

LWSI Gender Policy

August 2004

The purpose of this gender policy is to provide guidance to all LWSI staff so that they give due importance to the gender dimension of all they do as a part of the LWSI team. This will contribute to the goals and objectives that LWSI has set for itself which include *justice and dignity for all* as well as to *empower men and women of disadvantaged communities to improve their quality of life*.

The overall gender goal of LWSI is to promote a society in which men and women are free to develop according to their abilities and to contribute to society without the hindrances of gender stereotypes. In other words LWSI goal is to promote a gender just society.

In our reflection and analysis of LWSI accomplishments and failures in *empowering women to improve their quality of life* we have seen that:

1. Lutheran World Service India policies and program documents show a high level of gender awareness. Some extracts from those documents are given in Appendix 1. We do not think that further attention to gender is needed at this level.
2. In our statements of objectives and indicators of accomplishment in our PMD women are mentioned many times.
3. Gender is highlighted as a cross-cutting issue. We say "Because of patriarchal values and social conditioning women in India face discrimination and oppression at all levels." The importance of protecting the human rights of women is also highlighted in the document.
4. We have made the socio-economic and political empowerment of women a priority issue for LWSI. We say "Considering the marginalisation and vulnerability of women, LWSI programs will focus on women and support community initiatives which address gender inequalities. The program will focus on enabling women to overcome these vulnerabilities and occupy a central position in the development efforts."
5. In our detailed objectives, annual activity plans and reporting formats we specifically set targets for both men and women and we report the results for women separately from men.
6. Our annual monitoring report separates the results for women from that of men so we can see whether we are accomplishing the results for women that we set in our strategy and in our plans.
7. LWSI is utilizing a questionnaire called "Gender and Empowerment Assessment" to assess the effectiveness of our program in achieving our gender goals.
8. We participate as a member of SAGA, the South Asia Gender Alliance, with colleague agencies to improve our understanding of the gender needs of India and how we can better respond.
9. We note that the development of women is the most efficient and effective way to bring about justice and dignity for both men and women. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said recently: "No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition, promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and increase the chances of education for the next generation. Let us invest in women and girls."

A program evaluation conducted in 2002 by an external team included the note that “LWSI is effectively addressing gender concerns in its partner communities. Their monitoring data reflects this, and this was supported by our observations. However women are under-represented on LWSI staff. To a significant degree this is the result of self-selection: women are less likely to be willing to work under the onerous conditions LWSI staff work under.”

However, LWSI does not have a specific gender policy. With encouragement from Norwegian Church Aid and following the example set by our sister agencies in Nepal, Bangladesh and Cambodia we have included almost all LWSI staff in a process of reflection on the status of our gender related activities and creation of our own gender policy. The process has itself been a tool for increasing the awareness of all staff of the importance of continued efforts to bring about real changes in the status of women in our projects and in our staff.

One result of this process is a document which analyzes in more detail than was possible in the CSO or PMD the difficulties facing women in Indian society and the challenges LWSI must confront in order to achieve its objectives of empowering women to enhance their quality of life. That document is attached as Appendix 2 to this policy. The document also reviews the history of LWSI understanding and work in the field of gender.

The process of reflection has identified various shortcomings in our work. These have been described as follows:

Gender empowerment assessment tools are periodically used to assess the results of our intervention as elaborated above. Assessments have identified positive results as well as significant gaps.

1. We have noticed a rather mechanical approach to implementing programs where staff focuses on quantitative achievements, increasing the number of women participants and benefits to them.
2. Adequate efforts are not made to analyse Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs and understand the correlation between the two or move from fulfilling PGN to the higher goal of meeting SGN. Thus, women are involved in the programs, PGN are fulfilled, but SGN is not identified and little follow is done to ensure that SGN is achieved.

As a result, we see that after withdrawal of LWS services many women groups have become defunct and women revert to their traditional roles. Only men are carrying on with the development actions. While women have been motivated to enter the male domain, men have not been supported to share women’s responsibilities relating to household management, caring for children etc. While there are exceptions, we do not see significant signs of women’s empowerment, cutting across the rural and urban divide, class, caste and ethnic factors. In the urban areas of Cuttack women have become leaders and managers of community action, but the project finds it difficult to involve men in the development initiatives. In Calcutta, the reverse is true. Such examples of exclusion of one or the other group exist in rural communities too.

We also note that even after many years of intervention we have not succeeded in empowering men and women to address social evils like the dowry system, discrimination against girl child in matters of healthcare and education, domestic

violence against women etc. Women's participation in self help groups, access to credit and improved creditworthiness is sometimes a double edged weapon. On the one hand it can release them from indebtedness, enhance their dignity but it can also increase their vulnerability. In some communities it has been found that women take loans from group funds and pass it on to their husbands for productive use, ignoring the fact that she loses the access and control over the income but becomes liable to repay the loan. Once a reasonable amount has been saved in the group funds and after loans have been taken women tend to drop out of non-formal education programs, group meetings and related activities. The pressure to dropout comes from husbands or mothers in law.

Our conclusion is that what we have done so far is not enough. LWSI must give more attention to gender in order to make more progress towards its goals and objectives.

We have agreed that our policy is to "mainstream gender" in all our work. Mainstreaming gender is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action in any area and at all levels of the organization. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, such that inequality between men and women is not perpetuated and equality between them is improved.

This means that we are in the middle of an ongoing process which will require continual effort to identify ways in which our program needs to be modified to overcome the inequalities between men and women.

As mentioned above, LWSI needs to go beyond its attention to the practical gender needs of women and give greater effort to address the strategic gender needs of women.

PGNs (Practical Gender Needs) - are related to the condition of women. They are easily identifiable (food, clean water, education, employment, medicines, housing) and they are related to the existing gender division of labour and the situation faced by women due to gender dissimilarity beliefs and practices. For example women say they need water, fuel and fodder because it is they who look after their children, the household and domestic animals. Because fulfilling women's PGNs does not change the existing power relations between women and men no one feels threatened by activities and programmes aimed at meeting PGNs.

SGNs (Strategic Gender Needs) - are related to women's subordinate position in society and their desire to change the existing hierarchical gender relations and make them more equal. SGN can be pursued by women organizing, getting into decision-making positions, changing discriminatory practices, norms and rules in order to transform gender relations. Activities which promote women's SGN are education, consciousness raising, mobilizing and organizing, developing leadership and management skills etc. Such activities are often resisted because they challenge male domination and demand long-term changes in gender relations.

A review of the CSO and our Planning and Monitoring Document will show that LWSI is putting significant effort into activities designed to overcome the subordinate position of

women. But there is a great deal more that needs to be done. The following are some of the actions identified by staff during their work on this gender policy:

Individual level- For a meaningful implementation of gender perspective one has to start from oneself. One should become conscious of their own gender stereotypes and work to change them. Men need to change their attitude towards women and women need to alter their mindset of their own ability.

Institutional level- An affirmative action plan needs to be drawn up which will create positive discrimination towards women employees to enable them to come up to the decision making level. Overall women friendly atmosphere should be created by developing a support system so that women can contribute to their fullest potential with confidence and will remain in the organization.

The issues and needs which staff have mentioned during preparation of this policy are the following:

- To the extent possible and at all times LWS would attempt to maintain gender balanced staff strength. During recruitment preference would be given to women.
- The promotion policy will be such as to focus on the capacity building of women and enhance their capacity to become eligible for promotion on the basis of performance and merit. Strategy will empower and enable women to participate and generate leadership within organization.
- Specific needs of female and male staff in their overall leadership, management and implementation capacity will be identified keeping gender perspective in mind.
- Guideline of transfer will take into consideration the specific needs arising out of gender concerns with respect to women staff.
- Institutional values and culture will have to be promoted and practiced in relation to gender sensitivity. Periodic sensitization will be taken as a part of every programme and it will be integrated and internalized with a view to challenge the social practices which perpetuate discrimination against women. Some of the examples are the practice of accepting and giving dowry both by male and female staff, some traditional religious practices only by female staff such as fasting, abstinence from non-vegetarian food etc.)
- Code of conduct should be elaborated with details (modest dress, smoking etc.)
- In terms of benefits, more pro women measures will be introduced (special leave in case of miscarriage, adoptive mothers etc.)
- Train and orient women staff to handle all aspects of LWS work including construction activities.
- Encourage male staff to facilitate gender sensitization programs etc.

