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HUAIROU COMMISSION
Women, Homes & Community

Capacity Development Of Grassroots Networks To Become Effective Partners In Local Governance For Poverty Eradication:

Lessons from Below

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I. Introduction

Capacity development is both a means and an end for sustainable human development. It empowers people to realize their potential and better use their capabilities, and assures ownership and sustainability of development programmes. A broader, more complex view of capacity development is thus emerging. It goes far beyond training or systems and structural improvements of formal organisations. It means a society-based approach, building consensus a round national goals and programmes, using existing capacities, focusing on people and incorporating characteristics of good governance.[1]

United Nations Development Programme, 1997

Capacity building is different for different actors at different levels, local to global. For grassroots networks to become effective partners to local government, capacity development is needed for civil society, local government and other financial institutions that support grassroots initiatives. This document outlines the capacity building and support needs of grassroots networks at all levels to combat poverty. It then posits what capacity building and support requirements can help build effective alliances between grassroots networks and other institutional actors. Finally it outlines what government and donors can do to legitimise the influence of grassroots networks to become an effective force so communities can have a say in determining their own destinies.

Why capacity building?

Capacity building is needed is to help communities plan, prioritise their needs, determine strategies to address these needs and concerns, and for both communities and local government to partner effectively to address these needs. Capacity building can be seen as a tool towards empowerment of the poor particularly women.

Capacity Building, Mahila Samakhya Karnataka, India:
The Path to Empowerment

[1] *Capacity Development, Technical Advisory Paper 2*, United Nations Development Programme, Management Development and Governance Division, Bureau for Policy Development, 1997.

What is capacity building?

There are several definitions for capacity building. However from the perspective of grassroots networks, the following components form the core of capacity building:

- Human resources development which is building people's information base, decision making capacities, negotiation and articulation skills, technical know-how, managerial skills, and finally the capacity to reflect and evaluate development processes.
- The creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks for grassroots communities to participate and influence development processes
- Institutional development of communities, and especially women.

How can capacity development be sustainable?[2]

- *Creating an enabling environment* that allows different groups of people the space, the opportunity to determine their needs, issues and areas for capacity development. For grassroots women, having a separate space and time thus becomes a first step towards any capacity building measure.
- *Responsiveness* of the very design of capacity building to the needs, timing and conditions of its recipients. No prescribed set of measures or programmes can be used for all groups of people at all times. Women with their reproductive and productive responsibilities and constraints on their mobility, for example, may often need a training programme that is hands on, brought to them at night after their housework rather than one which requires that they travel outside their communities into a classroom setting.
- *Equitable, Pro-Poor, Gender sensitive* in aim, content and design. Programmes that do not specifically address the needs and conditions faced by the poor or marginalized groups typically leave them out. Thus any capacity building programme should in its overall goal take into account the needs of the poor, particularly poor women no matter what the subject, and in the very content of the training embed gender sensitisation and a distinct gender perspective and in its very design enable women to participate. Any equitable programme should in aim, content and design take into consideration their needs and conditions faced by the poor.
- *Participatory* where all people, men, women, the poor have a voice in every aspect of the capacity building process, including in their monitoring an.
- *Accountable* where the capacity building ultimately benefits those for whom it is designed.
- *Efficient* based on the particular needs of the individuals and designed make the best use of resources.

In an information age, every local initiative has global potential. Not only can information be made easily and widely available but people too are seeking information to better their situations. To improve livelihoods and living conditions, grassroots women in the north and the south are organizing themselves at every level. At the community level, community based organizations form the very foundation at which any development activity takes place. At state, national, regional and

[2] *Capacity Development: Technical Advisory Paper 2*, United Nations Development Programme, Management Development and Governance Division, Bureau for Policy Development, 1997

global levels, networks of organizations such as GROOTS international and coalitions of global networks such as the Huairou Commission now have brought the voices of grassroots women into the international arena.

What does governance mean for grassroots networks?

Through decentralization of government and devolution of power and decision-making, resources have become increasingly locally based and visible to communities. Grassroots community-based movements have proliferated across the globe both as a response to globalization but also because more communities are taking on development related issues. Increasingly communities are rejecting the notion that governments, corporations or any other top down or trickle down processes work for them. Instead, today movements on the ground see their roles in development processes as integral and are now acting on the belief that it is them and them alone who need to be at the heart of decision making that determine the type of development taking place in their communities.

Thus for grassroots women today, local governance represents a new opportunity for them to take charge of their lives and of development processes in their communities. Governance represents an opportunity to partake in decision making processes on all aspects of community and economic development including employment, housing, credit, food, shelter, water, sanitation, health, education, transportation among private and public goods and services that impact on their lives.

On the ground the institutions proliferating locally include community-based organizations which are often though not always linked to the non governmental organizations that support them or that have helped initiate them. Globally the Huairou Commission and GROOTS International represent global grassroots networks and institutional partnerships that bring the voices of the grassroots directly into the global arena.

Scope and Methodology of the Report: This report will validate the voices of the grassroots, their innovations and initiatives and draw heavily on the body of work collected through the Our Best Practices Campaign of the Huairou Commission. Chapter 3 summarizes the capacity building needs and initiatives of grassroots networks that could be supported. Chapter 4 discusses the effective ways of creating alliances between grassroots groups at different levels and how they can be connected as a force to promote governance at different levels where it will draw upon the on-going initiatives of the Huairou Commission and its partner networks including GROOTS International. Finally Chapter 5 summarizes the types support donors and government can provide to create an enabling environment based on where grassroots groups already are. First however before going any further it would be useful here to define and identify for the reader the global institutional players that represent the voices on the ground and the relationships between some of these networks and their global partners.

II. Global Grassroots Networks

2.1. *GROOTS International*

GROOTS International is a loose international network of grassroots women's organizations that began in Nairobi, 1985 where the founders of GROOTS noted the conspicuous absence of grassroots organizations in the UN global meetings. From then on till today GROOTS international has continued to grow. GROOTS International is now an international network of grassroots women's organizations whose presence is visibly felt in the international meetings like The Decade for Women's Conference in Beijing and Habitat in Istanbul, Turkey.

GROOTS International is unique in that it offered a space in the international arena for grassroots women to dialogue and partner with each other and to collectively negotiate with other institutional actors. It represented a break-through where community based women in the north and the south through dialogue and communication were able to see large commonalities despite the differences and thereby forge common strategies. Founding organizations include NCNW (USA), ORAP (Zimbabwe) and the Mother's centers (Germany).

In March of 1995, four international organizations concerned with strengthening women's capacities -- Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS International), Habitat International Coalition-Women & Shelter (HIC-WAS), International Council of Women (ICW), and Asian Women and Shelter (AWAS) formed the Women, Homes and Community Super Coalition (SC). The momentum built by the SC at the grassroots tent in Huairou at the Fourth World Women's Conference, and during the Habitat II process led to the formal launching of the Huairou Commission (HC) at the Habitat II Conference in 1996.

2.2. *The Huairou Commission*

Founded in 1995, the Huairou Commission was formed as an international partnership body made up of grassroots women's networks and their partners from local governments, academia, NGOs, the United Nations and other agencies. Over the past six years, these partnerships have grown dynamically through local, regional and global exchanges, organizing around global events, collaborative projects, and network communications. The networks that form the core of Huairou

Commission include Asian Women and Shelter Network (AWAS), GROOTS, Habitat International Coalition Women and Shelter Network (HIC-WAS), International Council of Women (ICW), WEDO, Women & Cities Network, and the Women and Peace Network. HIC Shelter International, a grassroots organizational network focused on organizations working on housing related concerns and WEDO, a global network of women's organizations working on environmental and development related issues also belong to the Supercoalition.

The Huairou Commission (HC) aims to advance grassroots women's capacities worldwide to create and strengthen sustainable communities by forging strategic partnerships. The HC is thus about:

- Building on, broadening, strengthening and sharing grassroots knowledge
- Strengthening grassroots leadership to influence decision making processes which shape their communities
- Transforming policies and institutions by working with partners on engendering community development

> The Huairou Commission links grassroots women to broader policy debates and practices through several strategic and thematic areas. Within the HC framework, grassroots women are working to equip themselves with research, information, tools, skills, practices, and support systems so that they can achieve the objectives, which emanate from their grounded realities. They are forming partnerships and networks, which enable them to introduce strategic influences in, mainstream global development policy debates. Through representation, the Huairou Commission represents grassroots women's positions on policy-making bodies such as the Steering Committee of UN-HABITAT Good Urban Governance Campaign.[3]
>
> Achola P. Okeyo, UNDP

Some of its other goals are to highlight women's concerns globally in the development of sustainable settlements and communities and second to identify and publicize what they would consider good practices from the perspective of women, homes and communities. Another role the HC plays is to engender development practices, policies and research. Its work globally remains grounded in concerns that stem directly from the work in communities managed by grassroots women and their organizations themselves.

The Vice Mayor, Prague, addressing the Huairou Commission Our Best Practices Task Force and the Czech Mothers, YMCA, Prague, February 2001.

2.3. Our Best Practices Campaign Task Force

The Huairou Commission (HC) launched its Our Best Practices Campaign (OBPC) in 1999, a three

[3] The Huairou Commission: Status Report On Engendering Governance: Local To Local Dialogues By Achola P. Okeyo, UNDP, February, 2002.

year effort that harvests community building practices all over the world. The HC celebrates and activates the remarkable contributions grassroots women make to their communities. A task force was created which met twice once in Mumbai hosted by Swayam Shikshan Prayog, India and a second time in the Czech Republic hosted by the Czech Mothers Centers. These events were combined with peer exchanges where the task force got to see the work of the hosting organizations.

For the first time through the global campaign a global effort was made to take seriously the everyday knowledge and practical solutions to problems and innovations on the ground created by grassroots women. The two key areas of concern, namely local governance and community participation, of the United Nations and the HC were focussed on in this campaign. This report is based on the findings and knowledge base created through this Campaign.

The support for the Our Best Practices Campaign of the Huairou Commission and this paper came from the LIFE program of the IDG/BDP/UNDP UNDP. LIFE is a UNDP global flagship programme to promote local-local dialogue and partnership between NGOs, CBOs, Local Governments and Private Sector for improving the living of the urban poor and influencing policies for participatory local governance. Using "upstreaming - downstreaming - upstreaming" approach, LIFE provides small grants (up to US$50,000) directly to NGOs and CBOs for need based participatory community-based projects in urban poor communities; supports capacity development of local actors and promotes advocacy and policy dialogues using the experience of the projects. LIFE is in operation in 12 developing countries where the LIFE national programmes are managed and monitored by multi-stakeholder National Steering Committee. In addition LIFE supports regional and global NGOs and Cities Associations to demonstrate and advocate participatory local governance for sustainable human development.

III. Capacity Development and Support Needs of Grassroots Networks

3.1. *Capacity Building at the Local Level: An Overview*

Grassroots communities and local government both need capacity development to combat poverty. For grassroots communities to improve the livelihoods and standards of living of their members require a range of different types of support. These categories of support include:

- Basic education would include but also go beyond functional numeracy and literacy
- Giving people the skills to access information
- Gender
- Governance
- Community and economic development
- Rights
- Health

3.2. Education

Women continue to make up 65% of those worldwide without basic reading skills. High rates of illiteracy clearly affect a women's economic stability and civic engagement, diminishing their ability to effectively contribute to relevant development policies.[4]

Graduates from Khayelihle Pre-school at ORAP headquarters, 1998.

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), 2002

In the north, the poor often lack basic educational qualifications such as college degrees or even high school diplomas. Thus educational programmes helping the poor attain these qualifications in the first world or attain skills that can get them jobs or build their confidence and leadership skills such that they can better compete for jobs are some of the needs that NGOs in the north fulfill. In the south, the needs are far more basic and capacity building can well begin with basic functional numeracy and literacy but go well beyond this to providing women the tools needed to access information that is vital and pertinent to their survival needs. Thus education needs to be more broadly defined.

Educational gaps are often addressed towards the goal of either integrating people into mainstream educational institutions or into the economy. Sometimes innovative government educational programmes like Mahila Samakhya Karnataka (Box 3.1)[5] in India can serve to integrate poor young

[4] *Women's Major Group Statement on Capacity Building*, WEDO, Bali May 27, 2002.
[5] Revathi Narayanan, Sangeetha Purushothaman and Simone Purohit in *Engendering Development and Governance: Grassroots Women's Our Best Practices* edited by Sangeetha Purushothaman and Monika Jaeckel, on behalf of The

girls back into schools and educate poor older women just as well as any NGO provided they are set up with the flexibility that the needs of this population demands. MSK positions literacy in a larger context of self-reliance, self-esteem and social change. Education here covers the entire gamut of knowledge and informed action leading to a better quality of life for poor rural women. Samakhya's philosophy is "Education for empowerment".

