the illegal armed forces.
- Plans by Dhaka Mission to do human chains as last resort to get withheld government funds.
- One of the Oxfam staff says, the children have access to both parents, because of love and because of education. We use them as change agents.
- Build trust in the community.
- One Madrasa teacher acting as Imam in the Imam's absence (Naokhali), said that the WWP did not have any trouble in the beginning because they came to him first. When they discussed with him, they discussed their objectives about cleanliness, then it was made easy.

Successes Reported by Bangladesh WWPs

- All the group is keeping the t-wells active and making sure the latrines are hygienic.
- Everybody in the WWP is contributing [participates in the work of the group].
- Now we have a bank account. Everybody gave 20 taka so we can help the poor.
- We went to the market and bought everything ourselves.
- Now disease in the village is reduced
- They had to go 1 ½ hours to get water. They could bathe only every 8 days. They had diarrhea, itching many other problems (Naokhali, Shohagchondhury).
- People used to go to the roadside, but now, there is no smell, so they don't go there.
- Compared to surrounding areas, their area is the "first in sanitation" (Sanondabari village).
- After a visit to Noakhali, the WWP in Sanondabari village, see that their men help much more than the Naokhali men help. (They do not have to work so far from home.) They see also that their task in the WWP hasn't been as difficult.
- There was a disabled person in one village, so the WWP had the idea themselves to build a ramp.
- People see their work is good for the community, so stop saying bad things.
- Open defecation: there used to be places women would go and so men could not, but this was stressful for women. Latrines alleviate danger/embarrassment.
- Women who didn't know each other and who may have had little support (especially in Noakhali), now have a kind of support system. "Now we have people to talk to about our sadness and before we could only stay near home and talk to the neighbors."

Problems and Solutions: Naokhali 2 WWP members

This woman moved to Naokhali from a river-eroded area. She never saw 100,000 taka all at the same time until she saw it in the WWP bank account. When they first began, some men obstructed them by saying ‘Why are you only doing it this way. Everyone should get these things, not just a few.’ They explained they had limited resources and so would select places where many women can go. They had the idea to do menstrual health management for the teenage girls and got training from the local partner agency on that and how to use latrines, use sandals, soap or ash, cover drinking water. The messages they get from hygiene promoters they disseminate to family members so they can reduce their cost, constantly advising family members to lead their lives in a clean way. They had never been to market. The men did it. When they first went, people made fun of them. They motivate people by saying “the benefit will go to every household. They are doing things that will benefit all but now they aren’t facing criticism. She told a story in front of the officials earlier about how some people, angry about where they were putting a latrine and bathing cubicle, destroyed a widow’s house. The police, called to mediate, supported the project and made the people rebuild her house. Now they are receiving requests from people in the village. Earlier they had no “respect” (*sonman*). Now they have.

The second woman added that because women cannot bathe when men are around, and men bathe first but there isn’t enough water, the women weren’t able to bathe often enough. So for 20 houses they found a location all could access and made a bathing corner (5 altogether). People used to criticize, but now they see they are doing good things for the community, and they can handle it as a team. She spoke of what the Oxfam staff helping me translated as “dignity” (*mordjada*) and “self-esteem” (*atto sonman*).

A Community Health Volunteer and a WWP member say, taking turns talking, in response to my question: “We have capacity to work. You have given us the knowledge, so it is better to work alone, not with men. The men cannot give the time. Men are moving around so they don’t have time to share information, but we are home. We can visit each other and give ideas for our children’s health.” She asks for more services: “Please, we give our labor. Please provide services to make our community healthy.”

The CHV said, sometimes political parties put pressure. They give the name of the preferred person to give men a latrine. The CHV said “We motivated the political people involved, saying that “you have their own way of getting a latrine. Please let us help the poor.”

The WWP member said, “When the vendors in the market asked them what they were doing, “when we said we were working on water and sanitation, they didn’t obstruct, they only asked some questions. We also told them we are not a political party, so if any political party would make us afraid, we are just working in hygiene.”

Problems and Solutions, Jamalpur, 2 WWP members

In the river area of Jamalpur, only the rich people had latrines, but many were using unhygienic latrines. After discussing with the Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) (partner agency) they opened a bank account and every member contributed taka. They initially got 100,000 as a grant and took 20,000 to provide water seals and rings and pans to transform unhygienic latrines into hygienic ones. They motivated even the rich people: "If your latrine is unhygienic, then all people suffer from lack of hygiene. Their village used to have many diseases caused by lack of hygiene. When they visited the Naokhali region, they got the idea to build bathing cubicles. They have built one ramp for a disabled family. They have 11 disabled families in this village, but no support to help them.

Some people didn't distribute the materials (Sanondabari village, Jamalpur). The WWP member I spoke with went back to their house many times to say, when will you give it out?

Children's Groups, Naokhali

Chosen by Oxfam from the 5 sectors of the village like the WWP. They are half boys and girls. Then each one brings 4 friends. They are trained on hygiene issues, and then they go out and analyze what they see. In the past they thought Allah gave disease, one boy explained.

Most of the kids say the fathers have a harder job and more jobs. Some go to the brick fields others go out for jobs. All but one girl I asked said they want to be boys because a boy can earn money. They all said girls need money to be married. Girls can earn but not like boys. Some of the girls said if they could earn money they would continue their education.

When they see someone open defecating, they blow a whistle to embarrass them.

One girl told of her efforts to convince her family about hygiene and bad water:

"Everyone in the family understands, except one old grandmother. The old grandmother said go away from in front of me. So she went to her sister-in-law who helped her convince her. As I am very little, they didn't understand."

Another girls said her father says, "We are running our lives in our own way, then the little one comes....What are you teaching us?"

Boys and girls say girls are better at teaching. The boys get involved in collecting grass for the cows or helping in the fields.

They say, boys and girls both have work after school, but the girls are more curious.

Obstacles:

One youngster reported older boys say to the young: "How will you stop me?"

When the girls go home after school, they collect water, clean house. They can ask the boys to help, and sometimes they do, but they don't ask a lot because it takes less time just to do it by themselves. The parents ask the boys to help them, but in reality, they help a bit and then go do something else. Interviewer: How to get them to help? Girl: Give them some money.

CONCLUSION: CAMBODIA AND BANGLADESH WWP

Gender roles are not necessarily about men or women per se, or about relations between the sexes.¹²⁹ Gendered effects are not necessarily caused solely by wrong attitudes of men and women. The reverberations between politics and personal lives shape the effects of WWP projects in both countries.