In order to be more effective in its work with women, LWSI needs women staff. Women staff have been shown to be more effective in reaching poor women than male staff because of the hindrances of Indian culture. In addition, LWSI needs to show by its example that women and men can work together. In 2003 only about 20% of the employees were women. LWS is committed to increase this to 40% by the end of 2006. Furthermore, women are underrepresented in middle and upper management in LWSI. Efforts should be made to increase the number of women in these positions.

An analysis of the level of women's participation in LWSI staff during the past 10 years is given in appendix 3. These charts show that the percentage of women staff in LWSI has

remained below 25% for almost the entire period. The lowest point was 16% in 2002. Since then the percentage has increased significantly. In mid-2004 it was 29%.

Women are seen to leave the organization at a faster rate than men. This means that the present emphasis on recruitment of female staff will have to be continued in order to maintain and increase the participation of women in the organization.

Program level- Gender should be integrated appropriately in all development activities. Program approach will enable both women and men to develop self-respect as well as mutual respect to each other and to lead a life with dignity. This will also help to create a positive attitude among all to acknowledge the contribution of women in every sphere of life.

In order to successfully mainstream gender concern in the program approach and process the strategy will address the practical need arising out of condition of women first and identify the strategic gender needs which gradually will be taken up through which men should not feel threatened. GAD approach of involving men too will be actively pursued.

Addressing PGN is an entry point. To start with practical gender needs will be identified and appropriate measures will be taken to fulfil those needs. Proper follow up action will have to be undertaken to attain the Strategic Gender Needs in the long run. Thus, it will be a two pronged approach to identifying and addressing both the needs.

In order to attain the strategic gender needs, program designing and monitoring need to be done carefully. For addressing both practical gender need and strategic gender needs a well linked program will be adopted.

Both women and men should be encouraged and motivated to step into each others domain with confidence. The programme will enable them to realize gender relation in relation to their stereotyped life. For that confidence building measures like regular sensitization, awareness programmes will be emphasized. For economic development women will be encouraged to take up ventures which are traditionally not considered as women's job.

The programme approach will enable women groups to be strengthened to handle the cases of domestic violence as well as men and PRI members should also be made aware and feel responsible to address these issues. Empowerment of women for their effective participation in PRIs would be taken up together with women and men's active participation in Gram Sabha & Ward Sabhas/Palli Sabhas.

Careful designing of program will be adopted so that through empowerment process, already overworked women should not be further burdened with added responsibility. From the beginning the concept of sharing responsibility both at domestic level and in communities both by men & women will be encouraged. This message will be propagated through regular awareness and sensitization programs.

Through empowerment process women's access and control over resources and decision making capacity will be enhanced. Through capacity building measures women will be able to assert their rights and will be in a position to bargain for better life. Right to reproductive health, property right, political participation, right to choose and make selection, right to develop etc. will be addressed as part of empowerment process. Strategy will empower and enable women to participate and generate leadership within operational communities.

Plans for disaster preparedness and response will be done with a gender perspective. During distribution of relief materials (after gender perspective need analysis) the needs of all groups will be considered if possible in consultation with them. Special care will be given for fulfilling the needs of special groups like pregnant and lactating women, children, elderly and sick persons.

Prior to implementation of rehabilitation programs women's needs will be taken into consideration and enabling condition will be created to seek their views and opinion on their needs and priorities.

Regular sensitization process will be organized involving both women and men of all age groups. Programme will be planned to encourage men for active participation where their participation is nil or very less.

For monitoring, qualitative and quantitative indicators in relation to PGN & SGN will have to be identified in each project and within the organization to monitor the process and impact in addition to monitoring the planned activities and tasks.

To identify training gaps keeping in mind GAD and integrate with training strategy. Goal oriented training strategy or need analysis to be developed to set a goal to meet in 5-8 years. More weight will be given to strategic areas so that sustainability is more guaranteed.

Reference materials consulted during the preparation of this policy:

- 1) Women in India-An Exhaustive Study
Edited by Arunima Baruah
2003
- 2) Understanding Gender
Kamla Bhasin
2000
- 3) Gender: Technology and Development-
Volume 1 Number 3
September-December 1997
- 4) Janadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies
Volume 7 No. 1
The Situation of Women
January 2004
- 5) BRIDGE development – Gender Report No 62
India Gender Profile- Report commissioned for SIDA
By Gautam Bhan
August 2001

APPENDIX 1:

In the LWSI Country Strategy Outline finalized in 2003 we have mentioned:

OUR VISION

People of India living in just, secular and peaceful societies, in communal harmony and with dignity, united in diversity and empowered to achieve their universal rights to basic needs and quality of life.

“People of India” is mentioned to show that all people, both men and women, are included.

OUR MISSION

Inspired by love for humanity, Lutheran World Service – India challenges and responds to the causes and consequences of human suffering and poverty with commitment to justice and dignity for all.

“Justice and dignity for all” is mentioned to ensure that both men and women are included.

Justice is one of our core values. We say:

Justice

LWSI recognizes the inherent dignity of every person and supports vulnerable communities in their efforts to achieve justice, human rights and a sustainable future for the human family and the whole creation. LWSI facilitates the empowerment of those with whom it works to achieve this end.

We specifically mention the dignity of every person and empowerment of all the vulnerable to achieve justice and their human rights. This is inclusive language which refers to both men and women.

Our PROGRAM GOAL is:

To empower men and women of disadvantaged communities to enhance their quality of life.

Here we have specifically mentioned men and women to ensure that our programs work with both.

Later in the document our Priority Focus Groups are described as:

Marginalized people in general, that is, those who are poor, vulnerable and unable to meet their basic needs, and among these;

- Scheduled casts and scheduled tribes who are socially oppressed, economically exploited and politically marginalized; Tribal people, who are increasingly displaced from their lands and alienated from their traditional occupations;
- Dalits who are socially oppressed, economically exploited and politically marginalized;
- Slum dwellers in the cities;
- **Women, who are denied their practical and strategic access and opportunities and are victims of exploitation and domestic violence;**
- Children who are potential child laborers denied of child development;
- The poor among the minority communities who are illiterate and subject to economic and political exploitation.

Thus our list of priority focus groups specifically mentions women.

APPENDIX 2

TOWARDS A GENDER POLICY FOR LUTHERAN WORLD SERVICE –INDIA

Summary of the analysis done by all LWSI staff in a series of workshops in 2004.

Introduction- *History of LWS (I), as learning and growing organization*

Lutheran World Service India (LWSI) is the Indian program of the Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service, Geneva, Switzerland. The Lutheran World Federation acts on behalf of the communion of Lutheran Churches worldwide. The LWF's Department of World Service (LWF/WS) presently operates relief, rehabilitation and development projects in 24 countries over three continents. In Asia, five countries are covered, namely, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Cambodia and Israel.

LWSI challenges and responds to the causes and consequences of human suffering and poverty with a commitment to justice and dignity for all. In keeping with organization's mandate to help the vulnerable and poor communities, LWSI provides relief and rehabilitation when natural or human made disasters occur and continues integrated development programs in both urban and rural areas of India vulnerable to natural and social disasters.

LWSI became operational on 7th November, 1974. Since inception, LWSI has implemented relief, rehabilitation and development programs in the states of West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Tamilnadu, Assam, Maharastra and Gujarat. Currently LWSI has activities in West Bengal, Orissa and Assam.

National, state and local government agencies play a role in the identification and selection of operational area. During the implementation of the program, LWSI takes support from various government agencies in terms of human, material and financial resources.