Thus central to capacity building for the grassroots, is education as a tool for empowerment of poor communities and particularly for the empowerment of women.

3.3. Information

Poverty is a function of both lack of access to resources and to information both. Providing people with the resources is not anywhere nearly as empowering as providing them the means and the information needed for them to access these resources themselves. Thus the need for widespread demystification and dissemination of information in a form that is accessible to the grassroots is an important pre-requisite to growth and development. This need varies in form from region to region. In the first world access to decision making structures and to resources entails difficult application formats and procedures requires that information channels be opened up to a broader audience through capacity building. In the third world literacy continues to remain a major barrier to access to information. In Eastern European countries information dissemination plays a vital role in the democratization process.

Box 3.2. The Means for Information Dissemination

- Peer exchanges and learning
- Participatory research aimed at bridging the gap between knowledge, reality and growth and where the ownership of knowledge remains with the grassroots
- Participatory monitoring and evaluation where the indicators are determined by the grassroots as useful to measuring their own progress
- Use of the media and the internet
- Participatory video where people tell their own stories to each other and the larger public.
- Publication of best practices
- Creation of resource centers
- Creation of training curricula and programmes
- Creation of fora for dialogue and sharing of information among grassroots organizations
- Creation of fora for dialogue and sharing of information among government agencies
- Creation of fora for dialogue between government, financial institutions and civil society.

The above means for information dissemination and broadening access to knowledge is drawn from the knowledge base harvested through on going work and global campaigns of GROOTS and the Huairou Commission such as Our Best Practices Campaign and the GWIAs.

Build People's Skills and Capacities to Access Information and Resources

Box 3.1. Mahila Samakhya, India: A National Model on Education as a Tool for Empowerment

"Without literacy there would have been many problems and complaints in the Panchayat and I would not have known." Laxmibai, a Sangha member and member of the village local government

Mahila Samakhya is a national organization and exists in several states. One state subsidiary Mahila Samakhya Karnataka is described here. Mahila Samakhya was formally launched in Karnataka in April 1989 and grew to reach out to 19,414 women in 1,057 villages. MSK successfully set up 350 non-formal education (NFE) centers. The vision of the NFE centers was to provide educational opportunities for poor rural children, especially girls denied access to education due to poverty, gender discrimination and the rigidity of main stream education systems. Overall, MS's efforts in literacy have focused on reducing female dropout rates by providing the community with support structures like crèches and NFE centres.

Community Mobilization: The main strategy was to organize women into sanghas or collectives. Sanghas represent a non traditional space and time which enables women [illegible], determine priorities, seek information, and initiate change at their own pace. Through the collective energy of all the women the sangha becomes the vehicle of transformation.

Mahila Shikshan Kendra

Social Development: Women are given training on legal literacy. Consequently several sanghas have organized anti-alcohol demonstrations and opposed child marriage, practice of witchcraft (Banamathi), Harijan exclusion from temples and the abuse of women by forest officials.

Literacy: *Mahila Shikshana Kendras (Schools for girls) are* residential schools which give girls from poor, deprived families not only education but a whole new life. Enacting plays on gender discrimination and social evils and learning basic skills like knitting, sewing and cooking… are all in a day's work. For older women, literacy camps and workshops have given many women the skills to read and write. For women in local government these skills have been particularly useful in helping them govern effectively.

Economic Development: Sangha women are trained to start savings and credit activities. Each member puts away a part of her monthly income that is available as loans to members to meet their immediate needs thus getting women out of debt traps and out of the hands of money lenders. Sangha savings have reached impressive amounts. Sangha women's reputation for prompt repayment of loans is so high that whenever there are new programmes information is immediately sent to MS.

Traditional Medicine: A new breed of barefoot doctors has emerged in many villages. One of the focuses in the health program is the use of traditional system of herbal medicine. This is linked to keeping women's knowledge systems alive and giving legitimacy to their skills.

Governance: MSK has had important successes in the field of gender and governance. A total of 35,334 women were elected to the State's 5,641Gram Panchayats. Among the villages where MS works **210** sangha women were elected to panchayat posts. More than 100 are among the most marginalized. Winning elections is only one part of the empowerment process. MS played an important role in motivating women to stand, help file nominations, plan campaigns in pre and post election training. The fact that literacy is not a prerequisite for political responsibilities has further boosted their confidence.

3.4. *G*ender

A gender perspective[6] is crucial if the paradigm of human development is to break out of its current impasse. A gender perspective means recognizing that women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic growth and human development. They are the workers in both spheres – those most responsible, and therefore with most at stake, those who suffer the most when the two work at cross-purposes and those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two. The implications of this understanding are:

- The need to engender the political process by integrating a gender perspective at the highest policy levels and by strengthening women's capacities to hold economic and political policies and systems accountable.
- The collective need to uncover, research, support and strengthen economic alternatives (policies, programs, models, experiences) created by women themselves.

Gender sensitisation and training for men, youth and officials to imbibe a gender perspective helps develop women's potential to lead creative, useful and fulfilling lives in all spheres.

All institutions dealing with sustainable development should develop and implement a *gender mainstreaming* strategy[7]. The Uganda Women's Caucus is a national initiative to institutionalize women's participation within parliament and at lower levels of the political machinery. The Indian constitutional amendments represent a legal strategy used to mainstream women's political participation in local government (see section 3.5. on Governance). HHS mainstreams gender through gender sensitisation for all actors(Box 3.2). MSK also engages in gender sensitisation (Box 3.1).

HHS conducting a Legal Awareness Session explaining gender stereotypes for an NGO, India Development Service, Karnataka, India, May 1995.

Gender disaggregated information and data[8] should be collected and made easily and widely accessible on all issues related to sustainable development. Activities at international, national and local levels that generate gender-disaggregated data and develop gender-sensitive indicators should be linked to create synergies and avoid duplication or lack of comparability. Capacity building on how to collect such data at all levels and how to develop gender sensitive indicators for officials, NGOs and CBOs becomes the first step towards ensuring this becomes a reality.

[6] *Engendering Governance: The Karnataka Experience*, Sangeetha Purushothaman, Padma Anil Kumar and Simone Purohit, done on behalf of the Hunger Project, Best Practices Foundation, Bangalore, October, 1999.
[7] *Women's Major Group Statement on Capacity Building*, WEDO, Bali May 27, 2002.
[8] *Women's Major Group Statement on Capacity Building*, WEDO, Bali May 27, 2002.

Box 3.3. Gender Sensitization and Mainstreaming:
Hengasara Hakkina Sangha (Karnataka Women's Legal Education Programme)[9]

Registered in 1993 to impart legal rights education to poor women, HHS represents a unique blend of rights, development and governance approaches. It tailors legal literacy-training modules to the needs of poor rural women. The organization's priority is to teach grassroots women to negotiate better, bargain effectively and access their rights, working within a rights framework. To raise women's awareness of their fundamental rights and inform them about law through a community based approach.
Strategies: Strategies include legal training, gender training and advocacy to existing women's groups, local authorities, bank managers, judges, lawyers, teachers, administrators and NGO activists.
Impacts: Women have used the law as a tool to negotiate more effectively. Women tell other women about women's rights in traditional meeting places, which has the desired multiplier effect. Hands-on learning demystifies the functioning of the courts, lawyers and judges.

Gender Sensitisation and Training for all Stakeholders where the explicit goal for capacity building is the empowerment of women

3.5. Governance

Several innovations exist in the field of governance including affirmative action initiatives such as those in India and Uganda and gender budgeting in South Africa. Some of these will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4 under roles played by NGOs in local governance. However for the purpose of capacity building here what is important is that it is not simply having marginalized groups in positions of power but enabling them and building their capacities to utilize these positions and govern effectively.

Increase Not Just Grassroots Participation and Representation in Local Government, but also Provide then the Information and Tools Needed to Govern Effectively

[9] HHS, India, Submission to the HC Our Best Practices database, 2001.

Box 3.4: NGO Capacity Building Initiatives in Local Governance in India:[10]
Civil Society Interventions in the Panchayati Raj System

The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian constitution mandated that a third of all local government positions must be held by women. This made for a radical transformation in local government bringing in close to a million women into power into India's government overnight. One major need of this population and therefore one outcome has been the development of a large body of capacity building measures and modules by the NGO sector to promote women's political participation.

Pre election training on reservation of seats, nomination (paper work, fees, certification), campaigning and voting. Political education here means mobilising people, especially women to vote in elections, to file nominations, campaign and even question candidates. NGOs provide support to boost the morale and confidence of the candidate throughout campaigning.

Panchayat women being trained by ISST, Karnataka, 1994.

The Right to Information Movement[11]: Just having women in power will not help them govern. Women need to have full information. This includes provision of full information on candidates, budgets programmes, and the scope of decision-making in all tiers of local government. The right to information means that the electorate has a right to know about their candidates, their party manifesto and campaign agenda and whom they are voting for. People have a right to know what to expect from their office bearers once in power. Its inherent implication is the creation of transparency of political processes and capacity building of the electorate is to create and demand processes that ensure this transparency.

Post Election Training: Once elected, members have the tasks of forming the government, initiating its functioning, understanding procedures, roles and responsibilities. Here NGOs played multiple roles.

- Training women on the effective functioning of the panchayats, mobilizing women to participate in them, responding to them and being articulate about their needs.
- Mobilizing women citizens, bringing them information, building their confidence and leadership abilities, undertaking political education, setting up training systems and orientation programmes.
- Disseminating information on various government programmes, procurement, allocation of funds, eligibility criteria and administrative procedures.
- Gender sensitization to change attitudes of men and the community.
- Providing links between rural women and the rural power structures viz. grass-roots organizations, local bureaucracies and panchayats, linking CBOs to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- Collaborating with the government to implement programmes, plans and activities for women.
- Need based training which is continuous and based on member's real experiences and problems.
- Training elected members on reproductive health, AIDs awareness, legal literacy, micro planning, vision building and leadership are some new innovative local governance capacity building initiatives

[10] *Engendering Governance: The Karnataka Experience*, Sangeetha Purushothaman, Padma Anil Kumar and Simone Purohit, done on behalf of the Hunger Project, Best Practices Foundation, Bangalore, October, 1999.
[11] This movement originated Rajasthan state, India and its practices on ensuring transparency through capacity building of the electorate and general public are rapidly spreading to other states in India.

3.6. Community and Economic Development

Most economic and financial institutions have in built biases again the poor. Thus building alternative institutions is one starting point for the poor beginning with self help groups. SEWA described represents an alternative economic institution owned by poor women themselves designed to work for the poor, not against it, unlike mainstream financial institutional structures. Thus SEWA represents one type of alternative economic institution of grassroots women. Other include informal collectives and federations of collectives. The capacity building mainly focuses on teaching women how to save and build their credit worthiness.

Box 3.5: The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Bank: Women's Self-help for Poverty Alleviation[12]

SEWA, Ahmedabad was established in 1971. In turn, 4,000 self-employed women formed the Shri Mahila SEWA Sahakari Bank in 1974 as a cooperative bank to provide credit to self-employed women, empower them and reduce their indebtedness. Qualified managers hired by the Board professionally run the bank and the Reserve Bank of India supervises its operations.

Activities: Initially the SEWA Bank concentrated on attracting deposits from self-employed women. It next served as an intermediary between nationalized banks and the poor to get loans. Through SEWA's lobbying, 6,000 members received nearly Rs 25,00,000 in credit at a low 4 percent interest rate. In 1976, the SEWA Bank began giving loans to its depositors from its own funds. Today it has lent 100 million rupees to 22,538 poor women for economic activities. Women are encouraged to save with the bank and register their savings account and assets in their own names. Members themselves apply for loans, usually unsecured, or through the bank's field staff. The bank processes the application through a loan committee by carefully reviewing the applicant's income-generating ability, financial status, soundness of working conditions and ability to repay. There are no subsidies or grants. The Bank borrows and lends at market rates. It provides loans with a repayment period of three years for *productive* purposes such as for working capital, buying tools of trade and capital investments like a house, a store or work space.

Steps: The first step is to extend bank credit to highly indebted women to end their indebtedness. Once a woman is free from exorbitant interest rates, the second step is to use her new credit productively to generate more income to repay the bank loan and build up working capital. Before borrowing, while repaying and after repayment, SEWA encourages its members to save. Around 10 per cent of women face difficulties in repayment, especially in times of crises. SEWA has learned that support rather than harassment strengthens the Bank's image as a friend of the poor and results in better repayment and is flexible in rescheduling installments at these times.