1. In Cambodia WWPs were established in 68 villages and a small staff carried out the program. The staff had diverse professional training managing government counterparts responsible for the village-level interventions. In Bangladesh, WWPs were established in 20 villages, and the program was carried out by a staff with high level technical skills, partnered with NGOs long established in their respective regions.

2. Stakeholders see WWPs as innovative programs because they are designed to put women in charge of every aspect of development funds for discrete projects they choose, manage and implement for themselves. In both countries the WWP successfully accomplished the gender-related WASH program objectives they set to a reasonable degree. By this I mean: In both countries WWP members say they are happy to be advocates for WASH because they see valuable results from new hygiene and safe water practices. In both countries, WWP members say that participation in WWP activities has brought them new recognition as people with access to outside resources, as people who can do high jobs (“work” outside of everyday household-related duties), and as people with knowledge in WASH issues that leaders and men should listen to. In both countries, stated successes are significant as indicators of consciousness of program goals and issues, even where the in practice obstacles to asserted changes have not been overcome. In both countries the degree of surprise at the women’s abilities is an indication of how strong negative stereotypes have been among program planners.

3. In both countries, emphasizing WASH as the province of women legitimates WWP activities, but can end up reifying a gendered rationale for different kinds of participation in emergent forms of ‘civil society.’

4. In both countries, humanitarian and gender programs already fight against old ways of seeing women as only ‘victims.’ In both, setting women’s empowerment against men, and focusing on women’s employment without considering the availability of satisfying prospects for their husbands and sons (who are not all village chiefs, commune chiefs, Imam, or other brokers of power/morality), risks turning problems that were once shared problems, affecting men and women differently, into problems between men and women. (In addition to the much discussed issue of the feminization of the workforce).

5. In both countries, the WWP are a job with some material and significant status benefits, given to women, not men, some families not others, and some women not others by outsiders perceived as powerful. As such, from the start, they bring local, national and international politics into the women’s daily lives and activate the women as agents in their micro-politics.

- a. In Cambodia, they can bring pressure on a few educated women.
- b. In both places this can bring accusations of corruption the WWP then have to dispel.

6. In both countries, they are an educational opportunity to compensate for other opportunities lost, like having to drop out of school.

7. In both countries the WWP are designed to accomplish a wide scope of tasks in addition to securing WASH benefits:

- a. Extend development funds and /or minimize dependency on outside agencies by using volunteer labor.
- b. Stimulate participation in community development ‘from below’ as an alternative to ‘top down’ methods (including human rights/law-driven interventions that can incite resistance).
- c. Give women experience, education, leadership skills.
- d. ‘Empower’ women as a stalwart against domestic violence and toward giving them decision-making power in their own lives (personal and on the political stage).

8. Through the WWP women take new roles in pre-existing hierarchies and politically volatile situations. In both countries the urgency and technical details of alleviating health problems and suffering, can obscure the way they can become generative points or focal points of incitement and pressure in local politics and in the broad ranging politics around modernization and democratization that reach beyond WASH program intentions.

9. Both programs and their effects are shaped by their histories, the interests and orientations of their partners, and by their contemporary contexts.

a. In Cambodia:

1. Powerful competing national and international discourses on tradition obscure positive aspects of Cambodian life and ethics as resource for grass roots activism.
2. Emphasis on integrating women into the state apparatus before the WWP began back-staged other forms of community leadership and motivation.
3. An economy of time/energy means the village economic middle receives material benefit first.
4. Strategies of persuasion, silent stalwartness and persistence, reasoning/persuading, are not ‘female,’ though officials interviewed have called them that, but are used by the weaker against the powerful, and in the exchange of energy for mutual benefit, for example. They may be ‘feminized’ when women are included in local government as a ‘gentler supplement’ to men’s coercive power. However, this indication of appreciation for this ‘gentler’ leadership suggests there could be benefits in exploring the more ‘organic’ kinds of leadership based on individual recognized qualities. The WWP women, by the way, often report this kind of ‘quality’ criteria for being chosen or choosing their own leaders.

b. In Bangladesh:

1. Encouraging WWP to participate in “non-party” politics/advocacy, has in the past ushered inadequately aware women into a world of volatile party-politics. Where in Cambodia, gendered discourses are more consistent across political parties, in Bangladesh, political party platforms may include controversial explicit or implied gender images that seem to link them to politics and politics to IO/NGO agendas.
2. Community factions/individuals reacting to the WWP as a job, a source of resources, a source of leadership legitimacy, or a magnet for support of opposing

interests out of their control, may be directed against the men in WWP households not the WWP directly.

3. Focus on advanced technical solutions may replace, displace, or obscure the chance to support/develop viable already existing positive practices/relationships between men and women.

10. Trainings:

a. Solutions to immediate obstacles in WWP projects involve decisions that can have larger political effects the women are not participating in, and may not be aware of (from advocacy at the national level to negotiations/compromise deals with local power brokers).

Training on general 'gender concepts' is less important than helping them to analyze the way their WWP gendered goals are affected by and affect broader community concerns.

b. Exploration of differences in the treatment of menstruation issues from Bangladesh to Cambodia could benefit both.

11. In both countries, WWP women use non-confrontational strategies to help achieve short-term results that do not challenge the status quo in accomplishing WWP WASH projects. Do they position women to make such challenges if they desire in the future?

12. In both countries WWP women participate in conflict, and use familiar techniques for getting what they want and need in their communities, including using social sanctions and pressures on husbands and men.

13. Linking WWPs to government is one idea for an exit strategy for the WWP and suits the goal of grooming women for participation in political culture. This is a strong emphasis of the Cambodian gender advisors as seen in the 2 forums and workshop and corresponds to broader women's rights efforts. However, it is not necessarily the most direct path to developing wide participation in a grassroots movement, or for exploiting alternatives to male-dominated hierarchies or pressure on women to be the ones to give in or sacrifice in moments of conflict. For that, exploring other sources of legitimacy and helping women to develop other familiar, but informal techniques of leadership could help. The 2 directions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It does require a strong focus on building the WWP as a functioning group with strong internal commitment.

Suggestion for the Bangladesh and Cambodia programs:

Ethnographic study. For both programs, the most dependable way to evaluate how the WWP actually work together and with the men, other women, and power brokers in their lives is to do a study in which speakers of the local language spend an extended amount of time in the villages, gain trust, attend regular meetings, and observe regular, spontaneous interactions.