Over the years the organization has expanded its' geographic area of operation to cover more and more vulnerable communities. Thematically too, the programs have undergone transformation from a welfare and service oriented approach to a right's based approach focusing on empowering communities to work collectively to improve the quality of their life. Issues relating to environment, sustainable livelihood, food security, gender justice and HIV/AIDS are among the priorities. As a forward looking and learning organization LWSI has consciously worked to overcome weaknesses, strengthen it's organizational structure, planning, monitoring and evaluation systems as well as the skills and competence of the staff through systematic skill-upgrading programs. Focus on mobilizing resources from government agencies as well as non-traditional funding agencies have helped the organization to grow and improve its work to help the underprivileged.

With experienced and committed staff team, LWSI assures high quality services provided in a compassionate and professional manner. The Team gives LWSI the capacity to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.

In rural areas LWSI works with the landless and the marginalized subsistence level communities. Majority of the families in the operational communities belong to the traditionally marginalized groups such as the Scheduled Tribes and the Scheduled Castes and

other backward classes. At present LWSI is operating in rural areas of three states – Assam, Orissa and West Bengal. In Assam LWSI is operational in three districts—Kokrajhar, Dhubri and Goalpara. In Orissa LWSI is operational in seven districts – Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Subarnapur, Bolangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi and Puri whereas in West Bengal LWSI is operational in three districts namely – Birbhum, Bankura and South 24 Parganas.

LWSI is also working in urban slums and squatter settlements among refugees from neighbouring countries and migrants from rural communities. The Urban Project is located in Kolkata in West Bengal and Cuttack and Bhubaneswar in Orissa.

Disaster Preparedness projects are operational in the disaster prone areas of coastal Orissa and Assam. Emergency response and rehabilitation projects are taken up whenever there is a major disaster and adequate resources are received from the donors. Emergency response projects pose a special challenge to implementation of our gender policy because we do not know the communities and the urgency of response seems to require the use of the existing (male-dominated) power structures.

The overall goal of LWSI intervention is to *“Empower women and men of the disadvantaged communities to enhance their life quality through sustainable livelihood, food and human security”*. Reducing the disaster and poverty related vulnerability of the socially and economically marginalized people through effective and responsive emergency relief, rehabilitation and disaster preparedness integrated in sustainable development process is the underpinning theme of LWSI intervention. The projects work to organize the communities, facilitate their participation in sustainable development process and to create enabling conditions for the people to secure their rights and achieve greater control over their lives and livelihood. LWSI also calls this “cultivating self reliance”.

Since the beginning, LWSI community based development initiatives have sought to reduce the social disparity between women and men by bringing women in the forefront of development. This commitment to improving the status of women in the society found different expressions and has evolved over the years. Initially, programs mostly concentrated on welfare of women, organized them and upgraded their existing income earning skills to enhance the family income. There were also efforts to create leadership opportunities for women and to involve them in the decision making process at the community level. But in the absence of adequate efforts to sensitize women and men about the disparities, women remained passive partners even while holding positions of responsibility in community organizations. The approach focused on improving the life conditions of the people within their existing social system and the strategy largely helped to address the Practical Gender Needs. This approach is also called Women in Development.

At the organization level, there was a growing recognition of the need to form a separate cell to work in a focused manner to create gender sensitivity within the organization at all levels, to develop appropriate program strategies and to guide and monitor the program implementation to improve the status of women within the operational communities. Thus in 1987, LWSI set up the Women Desk, headed by a senior woman staff. The Desk worked to develop conceptual clarity on gender, developed program policies and organized regular in-house training and orientation programs for staff members.

Conceptual clarity grew within the organization and the importance of socio-political and economic empowerment of women was recognized. It was accepted that women need to be involved in all spheres of program intervention and such involvement was actively encouraged. However, this soon became a game of numbers; gender disparity became less a thematic issue and more of a programmatic subject. Attention shifted to increasing the number of women program beneficiaries, often ignoring the claims of men. Thus, while there was quantitative growth, there was no significant qualitative change in the status of women. They remained passive beneficiaries without any involvement in decision making and with little control over resources. In reality our approach did not help the women or men to step out from their traditional socially assigned roles. As a step toward changing our working strategy the Women's Desk was renamed as Gender Desk.

In 1998, LWSI thoroughly reviewed the program strategies while preparing the PMD for the five years 1999-2003. Gender was recognized as a cross cutting issue that should be integrated into all aspects of our development and disaster response intervention. Taking the lead role for addressing gender disparities was no longer seen as the responsibility of one Desk, but as an inherent to all actions at all levels of the organization. Thus, LWSI began a renewed process of gender sensitization within the organization. Program strategies were redrawn and the programme direction was changed to ensure the active involvement of both women and men in development endeavour which in turn would help to improve the status of women in the family as well as in the society.

This was not an overnight change but emerged from the experience and practices put in motion in the preceding years. For example, for the first time in the history of LWSI, women volunteers were recruited for disaster response intervention in 1997. The need for recruiting female staff at all levels was acknowledged and whenever there was fresh recruitment to positions in the organization, women candidates were given priority.

This awareness and gender sensitivity made it possible for LWSI to introduce in-house rules to cater to the special needs of women employees. LWSI introduced women friendly rules like the formation of a committee to handle complaints of sexual harassment, increase in maternity leave, introduction of paternity leave, child care allowance for women employees etc.

Program context and strategies were further reviewed during the preparation of PMD 2004-2006. Gender continues to be viewed as a crosscutting issue integrated into all aspects of the program. Activities with output and impact indicators, targets, time frame and standards have been set up to give a clear picture of gender perspective in the programme. At the organizational level LWSI gives equal opportunities to women and men employees, but with a positive bias towards women in matters relating to recruitment, promotion, transfer, training etc. In 2003 only about 20% of the employees were women. LWS is committed to increase this to 40% by the end of 2006.

As LWSI works for justice and dignity for all, it focuses its efforts on the poorest and most marginalized because their need is greater. Among the poor and marginalized people it is the women who face greater difficulties than men. Thus LWSI gives greater attention to the needs of women because of their greater needs.

But there is another reason why LWSI gives more attention to women. Development of women is the most efficient and effective way to bring about justice and dignity for both men

and women. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said recently: "No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition, promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and increase the chances of education for the next generation. Let us invest in women and girls."

In order to be more effective in its work with women, LWSI needs women staff. Women staff have been shown to be more effective in reaching poor women than male staff because of the hindrances of Indian culture. In addition, LWSI needs to show by its example that women and men can work together.

1.1

Preamble - Situation of Women

II *In the country*

There are evidences of change in the Indian social, cultural, religious, gender, legal and political spheres. Women constitute a vital part of the work force in business establishments and industries. Women have joined professions which were once considered exclusive male domain. The rapidly spreading micro-credit projects and self-help groups of rural and urban poor women across the country give ample evidence to the effects of women's empowerment through economic intervention. NGOs working with women's groups at the grassroots, testify to the growth self-confidence in women as they become economically independent.

On the political front women are claiming equal rights, their presence is beginning to be felt and their voices are beginning to be heard from the higher levels of political advocacy to the local self-government at the Gram Panchayats. In 2004 India boasted of having five women Chief Ministers even though the 33% reservation for women in parliament and legislative assemblies continues to be debated. The 33% reservation for women provided at the decentralized local governance institutions such as PRI and other local bodies has enabled rural and urban women including the poor to get an entry to these bodies. But their effective political participation is still a far cry.

These social changes appear revolutionary, but hide more than they reveal about the status of women in India. Vast majority rural women are engaged in agricultural operations, but without any social and economic security. Huge wage disparity exists in the informal sector where most women are employed. Women are paid lower wages than men in the informal sector especially in the agriculture labour sector and urban informal sectors. Labour force participation rates are lower for women than men, the disparity being high in urban areas. Despite legislations, female infanticide and child marriage are common in rural areas and among the urban poor. The Indian society suffers from a male child mania. As a direct result sex determination tests and female foeticide are rampant among the urban middle and lower middle classes. According to Census 2001 female –male sex ratio is 933:1000, a very low ratio by any standards.

Female literacy rate is just 54.2%, significantly lower than male literacy rate at 75.9%. There are significant disparities in access to education and quality of education- disparities based on rural-urban division, caste, religion and gender. Violence against women, rape, sexual assault and domestic violence are underestimated and ignored. The evils of dowry system still prevail in India and the stringent legislations enacted by successive governments have done little to reduce the number of "dowry deaths". So far no legislation has been enacted to reduce the suffering caused to Muslim women by the continuance of the institution of polygamy. In matters of inheritance too, women do not enjoy the same rights as men.