Impact: The SEWA Bank breaks the vicious circle of indebtedness and dependence on middlemen and traders, and increases women's bargaining power. They can organize themselves into cooperatives and develop the skills and confidence necessary to deal with formal and non formal institutions. Gradually, members are trained in banking and this inculcates a sense of thrift. The SEWA Bank provides a parallel flexible banking infrastructure to serve the self-employed and the small businesses. A large number of members now have their own hand-carts, sewing machines, looms and working tools. Many have upgraded their skills, developed more business and increased their income.

[12] Source: http: cwis.usc.edu/dept/elab/oconnell/sewa.html

One major finding in a participatory planning project conducted in Hubli Dharwad twin city region in India in a Indo-British action research project was that while it was easy to plan with the poor, it was far more difficult for the poorest (i.e. landless men and women who had absolutely nothing). Meeting after meeting showed that they simply could not come up with solutions to improve their livelihoods. Thus it was realized for this group to start somewhere, a major amount of capacity building in the form of exposure visits, skills building and confidence building would have to precede planning.[13]

Organizations like BAIF in India and ORAP in Zimbabwe have a great deal of experience in income generation[14].

ORAP savings and credit client, Victoria Falls, attends to customer, 1999

Some tried and tested strategies developed by NGOs in community and economic development:

- Formation of community-based self-help groups (SHGs).
- Formation of women's cooperatives or unions as in the case of SEWA below.
- Introduction of savings and credit in the south and creation of revolving funds as a debt reducing strategy and building a flexible, women-operated, parallel banking system.
- Collective or group purchase to introduce women to markets where consumption needs are assessed and SHGs buy goods wholesale and sell it at retail prices to their members.
- Participatory rural appraisal techniques which helps a community assess its resources, skills, institutions and needs.
- Participatory planning exercises.
- Market assessment by the poor of local markets to determine economic opportunities.
- Organizational and management training such as accounts, records and book keeping.
- Linkages of self help groups to government programmes and bank credit as a way to overcome institutional barriers to access faced by individuals.
- Introduction of value adding technologies that allow women to earn the worth of their products and eliminate middle men.
- Training on product identification, assessment and writing sound business proposals.
- Technical training or skills training geared to specific products.
- Training on marketing of products.

[13] *Participatory Action Planning Process In The Peri-Urban Interface: The Twin City Experience, Hubli-Dharwad, India* by Meera Halkatti and Dr. Sangeetha Purushothaman presented in the Conference 'Rural-Urban Encounters: Managing the Environment of the Peri-Urban Interface' at the Development Planning Unit, University College London, United Kingdom, 9-10 November 2001

[14] Sangeetha Purushothaman and Monika Jaeckel, *Challenging Development* on behalf of GROOTS International, Books for Change: Bangalore, May 2001.

Linking community and economic development: this is a common strategy used where a community need once identified is turned into an income earning opportunity (Box 3.6).

Community Mobilization and Building People's Organizations is the First Step to Economic Empowerment

3.7. Health and Environment

Box 3.6: Urban Solid Waste Management:
Examples of Community Development turned into Economic Opportunities[15]

Ahmedabad: The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) has assisted in forming cooperatives among women to develop alternative skills to waste gathering and sorting. Despite difficulties arising out of secret deals and corruption in the trade of waste paper from government offices to contractors, women have persevered to advance themselves beyond picking scarps. The women are concentrating on gaining more autonomy from paper contractors, agents and mills because at present they are still paid only 10 percent of the price that contractors are able to obtain when they again sell the paper to the mills. The women have acquired a warehouse in the hope of bypassing the middlemen. Their long-term goal is to own a paper processing plant.

Bangkok: Community cooperation has developed among four hundred households who live and are engaged in waste-recycling work near Bangkok's On Nooch dump site. Cooperation is based on the resident's desire to acquire land and low-income housing. A Bangkok-based NGO has been working with the community. They have been successful in resisting eviction by the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority in 1984, and have since found a suitable land to purchase. Funds for the land are coming from household contributions and from collective waste gathering drives held once a month.

Bandung: In the early 1980s, a group of faculty with Dutch funding aided a squatter-picker community (Jati Dua) in community development and the improvement of waste recycling. The Jati Dua people, about thirty families, learned techniques of composting and fish and rabbit raising. They developed a nursery for growing compost seeds gathered from refuse. This project was disrupted when, in 1983, the local government evicted them from their squatter settlement and dispersed the families to different resettlement sites around Bandung. The cooperative has since been reformed and has purchased land so as to reunite the community. Housing units have been designed with the assistance of the Dutch Women's Association.

Source for Ahmedabad, Bangkok and Bandung: Furedy (1990).

Manila: An average 2,650 tonnes of solid waste per day is generated in Metro Manila. 1,675 per day tonnes are collected by the Environmental Sanitation Centre and 155 tonnes per day by other private haulers. 70 percent of generated waste is collected. 820 tonnes per day is either recycled, burned, scavenged by itinerant scavengers, falls into the sewers, or is not collected. The biggest of the city's nine dump sites is the enormous "Smokey Mountain" consisting of about 34 hectares of reclaimed land from the Manila Bay that rises 40 metres above sea level. There are 3,000 to 5,000 persons scavenging at the nine dumpsites.

Source: Uriarte, F.A. (1989) cited in UNESCAP (1990).

Health care is generally something women neglect and poor women neglect even further as other family needs are prioritized by women and their families over those of women. Often poor health is

[15] Box reproduced from *State of Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific, 1993*, United Nations, New York, 1993.

a major obstacle to economic progress, or for that matter, progress of any kind. Health depends on environmental cleanliness. Good practices of environmental management therefore often lead to improved sanitary conditions and better health. These linkages points towards partnerships that can design holistic community based solutions where a series of inter-related issues from health, environment, sanitation, crime, employment, and gender concerns can be addressed simultaneously. Therefore capacity building strategies to increase the poor's access to health is to re-acquaint communities with their traditional medicinal and health systems, getting communities and local government to take more responsibility, and mobilize the community to create opportunities wherever there are needs for sustainable income generation which also takes care of the gap in services. Examples from the campaign on best practices of the Huairou Commission include Mahila Samakhya (India), Tuelewane (Kenya) and Social Mobilization (Bangladesh) in the south and the Natural Child Birth (Germany) and Mother Centers (Czech Republic).

Mahila Samakhya Karnataka builds women's capacities on traditional health care systems which brings affordable medicines and preventative health care measures to their door steps and in turn becomes an income generating activity for some women. India Development Service, another NGO in Karnataka in a Ford Foundation supported programme trains and builds a cadre of village health workers and successfully negotiated with the village panchayats to pay them a monthly honorarium, thus building in sustainability into local community health systems.

The Tuelewane group trained, rehabilitated and employed the youth who were ex-criminals as night guards thus reducing crime, improving health and the environment. It is now building the capacities of other self help groups in Kenyan slums to do the same. Since its inception, the Tuelewane Women Group has been involved in many negotiations with local authorities and have convinced the City council to view them as an entity that provides essential services in place of the institutions.[16] These illustrations have shown how any problem in a community can be turned into an opportunity for change, mobilization and empowerment. Sustainable partnerships have been developed at local levels with community members, other self-help groups and local authorities.

Youth engaged in clean up activities: The Tuelewane Group

[16] *From Rhetoric to Reality: Gender Mainstreaming Urban Policies and Enabling Legislation*, Paper prepared for Expert Group Meeting on Urban Policies and Enabling Legislation, 12-14 November, Brasilia, By the Huairou Commission Our Best Practices Task Force, Sangeetha Purushothaman, Monika Jaeckel, and Catalina Trujillo.

Box 3.7: Women's Self Help Initiatives, Tuelewane, Kenya: [17]
Community Health, Urban Environmental Management and Income Generation

In 1995, twenty-five women from Mathare formed a group called "Tuelewane", a Kiswahili word meaning, "let us agree", to deal with the toilet and sewage issue. One pressing problem in Mathare was that the toilets had turned into dangerous garbage disposal sites, breeding grounds for epidemics like cholera, typhoid and scabies and had become hideouts for criminal activities. The community members were robbed, murdered and women constantly raped. Apart from the unclean water, the whole place was filthy with garbage that had accumulated over many years. The Tuelewane group decided to clear up the place, remove the garbage, clean the toilets and un-block the drainage system and sewers. As a first step women got permission from the local authorities to rehabilitate toilets used by about 35,000 people. The rehabilitated toilets were converted into bathrooms where each person would pay about Kshs 2 for a shower. The money obtained pays for a night guard, a cleaner, iron roofing sheets, timber and water pipes. One major achievement is the physical improvement of sanitation and access to clean water. Areas, previously disease ridden, are clean thereby leading to better health.

Toilets Filled to the Top with Garbage

During the last election, the Tuelewane group lobbied several other groups to support a woman candidate. Five groups even contributed 600 KSh for the chairperson of Tuelewane Women Group, to attend a management course at the Kenya Institute of Management so as to compete effectively with men. They now make the major decisions that affect their community and negotiate with police and local councils when necessary. The Chair of Mungano participated in meetings of the Nairobi Informal Settlement Committee hosted by Nairobi City Council and was elected to head the sub committee on Environment and Health and in the village committee of the Mathare Division Health Committee. Tuelewane Women Groups are also founder members of "Mungano wa Vikundi vya Kujisaidia", a network of fifty-two self help groups with 3,500 members drawn from different slums in Nairobi.

The Czech mothers have activities with play groups, discussion groups, breast feeding groups, language courses, courses on ecology in the household and alternative health care. Discussions on nutrition, health, alternative health care methods like homeopathy, and ecology play a bigger role in the Czech mother center as the number of children with allergies and allergy related illnesses are dramatically high in these countries due to higher pollution levels.

Helping Communities Identify Problems and Convert them into Opportunities for Change

Moving Towards Holistic Capacity Building that see Issues as Interlinked in the Lives of the Poor, Particularly Women

[17] Sangeetha Purushothaman and Monika Jaeckel, *Engendering Development and Governance: Grassroots Women's Our Best Practices* on behalf of The Huairou Commission from the Our Best Practices Campaign supported by the UNDP, Books for Change: Bangalore, May 2001.

Box 3.8: Social Mobilization for Sanitation, Bangladesh[18]

Sanitation, particularly rate of use of sanitary latrines by people is low (20%) in Bangladesh. This indiscriminate defecation practice is the main cause of pollution of surface water. The main strategies used by Social Mobilization for Sanitation (SMS) was to have local producers sell latrines to users at local costs. Poor families obtained loans from SMS to build laterines and repaid them. Women especially were involved through discussions with social and religious leaders in gender responsive ways to provide need-based training to all stakeholders (men, women and agencies). As a result the use of sanitary latrines increased from 23% to 64% and 21% to 29% in the intervention and comparison areas respectively. Local private latrine production centers run by women and men (separately) showed remarkable performance in promotion as well as supply of the sanitary latrines.

*3.8. **R**ights*

HHS conducting a Legal Awareness Session on Governance, Karnataka, India, May 1995.

Capacity development often has as one component raising people's awareness on basic human rights. In working with grassroots women, one component of training includes familiarizing women with their rights on issues related to marriage, children, property, inheritance, alimony and so on. Likewise, in governance the right to information movement referred to earlier trains people to demand transparency from government structures and political parties. Finally another essential component within government structures would include policy training on reforms, gender training, training on participatory methodologies. For example, Hengasara Hakkina Sangha trains men, women and officials on legal literacy (See Box 3.2).

Raising Awareness on Rights Tailored to the Local Context

There are various processes through which grassroots organizations currently educate government. The Soldier Mothers have created a virtual school for citizens. Through their raising awareness and through their publications they have widely disseminated information on rights on a city wide basis. In most post communist countries, where the state has played a top down role these new emerging grassroots organizations can play a crucial in educating civil society and government both on democratic processes. The Czech mother centers also create a space in which citizens can negotiate with local government, re-educate local authorities and provide an effective alternative to bureaucratic strategies.

[18] Social Mobilization for Sanitation, Bangladesh, Submission to the HC Our Best Practices database, 2001.

The Soldier Mothers of St. Petersburg[19]
A City Wide Model on the Role of Information Dissemination of Rights in Democratization

Our practice makes each woman a protector of her own rights, and encourages her not to wait on the help of faceless institutions. Member, Soldier Mothers

Role of Information: Knowledge is the best way to prevent totalitarianism and the only way to achieve a civil society in Russia is through pressure from below. Only a 'grassroots' culture can guarantee democracy in Russia. Therefore one aim of the organisation is to found a whole network of active citizens who help one another.