Suggestions for the Cambodia program:

1. Continued policy work with the national government that women be included. This opens a door vis a vis the state apparatus at the village level. However, focus on State law/rights can build resentment and resistance.
2. Brokered meetings between commune leaders including chief and Committee for Women and Children, including any women council members and focal points, and the WWP members, around a specific problem or issue, in each commune. This could give them a chance to practice talking with mutual interest/benefit. (Perhaps regular meetings all women and fewer with the men?)
3. Open up discussion on 'gender' by opening up discussion on 'culture' for both staff and WWP members possibly by sharing stories of actual relationships they know.
4. Guidance for the women's groups on the kinds of roles the group could play, as problem-solvers and activists on WASH issues, as a support group for each other, as a group of leaders among women, and as women leaders for the community at large. Articulate separate agendas and goals.
5. To become more grass roots: Consider training all the members of the WWP in the same way. There may be an attrition of confidence (though not necessarily in information). A hierarchy might appear within the group if a few know more, also a greater burden on a few. The 'cascade' method is also a hierarchical structure.
6. In the trainings, link problems with available solutions, with pros and cons (possible projects).
7. To make the WWP more grass roots: Consider making publicizing about health and hygiene a basic task of the WWP with automatic small funding set aside just for that (since the government asserts this as appropriate)? Offer the small grants for other ideas.
8. Train government counterparts on the specific task of analyzing WASH problems, with available solutions in a structured way. Appropriate them for WASH/gender.
9. To make the WWP more grass roots: In addition to the above, but separate from it, the women themselves assert that a focused building of specific knowledge useful to the village gives them the confidence but also a place from which to demonstrate their competence and the ability to 'teach' people who already know the basics. They say they 'forget' and are insecure. Give refresher trainings/practice in a village setting with demonstrations not lectures, equipment not notebooks. Teaching about 'gender' concepts and how to run a discussion is less important than giving practice of analyzing village water and hygiene conditions the impacts on men, women, and children.
10. Ongoing training/sharing/planning for gender advisors.
11. Have Oxfam gender advisors participate in, or give the training instead of an outside agency to focus more on the practice of explaining WASH issues, shift away from the WID focus of the current trainings, and help women explore ways to use less hierarchical processes already in their relationships/villages.

12. To make the WWP more grass roots: Can the women's groups run focus groups of men or discussions with men and women on community WASH needs?
13. Can they transfer the skills they use to manage households to the WWP? Open a bank account and manage it?
14. Can/is it a good idea for them to start small enterprises around soap making- or menstrual pads (see Bangladesh suggestions) or savings groups for latrines? What are the negatives of turning WWP humanitarian motivated development into a 'business' in the name of sustainability?¹³⁰
15. Since it is easier to be in the WWP if families support you, can the men in the WWP member families (and maybe some of the elders of the village) be included in initial trainings specifically so they understand what the women are being charged to do and its importance for the men as well as the women, so they can be advocates for their women from the start? Maybe, invite the women's families to a presentation for them.
16. Try with a few groups giving them control over a bank account, and training the entire group on keeping it.
17. If the WWP are to receive continued support to link to government, to become more grass-roots: Explore the possibility with WWP members of using the 'community' feeling at Buddhist and other spiritual rituals as one group says they do, the good feeling and spiritual benefits generated there, and also the high value placed on people whose morality is seen to be high, as a way to counter the hierarchical status of government rank and money. With education these are different ways of achieving status and respect and of becoming leaders. They are not necessarily at odds with one another, but the state structure 'path' tends to be focused on the "far away" as one husband put it, and to be top-down, while some of the same people may be involved in the other pagoda based activities using very different methods because beholden to a different set of institutional rules and ethical inter-relationships between the 'rich', medium, poor and those less poor. Linking to government need not preclude this other.
18. Consider the pros and cons of compensation for the poor and very poor OR a way in which membership in the group involves a certain number of poor members to whom the group distributes compensatory labor/help to make it possible for them to participate? This means a stronger focus on a group of more than the executive committee with the same training and commitment to the group as a source of legitimacy itself (less reliance on chief of village) and to WASH tasks. In general, poor can be isolated because they are busy simply finding food and because they fall out of mutual help networks if they have nothing, even not energy to give back.
19. Corruption/Nepotism: Especially in the interests of any kind of compensation, would changing the rules regarding the choice of neighbors and relatives relieve some of the pressure around corruption from family and non-family?
20. Consider setting a slightly larger group size minimum and setting regular meetings for on-going practice/sharing/training within the group.
21. Menstrual hygiene was not part of the training on issues. Include it?

Suggestions for the Bangladesh program:

1. If at first, the women could not see their WASH-related problems, and had to learn to "see" them by seeing their situation through new possibilities, the same must be true for their husbands. Could Oxfam help the women gain permission to participate in the WWP by holding a session for men on the analysis of gender-related WASH