A social revolution is indeed taking place in India but so far the benefits have accrued to a miniscule percentage of women among the middle and upper income groups in the cities. Modern independent India and her constitution grants women equality of status with men but the rights of the vast majority of the Indian women are unrecognized, are violated with impunity. Discrimination against women exists within the family, in the society and in all walks of life.

II *LWSI Contextual Analysis*

LWSI works with the socially and economically backward and marginalized communities in some of the most underdeveloped districts of eastern India. Among these marginalized communities deprived of basic amenities and facilities, women are among the most vulnerable and deprived. Globalization and rapid growth of urbanization and industrialization threatens the livelihood of the poor and marginalized and as can be expected the most affected in these communities are the women.

LWSI partner communities are varied in nature ranging from the urban poor to disadvantaged rural communities with the larger part consisting of Adivasi people. Irrespective of their location or ethnic identity women remain voiceless. In these communities women share in equal measure with men the burden of supporting the family, earning an income for the family to keep the kitchen fire burning, yet their primary role is perceived as child bearer and care giver of the family. Domestic arena is considered their domain.

In rural settings women are engaged in agriculture work. Other than tilling of the land women do all agriculture related work but are paid less than their male counter part. In rural communities women are also engaged in casual wage labour but are paid less than the men. The women do all these in addition to their un-recognised and unpaid labour for taking care of house-hold needs, cooking, taking care of the children and looking after the men, etc. In some communities children are often found to work as unpaid bonded labour in the better off families within the communities.

Traditionally, livelihood of the tribal communities largely depends on forest produces, collection and sale of forest produce. Women toil the whole day to collect minor forest produces and sell them but the returns are meagre. Gradually with the dwindling of the forests and with the increase of mining in some areas like Keonjhar, the tribal people are being alienated from their traditional sources of livelihood. This new trend has a negative impact on the socio-cultural settings, particularly for women. Deprived of access to forest resources, women take up employment in mines, quarries and stone crusher units where they are overworked and underpaid and often sexually harassed by the employers or the labour contractors. LWSI experience from focussed intervention in health care sector in these areas reveal that large number of women are victims of STI's, which is a major cause for concern especially in view the growing threat of HIV/AIDS.

In the post harvest period, employment opportunities are limited in the rural areas compelling rural population to migrate in search of employment to neighbouring towns and states to work on construction sites or in brick making units. Migration has many forms- in some cases men or women migrate alone, in some cases whole families migrate. The period of migration too varies- from a few weeks to several months. When men, husbands migrate alone, women are left behind to fend for the children and the family. When whole families migrate, generally the old and the infirm are left behind. Migration increases the

vulnerability of women and adolescent girls as well as children in many ways. They are over worked, sexually exploited at worksites, their family and social life is disrupted, schooling of children is interrupted and also exposed to severe health risks.

LWSI implements programs in disaster prone areas. Frequent natural disasters like flood cyclones and droughts increase the vulnerability of the poor, particularly women, children and the elderly. Access to food is reduced and water supply and sanitation systems are disrupted. Given their responsibility for caring for the family, cooking and fetching water disasters significantly impact the rhythm of life. Women with special needs like pregnant and lactating mothers face additional hardship and suffer trauma due to life in temporary shelters and relief camps which offer little or no privacy.

Among the urban poor too, the situation of women is equally dismal. They are responsible for management of the household and also have to work to earn to support the families. In the urban environment, women and adolescent girls have more opportunities for regular employment and income which makes male counterpart feel less responsible to feed families. Since food is assured at home men basically go for work according to their whims. The illiterate and unskilled men have less employment opportunities. They work as daily wage labourers, rickshaw pullers or are engaged in petty trades with very little income. Adolescents and young urban males step into antisocial activities due to absence of regular employment. They are often victims of alcohol or other substance abuse and their contribution to the family income is flexible and subject to their will. Girls from very early age support their mothers in their work of domestic help while boys are engaged in street side shops or motor garages. Women of urban slums are mostly victims of domestic violence, desertion, seduction, marriages which are not solemnized or at best informal. They are unaware of their legal rights or if aware are unable to secure their rights due to social pressure or simply cannot afford to seek legal protection. In the name of urban development the urban poor are being evicted from their settlements. This increases the vulnerability of women and adolescent girls who are exploited by criminals (Local Hooligans). The contribution of urban poor to the urban economy is not recognized all; instead they are continuously harassed thereby making their life most unsecured.

In urban communities poor have no representation of women in the local self government to voice their need at the higher level.

Evils of dowry is rampant both in rural and urban communities. Slowly the evil is creeping in the tribal and Muslim communities, where this system was never before been practiced.

Many women from rural partner communities have been elected to positions in local self government (PRI/Panchayats). For many their new found power is nominal- their husbands, brothers or other male members of the families take the decisions and wield the real power. Many others who are confident and have the capacity to contribute to the workings of the PRI find themselves overburdened- their newly elevated status and responsibilities has not in any way reduced their burden of domestic chores. When they cannot do the household chores, other female members of the family share the responsibilities and work. Often adolescent daughters absent themselves from school to take care of the household work.

Though women have no say on their own reproductive life our programme approach has targeted them to adopt permanent birth control measures. In our own approach we have not succeeded in convincing men to adopt birth control measures and there is very little effort in

this direction from the government also. In the process women have lost their reproductive right.

Continuous awareness programs and thrust on capacity building has brought an enormous change in the lives of partner communities. Women are taking more and more responsibilities for community development, showing competence in negotiating with government and PRI to secure their rights. Collectively, they have taken action to reduce the consumption of liquor within their communities and have mobilized men and the PRI to support their initiatives. In many communities, organizations and groups of women have taken steps to control domestic violence. The battered and abused women find strength and comfort in these groups and organizations. Through direct access to credit in their own SHGs, women of our partner communities have got a major break through in life and have been able to achieve a degree of economic independence. Their collective efforts have enabled them to be free from the indebtedness of money lenders. Women are much ahead than men in these endeavours. The social mobility of poor women has tremendously increased.

At the organization level also the women staff of LWSI face difficulties which need to be considered in order to ensure progress toward overcoming gender inequalities within the organization.

1. LWS project are located mostly in remote rural areas and the urban project works with the most deprived among the urban poor. In the rural and urban areas people are available in the evenings, community and group meetings as well as NFE classes are held in the evenings but it is not always safe for the women workers to visit the communities in the evenings. In the rural areas the tough terrain, long distances, the hilly tracks and forests pose problems. In the cities, the fringe areas occupied by the poor are also often centres of criminal activities.
2. In the very traditional rural India men and women not related by blood or by marriage do not live under the same roof or share meals for any length of time. Suitable houses are difficult to come by in the rural areas and LWS staff, men and women, posted in the rural areas often live in the same buildings (which double up as office too) and eat together. Rural population views this as strange behaviour and nature of the relation between male and female colleagues becomes the subject of speculation, gossip and rumours in the communities with obvious consequences for the staff.
3. LWS expects all workers- men and women, to ride motorcycles or mopeds activities which were formerly considered un-ladylike. In the rural areas a woman riding a two wheeler is still an object of curiosity and rural youth pass unpleasant comments about such women.
4. After marriage, young women workers come under pressure from their husbands and families to quit jobs to become time homemakers. Women are demoralized and LWS loses qualified and experienced staff.
5. While LWS makes every effort at the organizational level, to create women friendly and gender balanced work environment, individual workers, men and women, retain some of the gender stereotypes from their past social conditioning which is manifested in their interpersonal relationship in the work place. This often puts women in a disadvantageous position.
6. Educated male and female workers often hail from urban middle class background. Many of them find it difficult to adjust to the hardship of living and working in remote rural areas.