The Aim: As the name "School for Human Rights - We protect our sons" suggests, the main aim is not only to inform people, but to encourage their self-initiative and self-help. To do so, people need to know their rights and how to legally defend them. Since 1991 thousands of deserters have sought the "Soldiers' Mothers of St Petersburg" for help. The first step is always to get the recruit out of the military system of violence and power after which only are further steps to legally defend the young man's rights suggested.

Publication and Dissemination: Apart from oral lessons at the "School for Human Rights - We protect our sons", the Soldiers' Mothers publish brochures "Protection of conscripts rights" and "Protection of recruits' rights" to help people by passing on information and encouraging them to get active themselves.

Similarly FSWW supports grassroots women's leadership by advocacy, by providing input to the local government reform process and to the Social Contract Campaign during elections. The Uganda Women's Caucus uses gender dialogues and formed The Gender Information Centre which issued periodical publications of leaflets to all delegates which served as lobbying tools for information and education, the themes for which were derived from current events and issues debated in the Assembly.

Thus for government, recognizing the value of a grassroots culture towards democratic and other reform processes is a vital first step.

3.9. Capacity Building vs Support Needs

To create an enabling environment for people to address their own problems requires that policy makers and government first start to see themselves as facilitators and that they have the political will and commitment to see policy and structural changes through as this is not a smooth process. Also a concerted effort and commitment is needed to validate the fact that grassroots organizations in fact do know what their problems are and many have been able to evolve solutions that make sense. Thus policies and programmes for capacity building and support needs based on the innovations and best practices evolved by grassroots organizations are what might constitute a good starting point instead of top down measures that do not work. See Table 3.1. for the different capacity building and support needs of the grassroots.

[19] The Soldier Mothers of St. Petersburg, Submission to the HC Our Best Practices database, 2001.

Table 3.1: Creating an Enabling Environment: Capacity Building vs Support Needs of Grassroots Actors		
	Capacity Building Needs	Support Needs
3.1 Overall	3.1.1. Support existing capacity building initiatives	3.1.1. Resources for existing capacity building initiatives 3.1.2. Provide the space for grassroots networks and organizations to identify future capacity building needs 3.1.3. The central goal for all capacity building initiatives should be empowerment of the grassroots
3.2. Education	3.2.1. Functional literacy and numeracy 3.2.2. Education more broadly defined including skills development 3.2.3. Education for empowerment 3.2.4. Reviving traditional knowledge systems	3.2.1. Resources for flexibly designed education programmes 3.2.2. Adequate human resources or training of trainers 3.2.3. Transportation and child care needs to attend training
3.3. Information	3.2.1. Imparting the skills to access information 3.2.2. Imparting the skills to own local knowledge 3.2.3. Information dissemination on basic human rights, 3.2.4. Legal literacy to promote democratization and equality 3.2.5. Training on policy and legal reform	3.3.1. Resources for peer exchanges and horizontal learning 3.3.2. Media oriented towards serving the needs of the grassroots 3.3.3. Space and time for face to face interaction with banks, government and grassroots actors 3.3.4. Legal frameworks that promote equality and democracy 3.3.5. Dialogue forums on policy and reforms
3.4. Gender	3.4.1. Gender sensitization programmes for community men and women, and officials of banks, government, donor agencies and policy makers	3.4.1. Programmes and policies whose explicit goal is the empowerment of women 3.4.2. Programmes and policies that mandate equal participation of men and women 3.4.3. Separate planning fora for men and women 3.4.4. Exposure visits for the poorest, especially women and the landless 3.4.5. Programmes, resources that can cater separately to needs of men and women
3.5. Governance	3.5.1. Pre-election training 3.5.2. Post election training 3.5.3. Right to information movement 3.5.4. Needs based training 3.5.5. Training for government on the need for participatory mechanisms in planning, and other participatory methodologies	3.5.1. Policies that increase the representation of the grassroots and women in all levels of government 3.5.2. Resources for campaigning for the poor and women 3.5.3. Resources to building people's capacities to govern effectively 3.5.4. Policies and programmes that are not prescribed but need based 3.5.5. Policies and programmes that mandate participatory methodologies for planning implementation and monitoring of all government services.

**Table 3.1: Creating an Enabling Environment:
Capacity Building vs Support Needs of Grassroots Actors (Continued…)**

	Capacity Building Needs	Support Needs
3.6. Community and economic development	3.6.1. Community mobilization and self help group concepts, group dynamics, conflict resolution and organizational/management skills. 3.6.2. Savings and credit training 3.6.3. Exposure visits to government and banks and training on programmes and linkages 3.6.4. Market assessment by the grassroots 3.6.5. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) training for community, NGOs and government 3.6.6. Participatory planning training for all stakeholders 3.6.7. Technical training that close the gap between lab to land and that is relevant to local conditions 3.6.8. Creation of business proposals for income generation 3.6.9. Creation of proposals to fill community needs 3.6.10. Negotiation skills that help access public funds 3.6.11. Training on marketing	3.6.1. Resources and funding streams for community mobilization 3.6.2. Revolving funds for flexible credit for community and economic development 3.6.3. Government, banks and donors programmes made more transparent 3.6.4. Human resource development and trainers for participatory market analysis 3.6.5. Policies that mainstream PRA into government and donor programmes 3.6.6. Government and banks sensitized on participatory planning and policies that facilitate planning by communities instead of top down planning systems 3.6.7. Sharing of technical knowhow and collaboration between technicians and grassroots communities 3.6.8. Financial institutions share criteria on proposal assessment and collaborate with grassroots actors at the stage of proposal formulation. 3.6.9. Policies and planning mechanisms that accommodate community development proposals 3.6.10. Policies that promote fair trade direct trading among communities on products. 3.6.11. Policies that promote sustainable community and economic development where people have ownership over the development processes and can reap the benefits of their labour.
3.7. Health and Environment	3.7.1. Training on traditional health care systems that are affordable and easily available 3.7.2. Training on preventative health care measures 3.7.3. Gender training on the importance of taking care of women's health care needs	3.7.1. Policies and resources that increase the outreach of existing health care systems to poor women given their lack of mobility 3.7.2. Policies and resources that prioritise reproductive health 3.7.3. Policies and programmes that raise the awareness of poor communities on the gender bias in health care needs within families and communities.
3.8. Rights	3.8.1. Legal literacy training on women's rights for women and elected representatives 3.8.2. Training for the electorate and elected representatives on the Right to Information on candidates, budgets and expenditures in governance. 3.8.3. Training on policy, reforms and democratic processes	3.8.1. Create spaces in the form of policies and programmes on the importance of legal literacy training within government 3.8.2. Policies that prioritise transparency and mandate public consultations and reporting of actions and expenditures (accrued and planned). 3.8.3. Policies that provide the space to civil society to train government on reforms and democratic norms and processes.

3.10 Support Needs at Different Levels

Support needs for grassroots women, organizations and their networks needs to be examined separately. For grassroots women these include:

- Access to and control over resources and information
- Access to decision making arenas
- Transportation for women to access job and training opportunities
- Child care for women to better utilize employment and promotional opportunities and access training resources
- Policies that provide the grassroots, particularly women with equal opportunities to education, employment, health care and all other public facilities
- Policies that recognize the grassroots, particularly women for their contribution to the work force, reproductive work and their role in building social capital.
- Policies and programmes that address the needs and concerns of poor women
- Flexible credit to end debt and build their asset base.
- Accessible legal assistance

For grassroots organizations and networks, besides capacity building, support needs include:

- *Space* for community based organizations and networks.
- *Institutional support*, be it technical, financial, infra-structural or human resources
- *Access to decision making* arenas at all levels
- *Innovative untraditional forms of training methodologies*, not class room based but hands on learning methods based on peer to peer learning and sharing of experiences.
- *Developing a trained cadre of trainers or human resource development*
- *Programmatic and policy support* that supports the myriad roles community based organizations play in fostering sustainable development
- *Recognition and promotion* of the grassroots organizations' work, innovations and ideas through government and media support and publicity.
- *Documentation, dissemination and replication* of grassroots innovations, which improve and sustain livelihoods and the standard of living in a community.[20]
- *Partnerships to ensure sustainability* that upscale, mainstream and institutionalise their work without the grassroots losing ownership over the process
- *Convergence and coordination between government agencies* of their programmes to support participatory plans drawn up by communities
- *Gender sensitive, pro-poor policies* that support the work of grassroots organizations
- *Monitoring mechanisms and facilities* at local, national and global levels for women and the poor to monitor the actions of multilateral, government, corporate and financial institutions w.r.t. sustainable development[21].
- *Lobbying and advocacy* tools that put grassroots issues, problems and solutions on the political and decision making agendas of parties, government and policy makers.
- *Information communication technology*[22]

[20] *Women's Major Group Statement on Capacity Building*, WEDO, Bali May 27, 2002.
[21] *Women's Major Group Statement on Capacity Building*, WEDO, Bali May 27, 2002.
[22] *Women's Major Group Statement on Capacity Building*, WEDO, Bali May 27, 2002.

These are some support mechanisms that can contribute towards the creation of an enabling environment for the participation of the grassroots particularly women, at all levels, in community and economic development processes.

IV. Creating Effective Alliances Between Grassroots Groups to Promote Governance: Local, National and International Levels

4.1. *Partnerships*[23]

Partnerships for the grassroots span a *broad spectrum* of actors from professionals, academics, local governments, other local authorities (even the police), multi lateral donor and international institutions, other civil society actors and institutions, and to some extent, the private sector. Partnerships result in *building bridges* between different worlds and thereby challenge the norms in both worlds, expanding people's perspectives in each. Grassroots partnerships can exist at many levels, community, city, country, region, inter continental and global. It is important again in looking at effective alliances that we start grounded in what already is and build from these.

Building Alliances: Women from Mahila Samakhya Karnataka Come Together for a Mela or a workshop which builds capacities and networks sangha women members.

[23] Sangeetha Purushothaman and Monika Jaeckel, *Engendering Development and Governance: Grassroots Women's Our Best Practices* on behalf of The Huairou Commission from the Our Best Practices Campaign supported by the UNDP, Books for Change: Bangalore, May 2001.

This helps identify what good practices need more support, what needs replication and where the new initiatives that need support may lie.

The main strategy behind building self help groups (SHG) is to enhance the collective bargaining power of men and women at the grassroots which serves as a mechanism for their empowerment. As these community based organizations (CBO) grow from the individual to a community unit into a federation, into networks, coalitions of networks and so on, they take on larger responsibilities and play a more strategic role.

Box 4.1: Ingredients of a Good Partnership[24]

- Identifying and making transparent the principles upon which the partnership is based
- Getting to know partners, recognizing their contributions, needs and capacities
- Giving each partner equal voice and overcoming power differentials
- Creating mechanisms for long -term participation
- Good mediation
- Intra-organizational consensus building
- Regular on-going dialogue being central to the process instead of one time consultations
- Perceiving other stakeholders as potential collaborators rather than enemies

Suranjana Gupta and Monika Jaeckel, 2002

Building sustainable partnerships requires making transparent the principles upon which they are based on.

4.2. Partnerships at the Community Level

Box 4.2: Partnerships on Participatory Health, Hygiene and Environmental Management: Joseph Patel Wadi (JPW), Versova, Mumbai. [25]

Joseph Patel Wadi (JPW) was a typical community with dirty and unclean surroundings. The main problems faced by the JPW residents were poor waste management in terms of waste collection and disposal, water with low pressure, poor drainage and choked up toilets. The main aim of the Model Community Programme (MCP) initiated by UNICEF and All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIILSG), Mumbai was to empower communities to manage the environmental and sanitation issues in the settlement. Joseph Patel Wadi, selected to become a model community, had as its main objective to build people's capacities to overcome problems by involving all members of the community and functioning as a 'empowered community' in a mega city like Mumbai. The concept of separation of waste was introduced, which segregated dry and wet (organic) waste. To solve the water supply problem the community was provided wider water pipes and water sub-connections, to which the community contributed financially. AIILSG staff approached the local municipality and got financial assistance of 1.20 lakhs towards 14 new water sub-connections The water problem was solved and now the community is getting water with good pressure. Environmental pollution was dealt with through cleaning up and installation of toilets and through effective waste management via vermi-composting.

[24] Suranjana Gupta and Monika Jaeckel, New partnerships for a New Milleniium: The Stuttgart Model, February, 2002.
[25] Excerpts from *State of Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific, 1993*, United Nations, New York, 1993.

At the most basic level a dialogue between the CBO and local government helps prioritise grassroots issues and resource allocation for the poor, particularly for poor women. Sustainable examples of partnerships exist between self-help groups and local authorities (Boxes 4.2 and 4.3). Instances of state initiated partnerships like the Model Community Programme and Exnora in India have been shown to generate successful community participation.

To combat poverty the first step towards building equal partnerships is to enhance the collective bargaining power of the poor by mobilizing them.