- issues? Explore the possibility of having the WWP women do a demonstration of what they will be talking to villagers about for their families and select village leaders early in the formation of the group. Help women and their families/households/compounds analyze the time/energy/distribution of jobs issue.
2. Do the same introduction for teachers and Imam. (The partners smooth the way by talking to them. Would it help to formalize/add to what they do? Evaluate).
 3. And/or would roundtables of men/Imam/teachers and separate ones for women explaining and asking for suggestions on the WWP in advance help, with care on not creating expectations of control among the men?
 4. Monitor the advocacy work of partner organizations if they rally Oxfam WWP for demonstrations. Intervene with training/information on the way activities calling for funds and rights from the government (non-party politics) fit in the larger political picture. AND regarding what kind of effects they might experience.
 5. Explore the Women's Ministry as a source of cross-ministry advocacy (policy) and administrative funds for trainings on gender-related WASH issues, 'leadership' training for women and girls and 'gender' exercises for boys and girls together.
 6. Might the question of local politics become more important as a link to government is established, especially in Naokhali? The involvement of the Women's Ministry and female officials might help?
 7. Investigate the effects of children's group activities, in the home, school, and village. "Whistle-blowing" using shame or scorn as a technique may be effective, but are there complicated inter-generational consequences? Is this a technique that uses a local form of sanction Oxfam otherwise would not support? Is there another response the youngsters could make when they 'catch' someone in an unhealthy practice? Organize a private 'teaching' visit to their home, for example? Invite the offender to a meeting for a treat and a special presentation?
 8. Consider availability and viability of local materials for building. Is there competition for limited materials already?
 9. Earlier Oxfam research reports a local NGO (BRAC) has helped one woman start a small enterprise making menstrual pads.¹³¹ What are the negatives/contradictions of turning WWP humanitarian-motivated community-benefit oriented development into a 'business' in the name of sustainability?
 10. It seems the pads distributed are still cloth and still need to be dried. It is not clear where they are being dried now. Create a "drying box" that can be hung above eye level but is open to the sun or air to hang in homes, bathing cubicles or latrines? Since bathing cubicles are used by many women, it is not clear who can use that space for this purpose.
 11. Explore any considerations necessary for non-Moslem (e.g. Hindu) families.
 12. Open up the conversation for Oxfam staff, partners, and WWP members on the long term and overall gender goals of this work.
 13. Are adolescent girl groups to teach about hygiene and to address relationships between mothers and daughters as stated? (Mother's don't attend.) Whatever their intent, they will affect relationships. Consider inviting mothers and female family members to some meetings.
 14. Negotiating the possibility of the WWP involves partner agencies (and so Oxfam) in local politics, including negotiation/deals with power brokers engaged in illegal activities. Are any concerns about corruption regarding the women's group related to negotiations between the partner organizations and those opposing them?
 15. Consider the politics of the WWP as a "job" paid, and unpaid.
 - a. vis a vis Oxfam's concern about exploitation

- b. vis a vis the others in the area who want to keep control of the labor market and/or who may react to the WWP through the men's relationship to a labor market they control.¹³²
- c. For the WWP to meet, sometimes many people have to rearrange their day or wider schedule. Could those involved be included in an initial conversation, acknowledging that they will help make the WWP possible?
- d. Explore alternate local ideas of masculinity and femininity and help the women draw on them for ideas and rationale in a positive way.
- e. A lot of sick men, home from work in Naokhali could mean any number of things beside just illness, from an effort to exploit another (positive) kind of masculinity, as, in other cases, anthropological literature has found connected to threats or 'scorn' from other men. It could be related to the redistribution of tasks that permits women to go outside the home. Putting her outside the home instead of men may alter the kind of burden or increase it rather than relieve it. Investigate the distribution of tasks and men-at-home from this perspective.

Annex I: TOR

The review of the WWP in Bangladesh and Cambodia will investigate the following questions and make recommendations:

- How relevant are the WWPs to the goal, purpose and objectives of the WSI projects? Does the WWP model effectively contribute to achieving the objectives set out the proposals
- What is the nature of WWPs in the two countries? How do they operate? Do they represent and prioritize women's needs and voices in their operations, projects and community and other meetings?
- How appropriate is the process Oxfam has used for mobilizing and establishing the WWPs
- Has the provision of seed money, training and project management empowered the women members of the WWPs?
- What have been the internal and external constraints and successes faced by the WWPs?
- How effective is the advocacy work carried out by the WWPs at the local and provincial or district and national level?
- In Cambodia are the provincial forums effective in promoting a gender sensitive approach to WASH?
- What would be the role, if any, of the WWPs, after the end of the project?
- How sustainable is the WWP model and the community based approach adopted by Oxfam and its partners? What is the likelihood of the WWPs continuing their operations after Oxfam and its partners withdraw? What structures and practices are already in place, or need to be put in place, to achieve the best possible sustainable outcomes?
- What might be the mid, long term impact of WWPs at local and provincial or district level?
- How appropriate is the WWP model in the local or country contexts?
- Have the WWPs reduced gender inequities at the local level and if so how?
- What are the common and different perspectives held by internal and external stakeholders about the WWPs in Bangladesh and Cambodia?
- Are there modalities suited to the WWPs that could scale up and coordinate gender sensitive, multi-country activities?

The findings and recommendations will refer to the country context, to the specific project and its ways of working while paying attention to the results of the comparative analysis of the WWPs in the two WSI projects.