II *LWSI Intervention*

In order to mainstream gender LWSI has continuously stressed on involving women at all stages of the ongoing development process. Poor and Marginalised Women are encouraged to organize themselves in small groups and are supported to take up collective actions to bring about qualitative changes in their lives. LWSI stresses the need for women and men to organize separately but to work together in CBO to address their socioeconomic problems.

Along with various women development programmes, efforts have been directed towards bringing about changes in perception regarding the stereotypes of women-men relationship internally at the organizational as well as at the community level. Active participation by men in gender training programs indicates significant changes in the attitude towards these programs which were initially considered “women’s programs”.

Economic independence is one major yardstick to assess women’s empowerment and their ability to establish a strong position in the decision making process. Keeping this fact in mind, LWS has given a major emphasis on encouraging women to upgrade their traditional skills and to acquire new skills to enable them to stand on their own feet with confidence. In many communities, woman’s participation in groups, her access to credit at will or her new found credit worthiness has increased her status in the family and the community. Mostly the loan amount has been utilized for the need of household consumption purposes.

LWSI organizes programs to disseminate information on various poverty alleviation schemes implemented by Government. Interface programs involving self-help group members and government officials are organized to exchange information, build confidence, establish relations and enable the groups to take advantage of these schemes. Many groups of women have shown remarkable skills and quickly learned the necessary skills to mobilize these resources.

Even in some communities women groups have shown competence in resolving the cases of domestic violence in association with male members and local self-government and administrative institutions.

LWSI has changed its approach of capacity building through decentralizing of training programs. Venue, timing etc for training programs are decided in consultation with female members of SHGs to suit their convenience which used to be decided by the project personnel earlier. Much emphasis has been given to provide technical know how on agriculture, livestock rearing etc, which usually are done by women but are never considered women’s domain. Through SHG enormous social mobility among women has been initiated.

Education is central to the process of empowerment. LWSI organizes Non Formal Education programs especially for females and school drop out girls and also boys. These centers not only impart literacy skills but also provide a platform for women to discuss life issues. LWSI project units also organize pre-primary education centres for children to develop a habit of attending school at the later stage and also to enable mothers to drop their children in a secured place for few hours while they are out for work. A very successful programme of LWSI is organizing coaching centres for guiding the children of formal school. These centres particularly quite helpful for the girl students because at home they are kept busy with household chores and hardly find any time to study.

Including young girls and women in disaster mitigation teams at the community level and recruiting and deploying women in disaster intervention projects at the organizational level, two small and unremarkable steps by themselves, but in LWSI context they reflect a remarkable change in the gender perspective in the organization.

Gender empowerment assessment tools are periodically used to assess the results of our intervention as elaborated above. Assessments have identified positive results as well as significant gaps. We have noticed a rather mechanical approach to implementing programs where staff focuses on quantitative achievements, increasing the number of women participants and benefits to them. Adequate efforts are not made to analyse PGN and SGN and understand the correlation between the two or move from fulfilling PGN to the higher goal of meeting SGN. Thus, women are involved in the programs, PGN are fulfilled, but SGN is not identified and little follow is done to ensure that SGN is achieved.

As a result, we see that after withdrawal of LWS services many women groups have become defunct and women reverted to their traditional roles. Only men are carrying on with the development actions. While women have been motivated to enter the male domain men have not been supported to share women's responsibilities relating to household management, caring for children etc. While there are exceptions, we do not see significant signs of women's empowerment, cutting across the rural and urban divide, class, caste and ethnic factors. In the urban areas of Cuttack women have become leaders and managers of community action, but the project finds it difficult to involve men in the development initiatives. In Calcutta, the reverse is true. Such examples of exclusion of one or the other group exist in rural communities too.

We also note that even after many years of intervention we have not succeeded in empowering men and women to address social evils like the dowry system, discrimination against girl child in matters of healthcare and education, domestic violence against women etc. Women's participation in self help groups, access to credit and improved creditworthiness is sometimes a double edged weapon. On the one hand it can release them from indebtedness, enhance their dignity but it can also increase their vulnerability. In some communities it has been found that women take loans from group funds and pass it on to their husbands for productive use, ignoring the fact that she loses the access and control over the income but becomes liable to repay the loan. Once a reasonable amount has been saved in the group funds and after loans have been taken women tend to drop out of non-formal education programs, group meetings and related activities. The pressure to dropout comes from husbands or mothers in law.

The PMD 2004-06, takes into account the positive results and the gaps and elaborates strategies for integrating gender dimensions in all activities. Women are identified as among the most vulnerable groups and the need for affirmative action is emphasized. Gender sensitization programs for men and women, rooted advocacy and working with local NGOs to address social issues and human rights are considered priority thematic intervention areas. Accordingly activities with output and impact indicators and targets have been set to track the involvement of women in every sphere of the program. The PMD in effect has been designed as a tool to guide the frontline staff conceptually and facilitate effective program implementation keeping in mind the goal of empowering communities.

Concept & Approaches of Gender Relationship:

“Gender Relation is an Artificial and Unequal Relationship between Man and Woman Evolved Historically”

1.2 WAD/WID, WED, GAD

WAD (Women and Development) - This concept originates from socialist idea, which thinks women are part of productive process. In order to improve development process women’s capacity should be strengthened.

WID (Women in Development) – There is not much fundamental difference between WAD and WID concept. WID is an approach to integrate women into development, which aimed at meeting women’s basic needs and making use of women’s traditional skills and abilities for achieving the goals of development. This approach only helps to address the practical gender need, which basically helps to reduce the drudgery of women with a sympathetic outlook. Through this concept the hardship of women is perceived as women’s problem and tries to improve the condition of their life within their existing and stereotyped role. It talks about equity and equal opportunity but not much about empowerment.

WID policies and program do not address the subordination and oppression of women. It does not help to challenge the discrimination that lies within the existing social system; neither does it provide any space for men to involve.

WED (Women, Environment and Development)- The first efforts to introduce the dimension of gender into environment related projects in the development context, in the form of project components aimed specifically at women, date back to the 1970s. The underlying principle here was women are more sufferers if environment gets degraded and destroyed. The widespread promotion of the image of third world women as ‘valuable resources’ and ‘assets’ in natural resource management and later as ‘resourceful environment managers’ in development media, resulted in at least rhetoric about the need to involve women in safeguarding the environment, that is it was in women’s ‘natural’ interests to safeguard the environment. If women had to walk long distances to collect fuel and water then, it was assumed, they must also be interested in planting trees. Many of these initiatives, unwittingly, led to a further marginalization of women because of several misconceptions. The effect of such development intervention was that women’s already heavy workload often increased.

GAD (Gender and Development) – It talks about the changes of position of women in the society. To change women’s position it is necessary to challenge patriarchal structure and ideologies. What needs scrutiny and change is not just women but gender relations and gender division of labour. This system allows both women and men to involve in development process with an emphasis to women to bring them to forefront. GAD speaks of engendering of development processes without which development process will be endangered.

For more than a decade LWSI program activities stressed on reducing the social disparity existing between women and men in our society. Various approaches were adopted. But in most cases the programmes directed towards bringing women in the forefront, and in the process the concentration was mainly on women. Thus, the initial approach was more of WID approach which did not have the component to enable women and men to break the stereotype role which could challenge the patriarchal system and thus help to change the position of women in the family as well as in the society.

In the later part LWSI moved ahead towards sustainable development process and adopted activities where gender components have been integrated and can be claimed to be a GAD approach. But the analysis of the programs reveals that far more needs to be done to bring changes in women's position by involving both women and men in the process.

Genesis and purpose of this policy (Policy Goal)

Over the years LWS India has taken many gender oriented steps within the organization and efforts have been made to design a programme strategy to meet the Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs of disadvantaged communities. However, the absence of a uniform strategic gender perspective and approach was felt both for organizational and program development. This policy document has emerged from the realization that uniform strategic gender perspective and approach is necessary for organizational development and program development.

The overall gender goal of LWS I to promote a society in which men and women are free to develop according to their abilities and to contribute to society without the hindrances of gender stereotypes. In other words LWS goal is to promote a gender just society. In order to achieve this goal LWS has in its programs adopted inclusive processes which provide space for positive discrimination towards women to enhance their participation in collective community efforts for sustainable development. Thus, this document revisits our learning and experiences and in the light of these refines and rearticulates our strategies for a gender just society, reaffirms our commitments and thus provides a framework to guide us in our work.