4.3. Partnerships at the City Level

Box 4.3. Community Participation for A Clean Environment: Exnora, Madras[26]

Exnora International was formed in 1989, with the basic premise that community participation is essential to transform urban environments. The lack of basic amenities in Madras created problems like contamination of water supply, the overflow of sewage systems and the presence of informal garbage dumps. Exnora introduced the concept of the *street beautifier* who takes solid waste from individual households to containers. Exnora trains the street beautifier to separate waste at source. S/he can earn additional income by selling recyclables like plastic, paper, glass and metal scraps to agents and for producing and selling manure from vermi-composting using organic wastes. Rag pickers were provided employment and dignity of labour by giving them specially designed tricycles to collect waste and sweep the streets daily. The success resulted in the birth of 900 functioning Civic Exnoras in Madras each comprising 75 to 100 families operating in all sections of the city including slums. Each Civic Exnora functions as a grass-root-level autonomous non-governmental organization, which chalks out its own local programme to meet its own specific needs. Each household contributes Rs 10-25 for the street beautifier's salary, maintenance of the tricycle and purchase of materials for waste collection.

Here on a city wide basis organizations are able to forge and sustain change through sustained government initiative and involvement. Local institutions such as churches and farmers associations have been found to be natural allies of community based movements. In Nicaragua, the Revolving fund concept was an outcome of multiple partnerships of the national union of farmers and cattle ranchers, the Society for the Promotion of Economic and Social Development of Individual Producers (SAC-PROA) and the FEMUPROCAN, a federation of women producers[27].

4.4. City-wide partnerships Forged through Global Initiatives: The Local to Local Dialogues

What are the local to local dialogues? Forged by Huairou Commission and GROOTS International, the local to local dialogues represents an innovative global strategy which is grounded in local action. It is a method by which organizations engage in an on-going dialogue with local authorities to forge sustainable development. The Huairou Commission publicized the project through its global networks, GROOTS International, HIC Women and Shelter, International Council of Women (ICW), Women and Peace, Women Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), International Women and Cities Network. The local-to-local dialogue is a

[26] Excerpts from *State of Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific, 1993,* United Nations, New York, 1993.
[27] I.b.i.d.

methodology where according to Achola P. Okeyo, *dialogues become the means to open up channels of policy discussion for grassroots communities while at the same time amplifying an understanding of why gender matters, why participation is key to local decision-making and how democracy can be achieved in a very practical way on a common forum where anyone can have an idea about what needs to be done to solve common problems in a conflict free way.* This methodology and global strategy has been analysed one by one below. The reader however must keep in mind that the local to local dialogues have just begun and this is the progress thus far.

Box 4.4: CISCSA, Argentina: Local to Local Dialogues[28]

In Cosquin, Argentina, the Centro de Intercambio y Servicios para el Cono Sur (CISCSA) is working with three community-based groups including the Family Community Market (Mercado Communitario Familiar); the Council of Neighbourhood Centres (Consejo de Centros Vecinales); and the Women's Council (Consejo de la Mujer) and the muncipality.

Issues: In Cosquin the local-to-local dialogues facilitated broad-based participation on poverty alleviation, alternative livelihoods for women and environmental management. CISCSA linked gender, governance, economic development and environmental management through the "River Project" where the Council of Neighbourhood Centres is concerned with conserving water resources and the "Family Community Market," concerned with micro level entrepreneurship.

Strategies: A dynamic communications strategy encompassing on-going workshops with all stakeholders based on two cross cutting themes, 1) integration of a gender perspective 2) organizational inter relations across diverse communities. CISCSA utilized existing events of the international women's day and the Farmer's Market about the potential benefits, to the work of all stakeholders, of these two thematic issues.

Outcomes: Through these dialogues, CISCSA has brokered a new way of partnering between local actors enabling them to share information, share responsibility for common concerns, use information strategically to strengthen their relationships and place gender equality at the center of their actions. This, constitutes gender mainstreaming in local governance.

Thus what is new here is CISCSA's communication strategy where according to Achola P. Okeyo, *The Communication strategy was drawn up with three objectives in mind: 1) to enhance community awareness in connection with environmental conservation and disseminate the proposals of the River Commission; 2) stimulate popular participation in these areas; and 3) serve as a foundation for involving women living in Cosquin into municipal decision-making and the work of local organizations that are working on their behalf.*

In a historically state run country where democratic processes are just being established community based organizations serve as training grounds for consensus building and conflict resolution. Thus they pioneer new styles of leadership, decision making and governance and can build the capacities of local authorities previously accustomed to bureaucratic styles of functioning to now learn new democratic styles of governance and collaboration. The local to local dialogues thus serve as an ideal entry point for community based organizations to model a democratic norms and practices.

[28] Excerpts from The Huairou Commission: Status Report On Engendering Governance. Local To Local Dialogues By Achola P. Okeyo, UNDP, February, 2002.

Box 4.5: ICIWF, The Russian Federation: Local to Local Dialogues[29]

The Information Centre of the Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF) are engaged in local dialogues in Saratov, where approximately 900,000 inhabitants live. It involves the municipality, Association of Territorial Self-Governance Committees and NGOs with a membership of 450,000 and a local community consisting of 50,000 inhabitants.

Issues: The objective here is to strengthen community participation and involve women in decision-making processes in the face of inadequate federal legislation, emerging new structures and structural and policy reforms that are in progress. Concretely the issues are to oversee the schools, build mother centers and help communities have a greater say in decision making.

Strategies: Establishing working groups, discussions with local authorities, electronic bulletins.

Outcomes: The resources were used to plan and undertake 10 meetings with women's organizations, youth groups and self-governance committees. A three-day seminar was organized to bring together grassroots women organizations, local self-governance committees, law enforcement officials and local authorities. Another seminar brought together government departments, social workers and law enforcement departments to discuss crime prevention and safety of adolescents and women. As a result, a crisis center may be established in the city to address the problem of women and adolescent safety.

Any Mother Center, when first established, expresses universal types of needs such as basic institutional support, resources for space, utilities and so on. Many struggle for years before they deal with this issue head on which can best be dealt with through state support. Thus the local to local dialogues allow a space and forum to tackle these issues early on in the process.

Box 4.6: Local to Local Dialogues: The Mothers Center, Pampelika Beznice[30]

Mothers Center " Pampelika" Beznice, an NGO formed mostly by women on maternity leave works on issues of concern to themselves, their children and the general public. Registered in July 2000, it is a member of the Network of Mother Centers of Czech Republic.

Issues: In December 2001 the Center, who would like to be seen as a real partner in town planning, met informally with town representatives to seek financial help for heating expenses (about 32 000, Czech Crowns a year). One goal is to build a modern safe children's playground.

Strategies: A working group " PLAYGROUND" established by 5 center members sent a letter to the mayor and town representatives about the Local to Local project, asking to meet them and expressing the need to present the center's aims the town representative session.

Outcomes: The outcome of communications with the Mayor and town representatives were: possible places for the playground, the promise of future support, and the proposal to form a working team with two councillors.

[29] Excerpts from The Huairou Commission: Status Report On Engendering Governance. Local To Local Dialogues By Achola P. Okeyo, UNDP, February, 2002.
[30] Communication to the egroup on engendering local governance run by the Huairou Commission

Similarly in Tanzania also illustrates how the local-to-local dialogues can help poor women address key economic and legal problems around housing and settlement issues.

Box 4.7: The United Republic of Tanzania: Local to Local Dialogues[31]

In the city of Dar-es-salaam, the Women's Advancement Trust (WAT) in collaboration with three urban women grassroots groups, Mshikamano Housing Group, Mapambano Women Group and People's Voice for Development have forged the local to local dialogues.

Issues: Mshikamano Housing Group located in Mtoni Kwa Azizi Ali in Mtoni Ward, Temeke Municipal consists of 15 members of whom 11 are women. The group acquired land which was then taken over by local people which prevented the Mshikamano group from developing their plots. They took this as a challenge to solve through dialogues between the squatters and muncipal government. The Mapambano Women Group, with 30 grassroots women, located in Sinza A Ward, Knondoni municipal has been operating informally assisting each other mainly in terms of informal saving (popularly known as **UPATU)** and want to register their group.

Strategies: The Mshikamano Housing Group in collaboration with the local-to-local dialogue Tanzania project Coordinator, used the following strategies:
1. Met the local authorities such as Ward leaders, local councillors, community development officer to lobby and to influence decision- making at local authority in Temeke district.
2. Organize a session with lawyers to empower the group about the procedures for land acquisition, transfer and compensation as far as land regulations and laws are concerned.
3. Present their problem to the Municipal Director to get his views and decision.

The Mapambano Women group in collaboration with Local to local dialogue project coordinator discussed and agreed to use following strategies:
1. Capacity building on the roles of the group / Community Based Organizations.
2. Capacity building on the roles of the Saving and Credit Cooperative Society.
3. Involve the local authority in the operation of the group and its activities.

Outcomes: The chairperson of the Mshikamano Group together with 2 other members' began dialogues with the Mtoni Ward leader and their local councillor about the plot. The Mapambano Women's group have begun preparing the bylaws using input from the community development officer based in Sinza Ward.

An issue that could have become an area for conflict has been turned into an opportunity by the grassroots groups to be resolved through dialogue. In the process of these dialogues, the group's capacities have been built to:

- Formalize and register their organization.
- Learn to deal with land and legal issues.
- Built up alliances with local government.

[31] Excerpts from The Huairou Commission: Status Report On Engendering Governance. Local To Local Dialogues By Achola P. Okeyo, UNDP, February, 2002.

- Built alliances with lawyers
- Learnt about conflict resolution

The four groups engaged in local to local dialogues vary widely in terms of their capacity, situation they face locally, culturally and nationally. However, what is clear in the case of all the groups is that the dialogues are expanding their scope of work and their capacities both. Watching the local to local dialogues unfold, what is easily visible is that some groups need capacity building. According to Achola Okeyo[32], *In the case of LAC, the facilitating group is very experienced in these approaches and has organized a methodology that enables the groups to build on ongoing activities. Similarly, the Russian groups have still some way to go. Contending with large distances and problems of structural reform and slow bureaucratic structures, they have a major task ahead both in the area of capacity strengthening and in amplifying the best of the local-to-local dialogue methodology. Tanzania and Russia could benefit from a workshop to share learning from LAC and other groups with more experience with organizing and advancing the voice of women.*

The local dimension here is that it *enables local communities to use their own diversity creatively to solve local administrative and development management problems.* The global dimension to this initiative is that these organizations are in dialogue with each other through an egroup on engendering governance. Virtual discussions brought out the Stutgart success story of the mother centers movement, Germany which recently won the Best Practices Award from the Dubai Steering Committee which collaborates with the UNCHS. Winning such as Award is primarily useful not in its actual financial remuneration but in what the Steering Committee promotes in terms of partnerships and alliance building for the award winning organizations.

4.5. National Alliances and Partnerships[33]

Partnerships at national and international levels also help *shape policies*. The German youth welfare legislation was reformed through the Mother Centers input to include family self help approaches as part of government policy on municipal, state and national level. The Federal Family Ministry funds the National Association of Mother Centers, and together with the mother center movement created sustainability by influencing the legislative frame-work of state welfare programs to support of grassroots work and by introducing new funding regulations on state and municipal levels.

Information Dissemination at the First Mother Center Congress, Prague.1997.

[32] The Huairou Commission: Status Report On Engendering Governance. Local To Local Dialogues By Achola P. Okeyo, UNDP, February, 2002.

[33] Sangeetha Purushothaman and Monika Jaeckel, *Engendering Development and Governance: Grassroots Women's Our Best Practices* on behalf of The Huairou Commission from the Our Best Practices Campaign supported by the UNDP, Books for Change: Bangalore, May 2001.

Partnerships of groups associated with international networks like GROOTS, The Super-Coalition of Women, Homes and Communities and The Huairou Commission spanned the very local to the international. The advantage is that the deep-rooted knowledge accompanying local organizing that is grounded in experience can be transmitted globally. In fact networking has led to the rapid spread of the Mother Centers movement across national boarders.

Box 4.8: The Uganda Women's Caucus[34]:
A National Model for the Promotion of Women's Political Participation

The Uganda Women's Caucus formed in 1994, during the Constitution making process in Uganda marked a turning point in Ugandan politics. It brought together women of all walks of life who spoke with one voice and who had common objectives. With the affirmative action measure decreed by the Government, 51 women delegates out of 284 were members of the Constituent Assembly (CA), and it was they who formed the Women's Caucus.

Objectives and Strategies: The Women's Caucus was an innovative practice whose objective was to bring together all Constituent Assembly Delegates representing marginalized groups, to form a lobbying group to ensure increased participation of the hitherto marginalized groups in the governance of their country.