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- ¹ Oxfam Australia Wash Strategy Summary. P. 5.
- ² Cleaver, 2003; GWA, 2003; Khosla and Pearl, 2003; Lahiri-Dutt, 2007), cited in Ivens, Saskia. 2008. Does Increased Water Access Empower Women. *Development*, 2008, 51, (63–67) (p. 64-5).
- ³ Oxfam Australia Wash Strategy Summary. P. 1-2
- ⁴ On economic empowerment only: GWA and UNDP, 2006; UN OSAGI, 2006; suggesting water programs empower women more generally Bell, 2001; Shrestha, 2002; Well, 2005; GWA and UNDP, 2006; Smirat, 2006; UN OSAGI, 2006, cited in Ivens, Saskia. 2008. Does Increased Water Access Empower Women. *Development*, 2008, 51, (63–67) (p. 64).
- ⁵ Oxfam Australia Wash Strategy Summary. P. 5.
- ⁶ Oxfam Australia Wash Strategy Summary. P. 3.
- ⁷ “Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2, cited in Putting Gender Mainstreaming into Practice. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. 2003:15.
- ⁸ Oxfam WSI Part C. Project Details 2.2.
- ⁹ From TOR for this study.
- ¹⁰ Oxfam WSI activity plan.
- ¹¹ Oxfam Australia Wash Strategy Summary. P. 5.
- ¹² Oxfam WSI Part C. Project Details 2.2.
- ¹³ Oxfam Australia Wash Strategy Summary. P. 3.
- ¹⁴ Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *Gender of the Gift*. University of California at Berkeley.
- ¹⁵ “Gender in Water and Sanitation” Mainstreaming Gender in Water and Sanitation. November 2010. WATER AND SANITATION PROGRAM: WORKING PAPER. World Bank p.10.
- ¹⁶ Oxfam Gender Training Manual. 1994:293, Oxfam Gender training manual 2007:16-18 (Khmer version)
- ¹⁷ This understanding of ‘gender equity’ asserts that human rights and ‘equality’ expressed as universal are as implemented (not just historically or philosophically) aligned with liberal and neo liberal assumptions, policies and practices. The term ‘equity’ then asserted as a goal of policy and program would permit interrogation of these notions of ‘equality’ with the idea that various societies would might address the needs of people –men and women- differently, and achieve non-discriminatory, non-oppressive results that nevertheless are not the ‘equality’ of secular European or Anglo-Saxon 21st century feminism. Against a policy aimed at an imagined dissonant-free future, it is also used to assert that the practical fact is ongoing consideration of race, class, age and other differences will always have to be considered in policy and program design and implementation. For critique of the use of ‘gender equity’ as the route to an unexamined notion of ‘equality’ see: Ramphele, 1997, ‘Whither feminism’ p. 36 in *Transitions, Environments, Translations: feminism in international Politics*, edited by J.W. Scott. New York: Routledge. quoted in Scott, Joan Wallach (2000) “Some Reflections on Gender and Politics” in Myra Marx Ferree et al. (eds.) *Revisioning Gender*. Sage: London. p.87 cited in <http://assignmentsonline.wordpress.com/gender-and-development/concept-paper-2-gender-equality-gender-equity/> accessed Jan 7, 2012.
- ¹⁸ For a collection of articles addressing the content of ‘Universal Human Rights’ and the many sites of implementation see: Mark Goodale and Sally Engle Merry, Editors. 2007. *The Practice of Human Rights. Tracking Law Between the Global and the Local*. Cambridge University Press.
- ¹⁹ See for example Abu-Lughod, L. 2002. Do Moslem Women Really Need Saving? *American Anthropologist* 104: 783-790; and Mahmood, Saba. 2004. *The Politics of Piety*. Princeton University Press.
- ²⁰ UNICEF. 1991. *The condition of Women and Children*. Cambodia.
- ²¹ This kind of oversight has been noted elsewhere as well. UNDP 2010. *Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific*. P. 51. Andaya, Barbara. 2006. Introduction in *The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Southeast Asian History*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006.
- ²² e.g. on the negative affect of ‘modernity’ see Kate Frieson. 2011, No Longer a ‘Happy Balance’: The Decline of Female Status in Khmer Village Culture. In *Anthropology and Community in Cambodia*. edited by John Marston. Monash Asia Institute, p 171-189, and Margherita A. Maffii, Sineath Hong. 2010. Political Participation of Indigenous Women in Cambodia. *Asien* 114-115. On alternative views of the class-inflected ‘ideal woman’ in Cambodia and age-differentiated strength/agency and also legendry on male-female power struggles see Greene, Karen. 1991. *Khmer Courtship Narratives: Adolescent Cambodian Girls and the Negotiation of Identity*. MA thesis, University of California, Berkeley; for a view of strong women in Cambodia’s past that has been controversial see Jacobsen, Trudy. 2008. Lost goddesses: the denial of female power in Cambodian history. *NIAS*, and Maffii and Hong 2010, however, among other dangers, caution should be applied in any effort to see the indigenous of today as the Khmer of yesterday.
- ²³ endnotes 31 and 61.

- ²⁴Keyes, Charles F. 1984. "Mother or Mistress but Never a Monk: Buddhist Notions of Female Gender in Rural Thailand", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 11:223-241.
- ²⁵ VGNK management. 2010. Phase Two Evaluation of the Paris Declaration. Cambodia Country Study Report. Final Version. P. 61-63.
- ²⁶ For the critique of the focus on hierarchy: Cohen, L. 1998. *No Aging in India: Alzheimer's, the Bad Family, and Other Modern Things*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Appadurai, A. 1985. Gratitude as a social mode in South India. *Ethos* 13:236-245. Greene, K. 2007. *The Education of Soksabaay Sok: Child Rights, Good Governance and Social Services in the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia*. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley. For contemporary efforts to understand the role of hierarchy in Cambodian social and political organization, see Ledgerwood and Vijghen. 2002. *Decision-Making in Rural Khmer Villagers*. In, *Cambodia Emerges from the Past*. J. Ledgerwood, ed. Pp. 109-150: Southeast Asia Publications. Northern Illinois University. Marston, John. 1997. *Hierarchy, Neutrality and Etiquettes of Discourse*. PhD Dissertation. University of Washington. Day 2002. *Fluid Iron*. University of Hawaii Press.
- ²⁷ Collins, William. 1998. *Grassroots Civil Society in Cambodia*, a discussion paper prepared for a workshop organized by Forum Syd and Diahonia. For assertions of the breakdown of Khmer society as it was already "loosely structured" see John Vijghen cited in Viviane Frings, "Cambodia after Decollectivization (1989-92)," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 24, no. 1 (1994). P. 50-66. Jan Ovesen et al., *When Every Household is an Island: Social Organization and Power Structures in Rural Cambodia* (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, 1996). For a review of the literature debating the existence of "community" in Cambodia see: *The Meaning of Community in Cambodia: Literature Reviews, Khmer, French, and English Languages* (Phnom Penh: Working Group on Social Organization in Cambodia, May 1999). This literature sets 'community' against family loyalty and other patterns of friendship or obligation (cited in Hughes, Caroline 2001. *An Investigation of Conflict Management in Cambodian Villages*. Centre for Peace and Development, Cambodia Development Resource Institute.) Against this argument, emphasizing cohesion through bilateral kinship networks despite the way limited resources have shrunk the amount of aid and size of the networks, and the rational strategies villagers use to appear to participate as a 'village' when they see little benefit, versus their strong organizing skills and efficiency when they see benefit, see Ledgerwood, Judy. 2002 *Decision Making in Rural Khmer Villages*, with John Vijghen IN *Cambodia*. Emerges from the Past Judy Ledgerwood, ed. DeKalb, IL: Center for Southeast Asian Studies. For an analysis of ceremony and the building of community in an area hard hit by Khmer Rouge violence, see Zucker, Eve. 2006. *Transcending Time and Terror: The Re-emergence of Bon Dalién after Pol Pot and Thirty Years of Civil War*. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 37 (3), pp 527-546.
- ²⁸ 2008 Law on Admin. Management of the Capital, Provinces, Municipalities, Districts and Khans (Eng). <http://www.ncdd.gov.kh/en/legal-framework/law>. Accessed Jan 11, 2011.
- ²⁹ Mookherjee writes that middle class women were part of the underground resistance and symbolically equal members of the national collectivity and symbols of national culture, tradition but also modernization, liberation and insurrection. Mookherjee, Nayanika. 2008. *Gendered Embodiments: Mapping the Body-Politic of the Raped Woman and the Nation in Bangladesh*. *Feminist Review*, suppl. War 88 (Apr 2008): 36-53.
- ³⁰ Taj I. Hashmi. 2000. *Women and Islam in Bangladesh: Beyond Subjection and Tyranny*. Palgrave. P. 5-7
- ³¹ Mookherjee, Nayanika. 2008. *Gendered embodiments: mapping the body-politic of the raped woman and the nation in Bangladesh*. *Feminist Review*, suppl. War 88 (Apr 2008): 36-53.
- ³² Writing about the Aswami League paradigm of masculinity, Mookherjee, N. *My man (honor) is lost but I still have my iman (principle)': Sexual violence and articulations of masculinity*. 2004. In *South Asian Masculinities: context of change sites of continuity*. Women Unlimited an Associate for Kali for Women. P. 150
- ³³ Feldman, Shelley. 1998. (Re)presenting Islam: Manipulating Gender, Shifting State Practices, and Class Frustrations in Bangladesh. In *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*. Edited by Patricia Jeffery and Amrita Basu. Routledge. P. 50
- ³⁴ See Mahmood, Saba. 2004. *The Politics of Piety*. Princeton University Press.
- ³⁵ Shehabuddin, Elora. 2008. *Reshaping the Holy: Democracy, Development, and Muslim Women in Bangladesh*. Columbia University Press. P. 4
- ³⁶ Mookherjee, Nayanika. 2008. *gendered embodiments: mapping the body-politic of the raped woman and the nation in Bangladesh*. *Feminist Review*, suppl. War 88 (Apr 2008): 36-53.
- ³⁷ e.g. Redfield, Peter. 2006. *A Less Modest Witness: Collective Advocacy and Motivated Truth in a Medical Humanitarian Movement*. *American Ethnologist* 33:3-26.
- ³⁸ Mahmud, Simeen. 2003. *Is Bangladesh Experiencing a Feminization of the Labor Force? The Bangladesh Development Studies*. Volume 29:32.
- ³⁹ For questions on women's enterprise and competitiveness see Nidhi Tandon *Networked Intelligence for Development 2006 Information and Communication Technologies in Bangladesh* p. 12.
- ⁴⁰ Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *Gender of the Gift*. University of California at Berkeley.
- ⁴¹ Oxfam Australia Wash Strategy Summary. P. 3.
- ⁴² Hughes, C. 2001. *An Investigation of Conflict Management in Cambodian Villages*. Centre for Peace and Development. Cambodia Development Resource Institute. (CDRI).