Objectives of Gender Policy:

Many gender oriented steps have been taken up within the organization and efforts have been made to design a programme strategy to meet the Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs of disadvantaged communities. However, the absence of a uniform strategic gender perspective approach was felt both for organizational and program development. Hence, this Gender Policy for LWSI has been formulated considering the following points:

- It's basically to develop an affirmative action plan to mainstream gender in designing, monitoring and reporting of program activities at the organizational level as well as in the communities.
- To identify gender gaps in individual and organisation as well as in the programs.
- To develop strategic direction towards mainstreaming gender and set indicators to measure our progress and targets for changes in the organisation and also for programme direction. (In the PMD 2004-2006 impact targets with time frame and standards against each objectives and output targets and coverage with gender break up for each activities have been set up)
- To serve as a guiding tool which will enable us to develop an affirmative action plan by creating positive discrimination towards women to improve their condition and enhance their position.
- To develop Gender related positive change of attitude and mindset among the staff members and also within the partner communities.
- To generate common understanding and conceptual clarity as well as approaches on gender.
- To address the issue of human rights with special emphasis on women rights.

- To address the life issues from gender perspective – self-respect, dignity, land, forest and water right, eviction of tribals with special emphasis on women.
- Plan for disaster preparedness & response should be done with gender perspective
- To empower & enable women to participate and generate leadership within organization and operational communities

2 Definitions:

PGNs (Practical Gender Needs) - are related to the condition of women. They are easily identifiable (food, clean water, education, employment, medicines, housing) and they are related to existing gender division of labour and the situation faced by women due to gender dissimilarity beliefs and practices. For example women say they need water, fuel and fodder because it is they who look after their children, the household and domestic animals. Because fulfilling women's PGNs does not change the existing power relations between women and men and no one feels threatened by activities and programmes aimed at meeting PGNs.

SGNs (Strategic Gender Needs) - are related to women's subordinate position in society and their desire to change the existing hierarchical gender relations and make them more equal. SGN can be pursued by women organizing, getting into decision-making positions, changing discriminatory practices, norms and rules in order to transform gender relations. Activities which promote women's SGN are education, consciousness raising, mobilizing and organizing, developing leadership and management skills etc. Such activities are often resisted because they challenge male domination and demand long-term changes in gender relations.

In reality the differences between these categories are not always easy to define. In some cases the condition of women can be changed (PNG can be met) in such a way that it leads to changes in their position and transforms gender relations (achieves a SGN).

3 Strategy

-Gender Mainstreaming

Understanding of Mainstreaming- LWSI understands mainstreaming as integrating gender at different levels of operation across the board, right from the policy to the intervention within the institution, programme and down to the community level. Gender mainstreaming thus would involve changing the power relations between women and men. It further implies the advocacy process at the household level, in the community level and in all development policies and in all programmes. The ability to influence the powerful and the policies at the grassroots level as a continuous process is known as rooted advocacy. Through continuous interface with Government officials, Panchayats the capacity of women and men will be strengthened so that they can influence the policy in the long run. Programme approach will enable both women and men to participate actively in the pallisabha meeting to raise their needs collectively and influencing decision of PRI in their favour.

Where to begin & how

1st Individual level- For meaningful implementation of gender perspective approaches one has to start from oneself to un-condition from age old concepts of artificially created relationship between women and men and the stereotyped role they perform in the given situation. Men need to change their attitude towards women and women need to alter their mindset of their own ability.

2nd Institutional level- An affirmative action plan need to be drawn by creating positive discrimination towards women employee to enable them to come up to the decision making level. Overall women friendly atmosphere will be created by developing a support system so that women can contribute to their fullest potential with confidence.

3rd program level- Gender being a cross-cutting issue should be integrated appropriately with all development activities. Program approach will enable both women and men to develop self-respect as well as mutual respect to each other and to lead a life with dignity. This will also help to create a positive attitude among all to acknowledge the contribution of women in every sphere of life.

In order to successfully mainstream gender concern in the program approach and process the strategy will address the practical need arising out of condition of women first and identify the strategic gender needs which gradually will be taken up through which men should not feel threatened. GAD approach of involving men too will be actively pursued.

Addressing PGN is an entry point. To start with practical gender needs will be identified and appropriate measures will be taken to fulfil those needs. Proper follow up action will have to be undertaken to attain the Strategic Gender Needs in the long run. Thus, it will be a two pronged approach to identifying and addressing both the needs.

In order to attain the strategic gender needs, program designing and monitoring need to be done carefully. For addressing both practical gender need and strategic gender needs a well linked program will be adopted.

Both women and men should be encouraged and motivated to step into each others domain with confidence. The programme will enable them to realize gender relation in relation to their stereotyped life. For that confidence building measures like regular sensitization, awareness programmes will be emphasized. For economic development women will be encouraged to take up ventures which are traditionally not considered as women's job.

The programme approach will enable women groups to be strengthened to handle the cases of domestic violence as well as men and PRI members should also be made aware and feel responsible to address these issues. Empowerment of women for their effective participation in PRIs would be taken up together with women and men's active participation in Gram Sabha & Ward Sabhas/Palli Sabhas.

Careful designing of program will be adopted so that through empowerment process, already overworked women should not be further burdened with added responsibility. From the beginning the concept of sharing responsibility both at domestic level and in communities both by men & women will be encouraged. This message will be propagated through regular awareness and sensitization programs.

Through empowerment process women's access and control over resources and decision making capacity will be enhanced. Through capacity building measures women will be able to assert their rights and will be in a position to bargain for better life. Right to reproductive health, property right, political participation, right to choose and make selection, right to develop etc. will be addressed as part of empowerment process. Strategy will empower and enable women to participate and generate leadership within operational communities.

Plan for disaster preparedness and response will be gender perspective. During distribution of relief materials after gender perspective need analysis the needs of all groups will be considered if possible in consultation with them. Special care will be given for fulfilling the needs of special groups like pregnant and lactating women, children, elderly and sick persons.

Prior to implementation of rehabilitation programs women's needs will be taken into consideration and enabling condition will be created to seek their views and opinion on their needs and priorities.

Regular sensitization process will be organized involving both women and men of all age groups. Programme will be planned to encourage men for active participation where their participation is nil or very less.

For monitoring, qualitative and quantitative indicators in relation to PGN & SGN will have to be identified in each project and within the organization to monitor the process and impact in addition to monitoring the planned activities and tasks.

To identify training gaps keeping in mind GAD and integrate with training strategy. Goal oriented training strategy or need analysis to be developed to set a goal to meet in 5-8 years. More weight will be given to strategic areas so that sustainability is more guaranteed.

Organization Policy-Based on this policy guideline an affirmative action plan will be developed with respect to recruitment, promotion, transfer etc. The action plan will be time bound on the basis of issues and needs which have been cropped up during preparation of this policy.

- To the extent possible and at all times LWS would attempt to maintain gender balanced staff strength. During recruitment preference would be given to women.
- The promotion policy will be such as to focus on the capacity building of women and enhance their capacity to become eligible for promotion on the basis of performance and merit. Strategy will empower and enable women to participate and generate leadership within organization.
- Specific needs of female and male staff in their overall leadership, management and implementation capacity will be identified keeping gender perspective in mind.
- Guideline of transfer will take into consideration the specific needs arising out of gender concerns with respect to women staff.
- Institutional values and culture will have to be promoted and practiced in relation to gender sensitivity. Periodic sensitization will be taken as a part of every programme and it will be integrated and internalized with a view to challenge the social practices which perpetuate discrimination against women. Some of the examples are the practice of accepting and giving dowry both by male and female staff, some traditional religious practices only by female staff such as fasting, abstinence from non-vegetarian food etc.)
- Code of conduct should be elaborated with details (modest dress, smoking etc.)
- In terms of benefits, more pro women measures will be introduced (special leave in case of miscarriage, adoptive mothers etc.)
- Train and orient women staff to handle all aspects of LWS work including construction activities.
- Encourage male staff to facilitate gender sensitization programs etc.