Process: Caucus members aired weekly radio programmes where issues under debate in the CA were examined. Gender Dialogues were high profile activities organised to discuss upcoming issues in the CA. They were hosted in prestigious places followed by a reception and even male delegates wanted to be associated with the Gender dialogues and the stand of the Caucus.

Impact: The percentage of women in the Local Government Councils is 45% presently and in Parliament there is 18% representation of women. A woman Vice President and women Permanent Secretaries representing about 19% were appointed. Women are represented on the eight constitutional commissions. The Caucus successfully lobbied for 1. an equal opportunities Commission to guarantee enforcement of the constitutional principles and 2. for the affirmative action quota to increase from one in every nine local council positions to one in three. Consequently women are now guaranteed a third of local government council seats.

Lessons Learnt: With a need for alliances the group forged links with grassroots women's organisations, high-level women in the public and private sector and women intellectuals, as well as the link with youth and persons with disabilities delegates in the Assembly.

Replicability and Transfers: The gender working group of the Constituent Assembly Women's Caucus formed an NGO called FOWODE. Through FOWODE activities, parliamentarians and the local government councillors have been encouraged to form caucuses.

One major success story of alliances at the national level is that of the Uganda Women's Caucus. One of the keys to the success of the Women's Caucus was its early acknowledgement of the need

[34] The Uganda Women's Caucus, Uganda, Submission to the HC Our Best Practices database, 2001.

for alliances. The group forged links with grassroots women's organisations, high-level women in the public and private sector and women intellectuals, as well as the link with youth and persons with disabilities delegates in the Assembly. The promotion of women's articulation, public speaking and negotiation skills can help better their position, status and capacities to deal with mainstream institutions. Training on strategies utilized by the Uganda Women's Caucus can help replicate a successful model of this kind that promotes women's political participation and improves their capacities to govern effectively.

Another role played by national partnerships is *information dissemination* of national policies and other national practices. Union de Vecinos, USA, partners nationally with the Washington DC-based Public Housing Residents National Organizing Campaign councils whose role is to provide them with vital information on national policies as well as information on strategies being adopted by similar groups in other parts of the country. The Mother Centers nationally in the Czech Republic and Germany play this role. National partnerships are also important in *shaping national laws.* In Bosnia, Prijateljice's partnerships include an informally organized reference group established in November 1996 of Bosnia with national and international NGOs focussing on legal frameworks. The group consists of 25 NGOs whose objectives include creating Law Draft on work of humanitarian organizations and citizens associations.

*4.6. **R**egional and International Alliances and Initiatives*

Monika Jaeckel, founder, German Mothers Center Movement sharing experiences with Czech Mothers, Prague, Mothers Centers Congress, 1997.

The HC participated in international conferences (Beijing Conference, Habitat Conference) and International exchange with other homeless people from Thornaby, UK with the support of Christian Aid and Church Action on Poverty, South Africa Homeless Federation, USG Cambodia and with the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights.[35]

Having partnerships at the international and national levels can facilitate local partnerships. In the Czech Republic, the Mother Centers have built sustainable partnerships with several ministries and parliamentarians at the national level. This resulted in the Central Government Office drafting a letter of recommendation to municipalities, recommending mother centers to local authorities. The Czech mothers see as one of their most important alliances their partnership with the German Mothers. A visit by the Czech mothers accompanied by Czech local government officials to Stuttgart, helped demonstrate local government support to the Mother centers in both countries. This strategy proved more convincing than if the mothers were to try and get their local government to buy into the initiative themselves. Such exchanges help educate both the grassroots groups and local governments.

[35] Organizing for Land and Housing, Social Inclusion and Human Development Samahang Maralita Para sa Makatao at Makatarungang Paninirahan (SAMA-SAMA)

Box 4.9: A North- South Intercontinental Partnership Initiative to Combat AIDS: AFRUS AIDS[36]

In 1998 and 1999, informal dialogues between USA Church-based women and their African sisters, mostly Huairou Commission members, gave birth to a concept for a joint initiative to address the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa. AFRUS is a partnership initiative among a faith-based groups and grassroots focused organizations in the United States of America and community organizations in Africa. Their vision is to empower grassroots women responding to the challenges of HIV/AIDS in Africa from an informed point of view. Women in Africa therefore uphold AFRUS as an important avenue to mobilize resources, information and technical support to halt the spread of the disease and care for those already infected. One essential component was to **give African women a leading role** in determining the structure and priorities of AFRUS AIDS. AFRUS-AIDS advocates a comprehensive approach to empower grassroots organizations in their struggle against HIV/AIDS. AFRUS-AIDS is committed to placing its broad network and resources at the disposal of African women to encourage intra/intercontinental dialogue among groups that share the same foci in the HIV/AIDS campaign.

The different partners in AFRUS illustrate the diversity of strategies currently in place:

- **Rwanda Women Network, Rwanda** whose mission is the promotion and improvement of the socio-economic welfare of women in Rwanda through helping them meet basic needs. *Polyclinic of Hope*"is a center started for rape victims during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The Center promotes a holistic approach to providing care to survivors, including clinical health care, psychosocial support, counseling, human and legal rights education, social/economic empowerment and HIV/AIDS prevention, awareness and home-care support.
- **Ilitha Labantu, South Africa is** committed to fight abuse of women and children through awareness raising, education and training campaigns.
- **Anglican Church/ Compassion Campaign, Ghana**: The campaign's goal is to "create a compassionate and supportive societal response to those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, to give them hope, to de-stigmatize HIV/AIDS while providing humanitarian services.
- **Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) and Uganda Community-Based Association for Child Welfare (UCOBAC), Uganda** Through FOWODE's training programmes awareness is raised towards the goal of preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- **GROOTS Kenya**, a Kenyan network of grassroots organizations whose aim is to empower grassroots women's groups and individuals. GROOTS Kenya builds capacity of communities on HIV/AIDS counselling and home-based care as a natural solution whose advantages included care for a patient in a familiar environment and reducing the risk of contracting infections in a hospital environment especially for immune compromised patients.
- **Health Education Counseling Organization (HECO), Kenya** is an organization dealing with HIV/AIDS awareness creation and counselling of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.
- **Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP), Zimbabwe** exists to fight poverty amongst the communities of women, men and youth. HIV/AIDS is seen as a disaster at household, community, national, regional, continental, and world levels. Against such a background HIV/AIDS at ORAP fall under the Disaster Response and Management.
- **Women Advancement Trust (WAT), Tanzania** works for promoting women's rights in the areas of human settlements development re. land, housing and security of land tenure at the grassroots level. They are in charge of all lobbying and advocacy activities.

[36] Esther Mwaura-Muiru, GROOTS Kenya/Huairou Commission, *Report on The AFRUS First African Regional Meeting*, 3rd April- 5th 2002 hosted by GROOTS Kenya at the Green Belt Training Center, Nairobi, May 7th, 2002.

Representing a unique type of partnership around the issue of forging community based strategies to combat AIDs, AFRUS is one outcome of the informal relationships that emerge out of partnership entities like the Huairou Commission.

Box 4.10: Information Centre of the Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF)[37]: A Model on the Vital Role of Regional Networks in Information Dissemination

The Information Centre of the Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF) was created in 1994 by initiative of several women's organizations and was supposed to be the main resource center in Russia and CIS countries. At present, the Information Center of the Independent Women's Forum is an organization with diversified functions. Some of its functions are to give consultations for women's NGOs, grassroots organizations, leaders of self-governance; to prepare analytical materials on women's position in society; to collects the information about events in the women's movement in Russia, CIS and foreign countries; to translate different materials into Russian, empowerment of women in local self-governance and neighborhood communities; to hold conferences, seminars and lectures for women's organizations.

The network's role is to encourage information exchange as well as concerted actions by women's organizations and thus establish a firm position for women and their concerns with institutions. Emphasis is also placed on supporting regional women's initiatives as well as on installing training programs.

To implement its goals ICIWF initiated the Association of the Independent Women's Organizations (36 organizations from Russia and 3 countries from CIS). In the framework of the Association activity a number of projects was implemented (for example, Network of Information and Educational Center in 10 Cities was created, Women's Network (in 5 cities) for Habitat Agenda promotion was developed, and etc.). ICIWF was put in charge of coordinating and developing the infrastructure required to organize international conferences, workshops and seminars. In addition, the ICIWF provides analyses on women's issues and offers a library of translations of otherwise inaccessible international literature on such topics as 'Women's Rights', 'Violence Against Women', 'Sex Trafficking', 'Women's Health', 'Ecology', 'Children', 'Family', 'Housing Reform', 'Self-help', and others.

A network of women's organizations (from Voronezh, Petrozavodsk, Chelyabinsk, Dubna, Tarussa, V.Novgorod, Saratov, Snezhinsk) was established for improving living conditions at the locality. In these cities practical results were archived in the enumerated issues. For instance, in Petrozavodsk 13 neighborhood communities were created, that joined for repairing their common space in social housing (municipal authorities co-financed this activity on competitive basis), Association of Self-Governance in Saratov started to create mother's and gender centers at the locality (this activity was financed by the regional budget). Good partnerships were established between local authorities and women's organizations in Chelyabinsk. Thus a new educational program for women leaders of self-governance committees was created. The same results were seen in some other Russian cities.

During 2000 - 2001 ICIWF held 10 interregional seminars in different Russian cities. The main topics were urban policy, partnership development, Habitat Agenda promotion and others. Since 1994 ICIWF has held more than 60 seminars, round tables, meetings, 35 of them are interregional ones (the total number of participants is more than 2500). Since July 2001 up to now ICIWF has held 8 interregional seminars on local policy and women's agenda in different towns for partnership development.

[37] ICIWF, Russia and CIS countries, Submission to the HC Our Best Practices database, 2001.

Regional models are appropriate for addressing regional issues. They are unable to respond to global concerns and design capacity building strategies with global relevance and scope. GROOTS' three pronged strategy for capacity building and the select outcomes shown below shows an impressive break through in this regard. Here in lies a network that is able to forge capacity building strategies that go beyond the needs of any one country or region but are relevant in several cultural and national contexts.

Box 4.11: Lessons from Groots Three Part Exchange: Kenya, Papua New Guinea, And North America[38]

Over a three-year period from March 1997 to August 1999, grassroots women from Canada, Kenya, the U.S. and Papua New Guinea participated in a unique three-part exchange. The exchange methodology is based on the premise that people learn most effectively from their peers. Exchanges facilitate the transfer of information, highlight grassroots women's work, strengthen leadership skills, promote international alliances and document on-going work. In the first year, women from Canada, Papua New Guinea, and the U.S. met with Kenyan women in Mathare Valley, one of the largest slum areas in Nairobi. They discussed issues of development, practices of community involvement, and the problem of violence against women. The group visited various housing and environmental projects initiated by women. The next year, women from Papua New Guinea hosted women from the other three countries. They travelled together to remote villages to see how communities were grappling with development issues, taking control of their forest regions using portable sawmills, developing small income generating projects and trying to have an impact at the national level. This became a national as well as an international exchange. At each village more women joined in, until at one point two extra buses were required to transport all of the participants. In year three, the exchange came to Tennessee, New York and Toronto. The journey began in Appalachia, Tennessee, where community groups have formed land trusts to regain control over their land, which has been destroyed by strip- mining. Then in New York, the group participated in an institute on community development. The final leg of the exchange took place in Toronto where the group visited a number of local women's initiatives and reflected on the three- year project.

The exchange changed the lives of those who participated in it. Women's leadership abilities were tested and strengthened throughout the exchange. The very fact of having travelled half way around the world to interact with communities was a unique and empowering opportunity. Problems of globalization became very real where women could see how multinationals were affecting small communities from the Kikori Delta in PNG right up to Appalachia. Women learned that by organizing they could make a difference locally and globally.

[38] Email Communication with the Huairou Commission.

Box 4.11: Lessons from Groots Three Part Exchange (continued…)

Lessons learnt

Transfer of skills: Women learned from other women. Ruth, from Papua New Guinea, built her own house after seeing some of the housing in Kenya. Salome began a crab-rearing project after viewing income-generating projects in Kenya, and women in Papua New Guinea developed plans to collaborate on a fish-marketing project. All participants discussed plans to exchange their products among the four countries.

Sharing ideas and strategies: Kenyan women shared their experiences on promoting women leaders and methods used to gain acceptance from the men in their communities. They suggested ways to promote environmental education involving the entire community. American women explained their use of land trusts as a way of addressing environmental issues. During the exchange, information about what was taking place-the places, the people, the events-were communicated on-line to other GROOTS members around the world and to the media.