- ⁴³ Arturo Escobar, 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Ferguson, James. 1994. *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. University of Minnesota Press.
- ⁴⁴ Fassin, Didier. 2007. Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life. *Public Culture* 19:499-520.
- ⁴⁵ Latour, Bruno 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Harvard University Press; on this in international interventions for street children in Cambodia see Greene, K. 2007. *The Education of Soksabaay Sok: Child Rights, Good Governance and Social Services in the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia*. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley.
- ⁴⁶ Ferguson, James. 1994. *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. University of Minnesota Press.
- ⁴⁷ UNDP 2010. *Power, Voice and Rights, A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific*. P. 4
- ⁴⁸ Prigl, E. and Audrey Lostgarten. 2007. *Mainstreaming Gender in International Organizations: Theory and Practice, Institutions, Resources and Mobilization*. Duke University Press. P. 69
- ⁴⁹ Prigl, E. and Audrey Lostgarten. 2007. *Mainstreaming Gender in International Organizations: Theory and Practice, Institutions, Resources and Mobilization*. Duke University Press. P. 69
- ⁵⁰ "Gender in Water and Sanitation" *Mainstreaming Gender in Water and Sanitation*. November 2010. WATER AND SANITATION PROGRAM: WORKING PAPER. World Bank p.10.
- ⁵¹ Prigl, E. and Audrey Lostgarten. 2007. *Mainstreaming Gender in International Organizations: Theory and Practice, Institutions, Resources and Mobilization*. Duke University Press. PAGE NUMBER?
- ⁵² *Putting Gender Mainstreaming into Practice*. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. P. 37
- ⁵³ Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *Gender of the Gift*. University of California at Berkeley.
- ⁵⁴ Oxfam Gender Training Manual. 1994:293; Oxfam Gender training manual 2007:18 (Khmer version); Oxfam Gender Training Sambo, Kratie 2000; Oxfam Gender Training, Takeo 2000.
- ⁵⁵ See endnote 17.
- ⁵⁶ Oxfam Gender Training Manual. 1994:293, Oxfam Gender training manual 2007:16-18 (Khmer version)
- ⁵⁷ See for example Abu-Lughod, L. 2002. Do Moslem Women Really Need Saving? *American Anthropologist* 104: 783-790; and Mahmood, Saba. 2004. *The Politics of Piety*. Princeton University Press.
- ⁵⁸ For a powerful example of gender-based humanitarianism as justification for colonial rule and its effects in South Asia see Lata Mani. 1998. *Contentious Traditions*. University of California Press. Stoler, Ann. 2002. *Education of Desire*. Duke University Press.
- ⁵⁹ e.g. Day 2002. *Fluid Iron*. University of Hawaii Press. e.g. Ebihara, May. 1979. *Khmer Village Women in Cambodia: A Happy Balance*. In *Many Sisters*. Free Press, and the more controversial Jacobsen, Trudy. 2008. *Lost goddesses: the denial of female power in Cambodian history*. NIAS
- ⁶⁰ e.g. Jan Ovesen et al., *When Every Household is an Island: Social Organization and Power Structures in Rural Cambodia* (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, 1996). Derks, A..1997. *Trafficking of Cambodia Women and Children to Thailand*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration. For a contemporary study that takes early representations of Cambodian 'culture' too uncritically see Brereton, Helen et. Al. 2004. *A Fair Share for Women*. Cambodia Gender Assessment. World Bank, and Elizabeth Chey on the Status of Cambodian Women. <http://www.mekong.net/cambodia/women.htm>.
- ⁶¹ On the way 'women' became symbols of a reified 'tradition' as the bulwark against modernity as post-colonial nationalists struggled to modernize without losing—or rather while shoring up—the ethnic distinction that made local expertise necessary to governance and legitimized geopolitical boundaries, see Chatterjee, Partha. 1989. Colonialism, nationalism, and colonized women: the contest in India. *American Ethnologist* 16: 622-633, Edwards, Penny. 2001. *Restyling Colonial Cambodia (1890-1954)*. French Dressing, Indigenous Custom and national Costume," *Fashion Theory* 5:389-416. See also endnote 31.
- ⁶² UNICEF. 1991. *The Condition of Women and Children in Cambodia*
- ⁶³ See endnotes 22 and 59.
- ⁶⁴ See endnote 23.
- ⁶⁵ On the ethical concepts in Khmer see Hansen, 2007. *A. How to Behave*. University of Hawai'i Press, and Greene, K. 2007. *The Education of Soksabay Sok*. Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley. John Marston and Elizabeth Guthrie, eds. 2007. *History, Buddhism and New Religious Movements in Cambodia*. University of Hawai'i Press. Alexandre Kent and D. Chandler, eds. 2009. *People of Virtue Reconfiguring Religion, Power and Moral Order in Cambodia Today*. NIAS Press.
- ⁶⁶ Curiously, more women than men offered multiple reasons that men should be able to hit their wives according to the National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Directorate General for Health, Ministry of Health, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, MEASURE DHS, ICF Macro, Calverton, Maryland,