Two-word mantra

By Shashi Tharoor

**"The Hindu", Online edition of India's National Newspaper
February 01, 2004**

The single most important thing that can be done to improve the world, is perhaps this — educate girls. S.R. RAGUNATHAN

ONE of the more difficult questions I find myself being asked as a United Nations official, especially when I have been addressing a generalist audience, is: "what is the single most important thing that can be done to improve the world?" It's the kind of question that tends to bring out the bureaucrat in the most direct of communicators, as one feels obliged to explain how complex are the challenges confronting humanity; how no one task alone can be singled out over other goals; how the struggle for peace, the fight against poverty, the battle to eradicate disease, must all be waged side-by-side — and so mind-numbingly on. But of late I have cast my caution to the winds and ventured an answer to this most impossible of questions. If I had to pick the one thing we must do above all else, I now offer a two-word *mantra*: "educate girls".

It really is that simple. There is no action proven to do more for the human race than the education of the female child. Scholarly studies and research projects have established what common sense might already have told us: that if you educate a boy, you educate a person, but if you educate a girl, you educate a family and benefit an entire community.

The evidence is striking. Increased schooling of mothers has a measureable impact on the health of their children, on the future schooling of the child, and on the child's adult productivity. The children of educated mothers consistently out-perform children with educated fathers and illiterate mothers. Given that they spend most of their time with their mothers, this is hardly surprising.

A girl who has had more than six years of education is better equipped to seek and use medical and health care advice, to immunise her children, to be aware of sanitary practices from boiling water to the importance of washing hands. A World Bank project in Africa established that the children of women with just five years of school had a 40 per cent better survival rate than the children of women who had less than five years in class. A Yale University study showed that the heights and weights for newborn children of women with a basic education were consistently higher than those of babies born to uneducated women. A UNESCO project demonstrated that giving women just a primary school education decreases child mortality by five per cent to 10 per cent.

The health advantages of education extend beyond childbirth. The dreaded disease AIDS spreads twice as fast, a Zambian study shows, among uneducated girls than among those who have been to school. Educated girls marry later, and are less susceptible to abuse by older men. And educated women tend to have fewer children, space them more wisely and so look after them better; women with seven years' education, according to one study, had two or three fewer children than women with no schooling. The World Bank, with the mathematical precision for which they are so famous, has estimated that for every four years of education, fertility is reduced by about one birth per mother. The reason Kerala's fertility rate is 1.7 per couple while Bihar's is over four is that Kerala's women are educated and most of Bihar's are not.

The more girls go to secondary school, the Bank adds, the higher the country's per capita income growth. And when girls work in the fields, as so many have to do across the

developing world, their schooling translates directly to increased agricultural productivity. One marvellous thing about women is that they like to learn from other women, so the success of educated women is usually quickly emulated by their uneducated sisters. And women spend increased income on their families, which men do not necessarily do (rural toddy shops in India, after all, thrive on the self-indulgent spending habits of men). In many studies, the education of girls has been shown to lead to more productive farming and in turn to a decline in malnutrition. Educate a girl, and you benefit a community: QED.

I learned many of these details from my colleague Catherine Bertini, this year's World Food Prize laureate for her tireless and effective work as head of the United Nations' World Food Programme. As she put it in her acceptance speech for that prestigious prize: "If someone told you that, with just 12 years of investment of about \$1 billion a year, you could, across the developing world, increase economic growth, decrease infant mortality, increase agricultural yields, improve maternal health, improve children's health and nutrition, increase the numbers of children — girls and boys — in school, slow down population growth, increase the number of men and women who can read and write, decrease the spread of AIDS, add new people to the work force and be able to improve their wages without pushing others out of the work force — what would you say? Such a deal! What is it? How can I sign up?"

Sadly, the world is not yet rushing to "sign up" to the challenge of educating girls, who lag consistently behind boys in access to education throughout the developing world. Some 65 million girls around the world never see the inside of a classroom. And yet not educating them costs the world more than putting them through school.

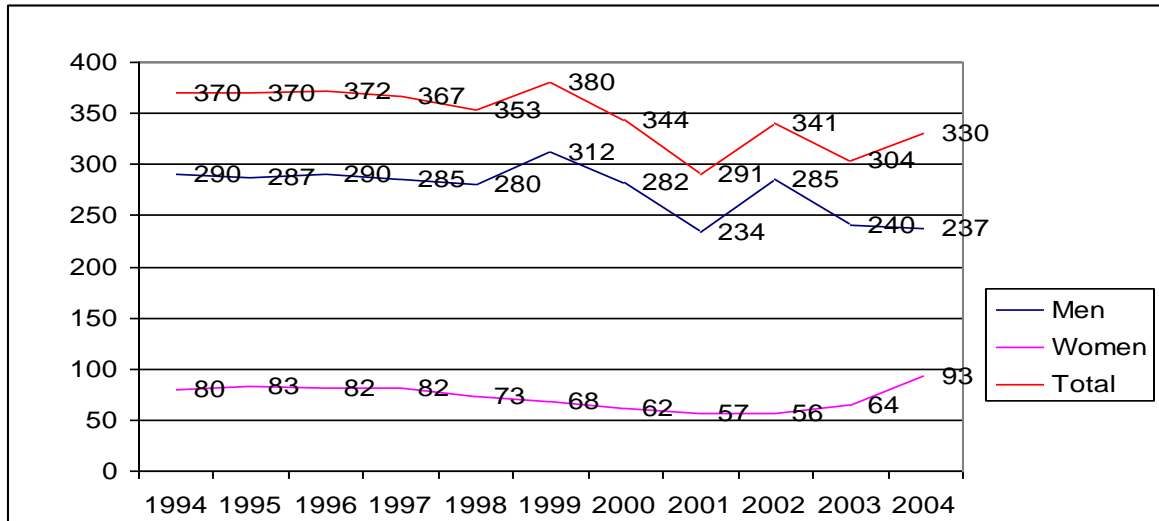
UNICEF's energetic head Carol Bellamy, releasing her flagship *State of the World's Children* report, said bluntly: "the failure to invest in girls' education puts in jeopardy more development goals than any other single action." In our own country, we have a long way to go. And we boast one State, Bihar, which has enthroned an illiterate woman as Chief Minister — as if to showcase its abysmal figure of a 23 per cent female literacy rate, one of the worst on the planet. But her seven daughters did indeed receive an education — so perhaps, after all, there are grounds for hope.

Certainly, there is no better answer. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan put it simply: "No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition, promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and increase the chances of education for the next generation. Let us invest in women and girls."

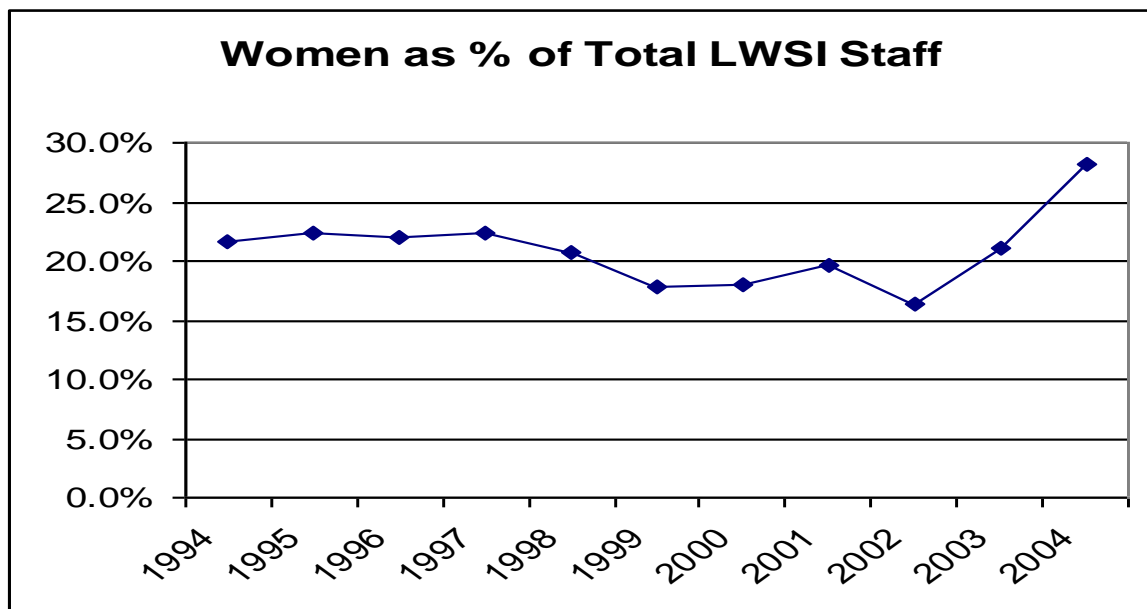
APPENDIX 3

The following charts illustrate the changes in male and female staff within LWSI during the past 10 years. Data for 2004 is as of end of June.