Appreciation of cultural differences and similarities: By having the opportunity to live in one another's homes and to discuss issues one-on-one, women became much more aware of, sensitive to, and able to appreciate, cultural differences.

Leadership development: As a result of their experience in the exchange, women found that they had more self-confidence in their own communities, were often consulted on issues and were more able and ready to speak up. In PNG, grassroots women had an opportunity to meet members of the National Council of Women for the first time. In Kenya, connections were made between GROOTS Kenya and the Greenbelt Movement. Media coverage of the exchange high-lighted the work of women's groups in all four countries.

Greater understanding of local/global relationships: Before the exchange, many women had no idea that women in both the North and South shared common problems. The opportunity to travel allowed them to see first-hand the situation of women in other countries and the commonality of issues faced from male violence, environmental concerns to the need for sustainable community economic development.

Political awareness and the importance of lobbying: Women were able to see what other women had achieved through organizing, lobbying and developing political strategies. From this, they could extract useful information to address their particular issues in their own communities.

Local/global action: The three-year exchange set the stage for future collaboration, ongoing communication and collective action. GROOTS involvement in the Beijing Conference and Habitat II has shown the importance of having the voice of grassroots women at international meetings. Through participating in the exchanges and in international events, grassroots women have experienced a growing understanding of international power structures and the need for ongoing communication between women in those structures of power and the grassroots.

Typically community based organizations have multiple partners at all levels. Different partners have provided capacity-building, financial, political, and technical support. The important element here, which allows the long-term viability of such partnerships, is that grassroots women are center-stage. Thus these new partnerships are multi-pronged, exist at multiple levels and across a wide range of stake-holders working towards multiple goals. What characterizes and distinguishes these partnerships is that the community particularly grassroots women retain ownership and definition of the terms on which the partnerships are entered into. More important is the learning by groups on maintaining one's integrity while negotiating such alliances. While working in emergency conditions in the earthquake region, FSWW *learned to negotiate partnerships with local administrations that range from Islamic fundamentalist to social democratic, without compromising its basic principles*. [39]

Global and regional networks like GROOTS and ICIWF play a vital role in information exchange and dissemination. Seeing information as the key to empowerment central to the goals of these networks is the widespread learning that is made possible through these networks.

Belonging to international networks provides a forum for peer exchange and learning. It has allowed groups to gain visibility and for the possibility of replication. FSWW as a member of the GROOTS International and the Huairou Commission, participated in international peer exchange meetings. The visit to the rural communities in the earthquake region in India during the GROOTS-SSP exchange in early 1999 and on-going interaction ever since provided invaluable support to the FSWW. Some groups such as the Czech mothers have even started as a result of global peer learning processes.

Thus one major recommendation is to build the institutional and programmatic infrastructure needed to support peer exchanges at local, city, national, regional and global levels.

However there are more global strategies than just exchanges forged by GROOTS.

Box 4.12: GROOTS[40] Three Pronged Strategy On Capacity Building: A Global Model

- ***Foster increased opportunities for peer learning among grassroots women's groups*** (to energize leaders, accelerate innovation and identify shared principles and processes).
- ***Promote a new knowledge base, generated from grassroots women's experiences and practices*** (to mainstream governance and development approaches operating in poor communities).
- ***Engage systems of public power to promote a shift in governance strategies*** (so local associations of poor women can plan, implement and allocate significant resources).

[39] See Article on FSWW, Turkey.

[40] GROOTS International, Year 2 Program Report # 1000-0186 for the Ford Foundation funded Program entitled ***Sharing Power and Decision-Making:*** Peer-to-Peer Capacity Building and Advocacy to Strengthen Grassroots Women's Participation in Local Governance program, 2002.

Highlights of Key Results from These Strategies

Foster increased opportunities for peer learning among grassroots women's groups

- Grassroots Women's International Academies (GWIAs) were held in 2000 and May 2001, against the backdrop of Expo 2000 (Hanover, Germany) and the United Nations Istanbul +5 Conference (New York) where accomplished practitioners presented their work to peers, donor and institutional partners on local governance, disaster management, alternative community education systems, and poor people's housing initiatives.
- Self-help women's groups in East and Central Europe were resourced and linked to the Mother Centers movement. Two key global meetings established two new centers in Bulgaria and Bosnia. The Czech Mother Centers are now 120 strong with a dozen plus new Centers and momentum is spreading to Slovakia, Hungary and Tbilisi, Georgia.
- In Central America and Papua New Guinea, sub-regional and national governance conferences evaluated organizing strategies to use municipal quota systems to effectively link grassroots women's priority issues to political party and campaign election agendas and to make government departments accountable to citizen priorities.
- Peer learning and training exchanges have been a method for creating sustainable cross-cultural alliances in ethnically polarized communities in Kenya and Papua New Guinea. Here GROOTS members have brought women's groups together to learn practical skills and livelihood strategies from one another and in turn used these basic working relationships as a basis for transcending ethnic differences and exploring a common set of problems and priorities.

Towards Creating a New Knowledge Base

- Case studies on women's participation for the effective rehabilitation of homes and communities in disaster hit areas in India and Turkey were documented and disseminated widely. The network's efforts to promote awareness of the potential for poor women's involvement in post-disaster relief and reconstruction, and the accompanying gender-equitable policy and program measures needed, were particularly successful with the World Bank Disaster Management Unit, a donor consortium on disaster convened by the European Foundation Center, and the UN Division on the Advancement of Women seeking linkages with Groots to concretize policy mechanisms to facilitate women's involvement. In this context, grassroots women's groups in India and Turkey are partnering with local government on government resettlement and reconstruction plans.
- AFRUS-AIDS, a coalition of global faith based organizations working in association with community-focused African women's groups, are working together to demonstrate that grassroots women's groups can design and implement prevention and care-giving responses to problems caused by HIV-AIDS.

Towards Creating a New Knowledge Base

- The Huairou Commission and GROOTS connected their governance work to the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements Global Good Governance Campaign resulting in dialogues with the International Union of Local Authorities, ICLEI, parliamentarians, and multi-lateral aid agencies on the link between strengthening human settlements and encouraging effective citizen participation in the management of cities and towns. Theme-specific workshops at preparatory and mid-decade monitoring conferences[41] are co sponsored that link alternative approaches to the fulfilment of government commitments to gender equity and poverty reduction.

[41] At the UN Special Session on Istanbul +5, Groots members presented at workshops on Women and Local Governance, Post-Disaster/Post Conflict Strategies to Strengthen Women's Participation, and Our Best Practices, in the official sessions during the government meetings.

Box 4.12: GROOTS Three Pronged Strategy On Capacity Building (continued…)

- The Istanbul + 5 Grassroots Women's International Academy at the U.N. led to the creation of a set of participant recommendations on how decision-making and human settlement planning processes must be changed to ensure poor women's meaningful involvement. These recommendations were debated with representatives from the World Bank, UNDP, UNCHS, and global philanthropies and presented to government officials at workshops and private briefing sessions held throughout the official session.
- Groots and the Huairou Commission launched several thematic initiatives on alternative approaches to problems faced by poor women and their communities.

Engage Systems of Public Power to Promote a Shift in Governance Strategies

- Whether positioned locally or globally, network initiatives were designed to provide officials concrete, detailed pictures of how poor women's involvement improves the quality of public services, fosters community involvement, and promotes accountability in resource expenditures and decision-making.
- Groots promotes global advocacy where growing numbers of grassroots women leaders must directly represent themselves and thus funded several dozen grassroots women activists to represent their accomplishments and priorities at several United Nations policy meetings in the year 2001 (including the Commission on the Status of Women, Istanbul +5, the World Conference on Racism, and preparatory sessions for WSSD). UN agencies also invited and funded members to present as experts on sustainable human development and poverty eradication strategies, based on the network's visibility.
- At regional and global levels, GROOTS collaborated with the Women and Peace Network, HIC Women and Shelter, WEDO, the Slum Dwellers International, SPARC, WICEJ, and AWID towards holding multi-lateral and national governments and institutions accountable to implementing commitments made to women and the poor in the UN Habitat Agenda, the Platform of Action and Agenda 21. Indeed, Groots gained recognition as a key actor for insuring grassroots women's direct representation in these debates and was asked to serve as consultants to multi-lateral financial institutions and European governmental and development aid agencies to evaluate and reform their poverty eradication and gender mainstreaming policies and approaches.
- Leveraging monies and institutional support to match its own resources, GROOTS also undertook joint activities with a number of organizations including the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), USAID, the Latin American and Caribbean Urban Management Program, NOVIB and a range of global faith based organizations. These partnerships facilitated project implementation with substantial progress towards innovation, energizing leaders and identifying shared principles and processes.

Thus the main lessons here would be:

To promote global networks and strategies that foster peer learning.

These also include the Grassroots Women's International Academies described below besides the local, regional and global exchanges.

Promote a New Global Knowledge Base based on Local Experiences

This includes capacity building and resources for documentation, learning for a such as the GWIAs, utilizing international events for theme specific exchanges across sector and country, among others.

Engage Systems of Public Power to Promote a Shift in Governance Strategies

This would include engaging at all levels with government to demonstrate the importance and potential of involving poor women in development in terms of actual delivery of public goods and services and improved quality both.

4.7. Grassroots Women's International Academy

The Grassroots Women's International Academy (GWIA) at EXPO 2000 may have served as a launching pad for several groups to share experiences regionally or globally. Other platforms for interaction include global documents such as the Platform of Action, Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda for advocacy in the arenas of poverty eradication, participatory governance, and people-centered sustainable development.

Revathi Narayanan presenting the work of Mahila samakhya Karnataka at GWIA, 2000, Hanover, Germany,.

The Grassroots Women's International Academy (GWIA 2000) is a series of training conducted by grassroots women's groups from around the world. GWIA is not intended to be a conventional congress with lectures, reports and debates, but a real academy. Grassroots Women's International Academy (GWIA) was first held in Germany at the Saltzgitterbad Mothers Center as part of the Expo 2000. The second GWIA was held in New York between May 27 to June 1, 2001. A third GWIA is planned for the year 2004 in St. Louis, USA, during the major exposition: 100 Years St. Louis. GWIA 2000 is a stepping stone in a long term process of claiming grassroots knowledge and setting up grassroots learning and transfer systems in which grassroots women control the teaching and dissemination of their expertise.

The next major step is now to institutionalize the GWIA in order to consolidate the process of grassroots ownership of their knowledge base to both counteract the brain drain in poor communities as well as to educate mainstream institutions in partnering with grassroots

The OBP campaign was taken a step further to a peer learning model by the Grassroots Women's International Academy (GWIA) conducted as a series of 4 one week workshops as part of the EXPO 2000 in Germany, where 42 grassroots women's projects from around the world presented

their work in a training format, 20 of which were from the OBP campaign. GWIA was produced by the National Association of German Mother Centers in cooperation with the Huairou Commission and GROOTS. A second Grassroots Women´s International Academy (GWIA) was held in New York end of May 2001 to deepen the learnings from these practices in preparation. for Istanbul plus five. GWIA at Istanbul plus 5 focussed on the policy implications of selected Our Best Practices and the lessons learned from exchanges and transfers that were a result of the campaign and the Expo 2000 workshops. At this point after several successful GWIA events, the need was felt to institutionalize the process initiated by GWIA to provide a stronger permanent base for interaction and learning among grassroots women's organizations.

Institutionalization of the Grassroots International Women's Academies

Thus as one moves from the most basic unit i.e. the community based organizations some of the lessons remain the same. However as the roles played at different levels are different the support needed at different levels also vary.

In summary, some of the basic lessons for building effective alliances include:

- Building grassroots organizations at all levels be it the local collective or the global network.
- Having clear transparent principles upon which partnerships are based.
- Facilitating peer learning at all levels.
- Promotion of global networks and strategies that facilitate peer learning
- Promote a new knowledge base
- Engage with all stakeholders to promote a shift in governance strategies.
- Finally to institutionalise peer learning innovative structures like the GWIAs.

V. Recommendations and Policy Directives for Governments and Donors Support for Grassroots Networks

In recommending to policy makers, donors and governments what is needed we start with where grassroots organizations and their networks are. We build on their existing roles, their strengths and activities from the local to the global.