USA. September 2011. Cambodia Demographic Health Survey 2010. P. 207

⁶⁷Siobhan Gorman et al. 1999. Gender and Development in Cambodia: An Overview. Working Paper 10. Cambodia Development Resource Institute Phnom Penh. P. 4.

⁶⁸ Decision-making for the spending of money earned by men: In Kratie 92.9 women, 4.1 joint, 3.0 men out of 286 women asked. In Takeo 64.7 women, 24.7 joint, 7.6 men, out of 775 women asked. Cambodian women are usually involved in all three specific decisions, although the extent of their involvement depends on the issue being decided. About 45 percent of women say they alone make decisions about their own health care. However, decisions about major household purchases and visits to the wife's family or relatives are usually made jointly by the husband and wife. Older women make more decisions than younger women. Educated men more likely to say joint decisions. Urban more than rural. National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Directorate General for Health, Ministry of Health, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, MEASURE DHS, ICF Macro, Calverton, Maryland, USA. September 2011. Cambodia. Demographic Health Survey 2010. P. 202-204

⁶⁹The 'head of family' is an official government position, institutionalized through the family books through which each household is registered with the local police. If the household is a married couple, the head of the family is likely to be noted as the man. (Though if a couple is living with a widowed mother, the elder woman will be listed as head of the household or family unless she gives up that role (*mekreusa*.) The English term 'family' can get confused with the term 'household,' making understanding who is in what group and who is not confusing in translation. The head of the house (*mepteah*) most say, is the woman, but how the range of her power/agency reaches varies hugely and so, therefore, the relationship between/definition of these two positions. Like the reporting on who makes the decisions in the National Health Survey mentioned above, how people talk about the degree to which the governmental category of 'head of family' dictates the power dynamic between men and women in the village or home depends on many factors.

⁷⁰ See endnote 24

⁷¹The 2010 statistics assert "equity" has already been achieved at the elementary school level. The classrooms I visited had an equal number of girls, or slightly more.

⁷²Keyes, Charles F. 1984. "Mother or Mistress but Never a Monk: Buddhist Notions of Female Gender in Rural Thailand", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 11:223-241.

⁷³ See endnote 26

⁷⁴Marston, John. 1997. Hierarchy, Neutrality and Etiquettes of Discourse. PhD Dissertation. University of Washington, Greene, K. 2007.

⁷⁵ See endnotes 27 and 28.

⁷⁶ VGNK management. 2010. Phase Two Evaluation of the Paris Declaration. Cambodia Country Study Report. Final Version. P. 61-63.

⁷⁷ <http://mwa.gov.kh/en/ministry-background>

⁷⁸ VGNK management. 2010. Phase Two Evaluation of the Paris Declaration. Cambodia Country Study Report. Final Version. P. 64-65.

⁷⁹ <http://mwa.gov.kh/en/ministry-background>

⁸⁰ For updated statistics on the commune and these levels see http://www.necselect.org.kh/nec_english/.

⁸¹http://www.comfrel.org/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=475:gender-policy-and-womens-political-empowerment-incambodia&catid=144:2010-08-05-02-40-57&Itemid=1062 accessed January 15, 2012.

⁸²http://www.comfrel.org/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=475:gender-policy-and-womens-political-empowerment-incambodia&catid=144:2010-08-05-02-40-57&Itemid=1062 accessed January 15, 2012.

⁸³http://www.comfrel.org/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=475:gender-policy-and-womens-political-empowerment-incambodia&catid=144:2010-08-05-02-40-57&Itemid=1062 accessed January 15, 2012.

⁸⁴2008 Law on Admin. Management of the Capital, Provinces, Municipalities, Districts and Khans(Eng). <http://www.ncdd.gov.kh/en/legal-framework/law>. Accessed Jan 11, 2011.

⁸⁵Brereton, Helen, Edited by Michael Wild. 2006. Gender Mainstreaming and Decentralization: An Assessment of the Process with Recommendations. Partnership for Local Governance. P. 49

⁸⁶ I didn't see this in the law. There may be prakas expanding on the 2008 law.

⁸⁷In 2004 in partnership with Seila, UNICEF/Seth Koma UNICEF, began to provide support to (select) WCFPs by establishing and financing Commune Committees for Women and Children. This gave them more say. This research also found that they were more effective if the chief of the commune was president of the committee. Brereton, Helen, Edited by Michael Wild. 2006. Gender Mainstreaming and Decentralization: An Assessment of the Process with Recommendations. Partnership for Local Governance. P. 50-51.

⁸⁸Brereton, Helen, Edited by Michael Wild. 2006. Gender Mainstreaming and Decentralization: An Assessment of the Process with Recommendations. Partnership for Local Governance.

⁸⁹Brereton, Helen, Edited by Michael Wild. 2006. Gender Mainstreaming and Decentralization: An Assessment of the Process with Recommendations. Partnership for Local Governance.

⁹⁰ This village chief, like many Cambodians, put the coming of human rights to Cambodia in 1947 or 1948, thanks to a popular anti-colonial prince (son of Sihanouk). Before that, he says, women didn't have rights, they had 'merit' (bun)

⁹¹ Mookherjee notes that middle class women were part of the underground resistance and symbolically equal members of the national collectivity and symbols of national culture, tradition but also modernization, liberation and insurrection. Mookherjee, Nayanika. 2008. gendered embodiments: mapping the body-politic of the raped woman and the nation in Bangladesh. *Feminist Review*, suppl. War 88 (Apr 2008): 36-53.