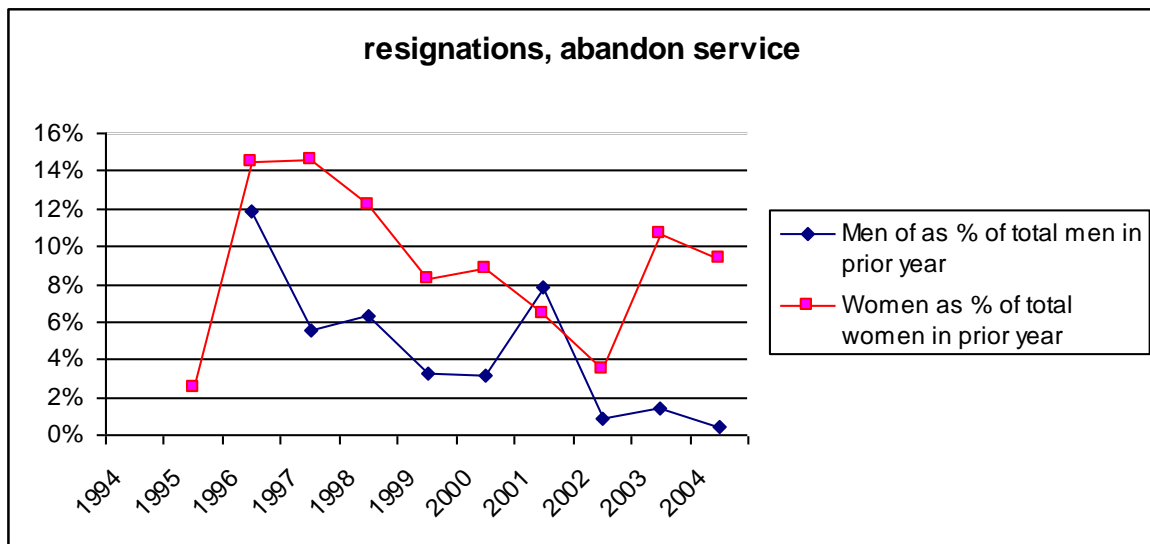
Total number of staff:



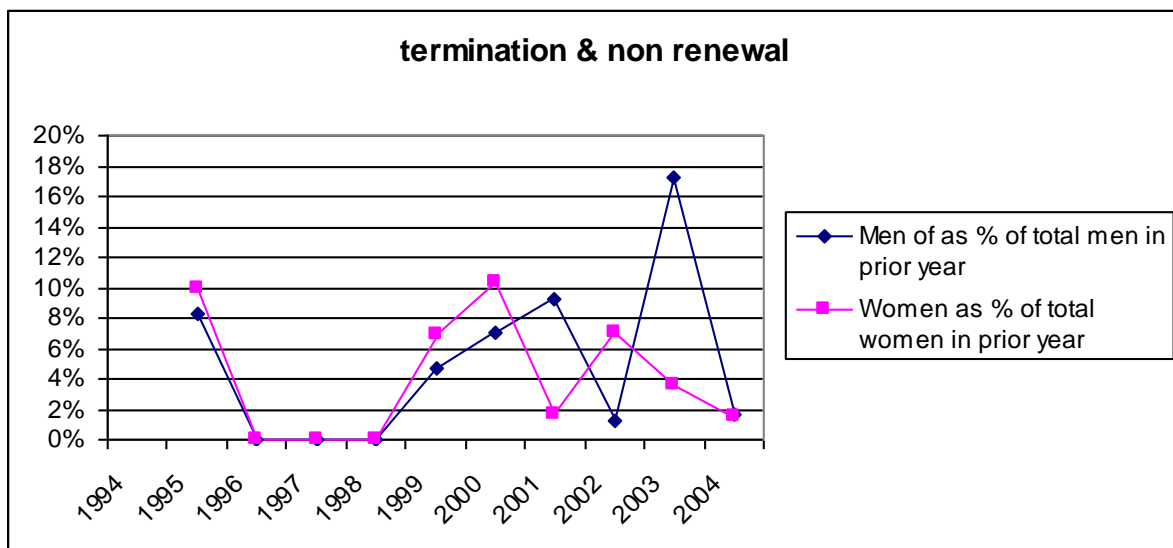
Women as a percent of total LWSI staff:



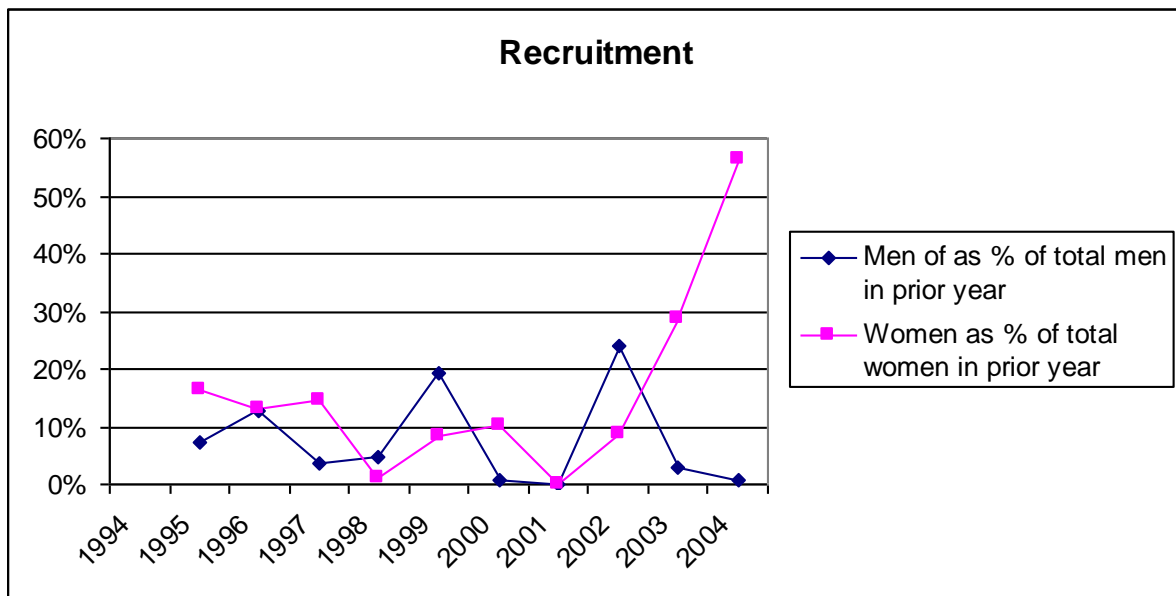
Men and women who left LWSI service through their own choice:



Men and women who left LWSI service by the choice of the organization:



Recruitment of new staff by sex :



The lesson from these charts is that the level of women's participation in LWSI staff was stable from 94 to 98, decreased to a low in 2002 and has since gone up significantly. Part of the reason is that women have left the organization at a higher rate than men. The conclusion is that LWSI will have to continue its current emphasis on recruitment of women staff in order to maintain and increase the participation of women in the organization.

These charts do not address the issue of women in middle and upper management. There are only 3 women in the Head Office whose responsibilities are above that of a secretary. There are no project-in-charges who are women. These are two areas where additional effort is needed.