5.1. Recognition and Support of Existing Roles Played by Grassroots Actors in Governance

Community based organizations play a variety of roles in development and governance. These include planning, monitoring public goods and services, gender sensitization and mainstreaming gender concerns among others. Local governments are increasingly recognizing the roles played by community-based organizations. Government at all levels and donors need to recognize and support grassroots organizations in these new and often not so new roles in governance. What are these roles today? Existing roles of Grassroots Organizations and networks in promoting governance towards the goal of poverty alleviation include[42]:

- **Planning:** Joint planning initiatives with community based organizations and government help both sides understand each other right from the onset. Grassroots groups understand government constraints and resources in terms of availability of resources, times lines, assumptions, eligibility criteria for programmes and funds, types of programmes available and so on. Government can also better understand the real needs of the community.
- **Monitoring:** A certain percentage of funds in local governments in some countries are either allocated to women or to marginalized groups or to low income populations. For example 30% of local government funds in India are supposed to be earmarked for women and in Philippines, 5% are earmarked for women and development. Bantay Banay, Philippines, tries to monitor this 5% wherever it works. It trains women on local government services. An Inter-Agency Coordination Council (IACC) coordinates and collaborates among its members and represents the community. Partners involved include the police, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), LGUs, NGOs and other private sector actors demonstrating the inclusive nature of women's organizing.
- **Convergence: Collaboration Across Sectors and Departments**: The inter relatedness of issues in women's lives have resulted in the need for cross sectoral multi-issues based solutions. Solutions created by them have therefore drawn upon *diverse sectors*. In Bantay Banay, government agencies from different sectors and stake holders (health, social welfare, religious, police, law and private sectors to name a few) collaborated with communities to provide a range of services for victims' families. This builds the buy-in and support to grassroots women from actors in other sectors as well as gets them to appreciate and understand the contributions made by grassroots women.
- **Gender Sensitization, Mainstreaming and Institutionalizing Gender Concerns:** Institutionalizing and mainstreaming women's concerns has resulted in changing educational

[42] Sangeetha Purushothaman and Monika Jaeckel, *Engendering Development and Governance: Grassroots Women's Our Best Practices* on behalf of The Huairou Commission from the Our Best Practices Campaign supported by the UNDP, Books for Change: Bangalore, May 2001.

curriculums, increasing budgetary allocations to address women's needs, increasing the number of women on electoral and decision-making bodies and increased opportunities for women in educational institutions, training and in employment.

- **Channel Into Politics: Building Leadership:** Organizations in the south and the north act as feeders for women to participate in the public sphere. Grassroots organization facilitate the entry of the poor and women into local politics through organizing them into collectives. In the CBOs, while women individually become more active, the CBOs also help strengthen their collective voice in the community. This channel into politics not only engenders local governance but provides a grassroots culture.
- **Creating an Alternative Development Voice:** By creating a dialogue forum and by bringing in other actors into this dialogue grassroots women are able to generate an alternative voice to top down development by providing solutions and alternatives that include a range of perspectives.
- **Building Capacities to Govern:** Through local initiatives such as building leadership skills within grassroots community based organizations to national roles played by national initiatives where grassroots networks influence policies and structures towards mainstreaming their problems and solutions, at all levels the capacities to govern are being built by grassroots organizations and their networks.
- **Engendering and Democratising Institutions of Governance and Civil Society:** Post-socialist societies and societies with histories of military rule, typically have weak civil societies. Part of reweaving a new civil society fabric is to imbibe values and practices of tolerance, trust, acceptance of difference, celebration of diversity and cooperation among its members. Grassroots networks and organizations imbibe this culture by practice, modelling it for governments. They represent a new type of civil society, which is community-based and women-led. Inclusion of children at a very young age teaches them to participate and learn the value of a rich civil society. It simultaneously enables women, youth and the larger community to unlearn totalitarian or top down practices of previous regimes helping them overcome internalized fears and assert themselves. These are training grounds for dialogue across different opinions and dealing with local authorities. Even in historically democratic countries like Germany, the Mother Centers play this role of teaching historically excluded populations to participate in public spheres. These values are constantly being learned and constitute basic elements of democratic participation of a citizenry.
- **Engendering Leadership:** Grassroots women have changed the very definition of leadership and therefore of governance. Redefined elements of leadership include:
  - Center staging women
  - Multi-faceted leadership
  - Leadership as a Learned not Innate Trait
  - Leadership for Empowerment
  - Women Leaders Facilitating Other Women's Leadership:
  - Non-Partisan leadership
  - Leaders taking care of everyone
  - Collective Leadership
  - Self-defined and recognized
  - Issue based leadership

Thus one major recommendation of this report is to support the existing work of grassroots organizations and their networks.

5.2. Gender Sensitive Grassroots Policy Directives[43]

The following section will examine the generic lessons from the Best Practices of Grassroots women and look to see what policy implications lie embedded within these local practices.

5.2.1. Overarching Goal: The Empowerment of Women

One common goal that cuts across all community based organizations is the empowerment of women. Several activities revolve around this over arching goal. However two important tenets to increasing women's access to economic and public spheres of life include developing their skill sets and providing them the needed support services, including child care and transportation.

For a policy to be gender sensitive one explicit goal should be the empowerment of women.

5.2.2. Environmental Management:

In trying to build a better lifestyle for their communities, women simultaneously tend to preserve their society's natural resources. In doing so, women have redefined sustainability from a gender perspective linking it strongly to livelihood issues.

Grassroots Organizations, in particular, women should be central to planning, monitoring and implementation of all development process and decisions.

5.2.3. Building Grassroots Collectives

Be it the community based organization, the sanghas, the mothers centers, women's groups, or women's organizations, a space and a time is being created for women by women. Once created, these groups take on myriad functions in the community. These collectives create a space which first and foremost ends the isolation poor women experience and second, provides a supportive environment where they can discover and learn new skills and talents, find opportunities to earn incomes, link with the public sphere and overall increase their confidence.

All policies and programmes linked to communities should begin with building grassroots and women's collectives.

And

All Policies and Programmes should nurture and center stage existing collectives for programme planning, monitoring and implementation.

[43] *From Rhetoric to Reality: Gender Mainstreaming Urban Policies and Enabling Legislation*, Paper prepared for Expert Group Meeting on Urban Policies and Enabling Legislation, 12-14 November, Brasilia, By the Huairou Commission Our Best Practices Task Force, Sangeetha Purushothaman, Monika Jaeckel, and Catalina Trujillo.

5.2.4. Increasing Access to Resources:

Access to information and resources have helped women acquire land, credit, shelter and assets. In the north, this access has increased presence of women in public spaces, monitoring of public goods and has increased employment opportunities. Assets like land, credit and infrastructure have nurtured women as producers and secure tenure provides women in urban areas the essential security needed to leverage other basic services.

Policies should channel resources to women and create assets in the names of women, especially with the goal of ensuring secure tenure in urban areas.

5.2.5. Building Alternative Economic Institutions

In India and Bangladesh savings and credit activities have provided alternative credit sources that safeguard women's assets by ending their indebtedness. The savings groups represent an alternative parallel banking system that provides women flexible credit for consumption and production giving them a credit history and legitimacy to leverage credit from formal banking systems.

Economic policies should therefore encourage the formation of thrift groups and provide credit and technical support for existing self help groups.

Or

Economic policies should encourage the formation of alternative economic institutions as defined by the poor and by women themselves.

5.2.6. Training:

Poverty is a function of lack of access to resources and information. Training for women corrects this gap. For poor women to develop economic alternatives, a range of training is needed on community mobilization, self help concepts, savings and credit, linkages with government, banks and mainstream institutions, income generation, skills for production specific to the economic activity, accounting, marketing and negotiations skills. Knowledge on production techniques, administration and marketing equalizes work responsibilities and know how between men and women. For political empowerment, women need training on elections, campaigning and then in their capacity as elected representatives. For social empowerment of women, they need training on legal literacy, information on resources and support services.

Training and capacity building for the grassroots and for women should be an intrinsic part of any economic, social and political policy or programme.

5.2.7. Providing Support Services:

It is not enough to simply provide women with opportunities to earn more income. For them to fully utilize these opportunities, other basic needs and support services must be taken care of such as child care, transportation, nutrition, peer counseling, health care among other services.

Policies that ensure child care, transportation and other support services for women are essential for their full participation in economic and community development.

5.2.8. Other Policy Concerns:

The Our Best Practice Campaign and case studies point towards promoting practices that:

- **Center stage the leadership of women and the grassroots**: Having women in the center allows the needs of communities to be taken care and for development to be comprehensive and holistic. It allows for the empowerment of women who in turn will provide other actors the space to participate in development without compromising on sustainable human development.
- **Promote Learning Exchanges**: Peer exchanges and sharing stories have been found to be the easiest way of learning. Therefore creating a resource pool and foundation that promotes learning exchanges can facilitate a horizontal spread of grassroots women's innovations. It can also prevent resource wastage by not having each community re-invent the wheel.
- **Make Visible Grassroots Women's Principles**: Grassroots women's values of cooperation, holistic development, non-hierarchy, inclusion and creation of a nurturing climate can provide a real challenge to dominant development priorities and principles that emphasize individualism, consumerism and profit. Thus these principles need to be validated and made visible.
- **Mainstream/Institutionalize Grassroots Women's Perspectives**: The creation of institutional structures and funding streams that prioritize grassroots women's needs would force larger institutional actors to re-evaluate their own development priorities and processes. Further it would allow a space for women to be part of decision making for all development processes.
- **Create Dialogue forums for Dialogues on Policy and Reform:** Interaction fora between grassroots women and other institutional actors can help educate these actors as well as provide a forum for women to articulate their needs and negotiate for their communities and families. It can allow different actors to buy into a consensual process that allows future cooperation facilitating partnerships where grassroots women determine the priorities and agenda for action.

5.3. What are good examples ?

The Huairou Commission has identified a range of gender sensitive urban policies and good practices in its *Our Best Practices Campaign* and subsequent Grassroots Women's International Academies. The Huairou Commission is thus well positioned to identify good examples of practices and enabling legislation and policies that should be supported.

Box 3.4: NGO Capacity Building Initiatives in Local Governance in India:[44]
Civil Society Interventions in the Panchayati Raj System

The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian constitution mandated that a third of all local government positions must be held by women. This made for a radical transformation in local government bringing in close to a million women into power into India's government overnight. One major need of this population and therefore one outcome has been the development of a large body of capacity building measures and modules by the NGO sector to promote women's political participation.

Pre election training on reservation of seats, nomination (paper work, fees, certification), campaigning and voting. Political education here means mobilising people, especially women to vote in elections, to file nominations, campaign and even question men and women candidates. NGOs provide support to boost the morale and confidence of the candidate throughout the campaigning.

Panchayat women being trained by ISST, Karnataka, 1994.

The Right to Information Movement[45]: Just having women in power will not help them govern. Women need to have full information. This includes provision of full information on candidates, budgets programmes, and the scope of decision-making in all tiers of local government. The right to information means that the electorate has a right to know about their candidates, their party manifesto and campaign agenda and whom they are voting for. People have a right to know what to expect from their office bearers once in power. Its inherent implication is the creation of transparency of political processes and capacity building of the electorate is to create and demand processes that ensure this transparency.

Post Election Training: Once elected, members have the tasks of forming the government, initiating its functioning, understanding procedures, roles and responsibilities. Here NGOs played multiple roles.

- Training women on the effective functioning of the panchayats, mobilizing women to participate in them, responding to them and being articulate about their needs.
- Mobilizing women citizens, bringing them information, building their confidence and leadership abilities, undertaking political education, setting up training systems and orientation programmes.
- Disseminating information on various government programmes, procurement, allocation of funds, eligibility criteria and administrative procedures.
- Gender sensitization to change attitudes of men and the community.
- Providing links between rural women and the rural power structures viz. grass-roots organizations, local bureaucracies and panchayats, linking CBOs to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- Collaborating with the government to implement programmes, plans and activities for women.
- Need based training which is continuous and based on member's real experiences and problems.
- Training elected members on reproductive health, AIDs awareness, legal literacy, micro planning, vision building and leadership are some new innovative local governance capacity building initiatives

[44] *Engendering Governance: The Karnataka Experience*, Sangeetha Purushothaman, Padma Anil Kumar and Simone Purohit, done on behalf of the Hunger Project, Best Practices Foundation, Bangalore, October, 1999.
[45] This movement originated Rajasthan state, India and its practices on ensuring transparency through capacity building of the electorate and general public are rapidly spreading to other states in India.

5.4. How to Design Policy and Programmes for Capacity Building?

The Huairou Commssion suggests utilizing existing expertise in its global networks to extract policy directives from the Best Practices database. The Huairou Commission is well positioned to provide this expertise on an on-going basis for deriving policy implications and shaping enabling legislation concerning grassroots practices and gender mainstreaming. As globalization permeates society, as decentralization changes the shape and form of governance as we knew it, so will the needs and practices of the grassroots grow and evolve. So too will the lessons and the policy implications. Thus creating permanent mechanisms for involving the local, national and global networks in decision making and planning of programmes, policies and resource allocation is one way to ensure that these remain in tune with the needs on the ground.