⁹² Taj I. Hashmi. 2000. *Women and Islam in Bangladesh: Beyond Subjection and Tyranny*. Palgrave. P. 5-7

⁹³ Mookherjee, Nayanika. 2008. Gendered embodiments: mapping the body-politic of the raped woman and the nation in Bangladesh. *Feminist Review*, suppl. War 88 (Apr 2008): 36-53.

⁹⁴ For an overview of the very difficult condition of women in Bangladesh, see M.A.B. Siddique, (1998) "Gender issues in poverty alleviation: a case study of Bangladesh", *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 25 Iss: 6/7/8, pp.1095 – 1111; and the more journalistic Khan, Adam R. Murdered for Love. *Maclean's*, 00249262, 5/23/2005, Vol. 118, Issue 21.

⁹⁵ Sajal K Palit 2006 The Impact of socio-economic reforms on governance: The Bangladesh experience, *JOAAG*, 1:77.

⁹⁶ Heyzer, Noeleen (1989): 'Asian Women Wage-Earners: Their Situation and Possibilities for Donor Intervention' *World Development*, Vol. 17, No 17, pp. 1109-1123. *Gender, Work and Structural Adjustment: A Selected Annotated Bibliography* by Lakshmi Lingam. Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai India

⁹⁷ Mahmud, Simeen. 2003. Is Bangladesh Experiencing a Feminization of the Labor Force? *The Bangladesh Development Studies*. Volume 29:32.

⁹⁸ Mookherjee, N. My man (honor) is lost but I still have my iman (principle)': Sexual violence and articulations of masculinity. 2004. In *South Asian Masculinities: context of change sites of continuity*. Women Unlimited an Associate for Kali for Women.

⁹⁹ Writing about the Aswami league paradigm of masculinity, Mookherjee, N. My man (honor) is lost but I still have my iman (principle)': Sexual violence and articulations of masculinity. 2004. In *South Asian Masculinities: context of change sites of continuity*. Women Unlimited an Associate for Kali for Women. P. 150

¹⁰⁰ Feldman, Shelley. 1998. (RE)presenting Islam: Manipulating Gender, Shifting Sate Practices, and Class Frustrations in Bangladesh. In *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*. Edited by Patricia Jeffery and Amrita Basu. Routledge. P. 50

¹⁰¹ Santi Rozario. 2006. The new burqa in Bangladesh: empowerment or violation of women's right? - *Women's Studies International Forum* 29 (2006), pp. 368-380. Shehabuddin, Elora. 2008. *Reshaping the Holy: Democracy, Development, and Muslim Women in Bangladesh*. Columbia University Press. P. 11 NGO programs offer an alternative to exiting forms of madrasa education and informing credit or mone lending that serve as sources of legitimacy and areas of investment for members of the Islamist parties. So development NGOs have been attacked including NGOs working for women's rights and health. Feldman, Shelley. 1998. (RE)presenting Islam: Manipulating Gender, Shifting Sate Practices, and Class Frustrations in Bangladesh. In *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*. Edited by Patricia Jeffery and Amrita Basu. Routledge. P. 50

¹⁰² Nashid Kamal *and K.M Zunaid Education and Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh (undated report). And Background report on gender issues in Bangladesh: Report prepared for the British High Commission, Dhaka. By Sally Baden and Cathy Green, Anne Marie Goetz and Meghna Guhathakurta. August 1994. Institute of Development Studies University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK. P. VII

¹⁰³ For discussions of the politics of the new humanitarianism in addition to Fassin (above) see Redfield, Peter. 2006. *A Less Modest Witness: Collective Advocacy and Motivated Truth in a Medical Humanitarian Movement*. *American Ethnologist* 33:3-26.

¹⁰⁴ Chowdhury, Elora Halim. 2011. *Transnationalism Reversed: Women Organizing A...* State University of New York: Women Organizing against Gendered Violence in Bangladesh. The information on the security money among upper classes comes from a chance conversation with a lawyer with the high court of Bangladesh on the airplane.

¹⁰⁵ Background report on gender issues in Bangladesh: Report prepared for the British High Commission, Dhaka. By Sally Baden and Cathy Green, Anne Marie Goetz and Meghna Guhathakurta. August 1994. Institute of Development Studies. University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK. P. VIII

¹⁰⁶ Chowdhury, Elora Halim. 2011. *Transnationalism Reversed: Women Organizing A...* State University of New York: Women Organizing against Gendered Violence in Bangladesh. The information on the security money among upper classes comes from a chance conversation with a lawyer with the high court of Bangladesh on the airplane.

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- ¹⁰⁸ Santi Rozario. 2006. The new burqa in Bangladesh: empowerment or violation of women's right? - Women's Studies International Forum 29 (2006), pp. 368-380.
- ¹⁰⁹ Shehabuddin, Elora. 2008. Reshaping the Holy: Democracy, Development, and Muslim Women in Bangladesh. Columbia University Press. P. 4
- ¹¹⁰ Shehabuddin, Elora. 2008. Reshaping the Holy: Democracy, Development, and Muslim Women in Bangladesh. Columbia University Press. P. 4
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- ¹¹² See endnotes 38 and 45.
- ¹¹³ Mookherjee, Nayanika. 2008. gendered embodiments: mapping the body-politic of the raped woman and the nation in Bangladesh. Feminist Review, suppl. War 88 (Apr 2008): 36-53.
- ¹¹⁴ In the Bangladesh war for independence, 3 million died and there were 200,000 reported rapes.
- ¹¹⁵ Mookherjee, N. My man (honor) is lost but I still have my iman (principle): Sexual violence and articulations of masculinity. 2004. In South Asian Masculinities: context of change sites of continuity. Women Unlimited an Associate for Kali for Women. P. 143
- ¹¹⁶ Judy Hagen, Oxfam researcher, phone conversation January 2012.
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- ¹²⁰ Gender Assessment USAID/Bangladesh. 2010: 5-6
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- ¹²² MD. Mostfizur Rahman Khan Fardaus ARA. 2006. Women, Participation and Empowerment in Local Government: Bangladesh Union Parishad Perspective. Asian Affiars. 29:73-00
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- ¹²⁴ Sohini Paul and Pooja Ramavat Goel. 2010. NCAER. Decentralisation in Bangladesh.
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