

Summary

Feminist Economists Engage with India's Eleventh Five Year Plan

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India

Paper for the IAFFE conference on

Engendering Economic Policy

Boston 2009

This paper reports on an initiative taken by the Planning Commission in India, during the preparation of the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012). For the first time in the history of Planning in India, the Commission constituted an officially designated Committee of Feminist Economists (CFE). In this paper, we the two authors - one from the 'inside', the Minister rank member of the Planning Commission, a feminist, and an activist in the field of women and human rights, Syeda Hameed, and the other from the 'outside', a feminist economist with a long history in women's studies and policy interventions in India and elsewhere, Devaki Jain - describe the particular difference that the CFE made to the final document, namely the Eleventh Five Year plan¹ as well as to the platform of voices that are engaged in advocacy for women's rights.

We also explore the reasons that account for the difference, as well as the obstacles faced on three counts: firstly, during the penetration into the citadel of male-led economic governance; secondly, within the feminist advocacy groups on the arrival of

¹ India. Planning Commission, Government of India. Eleventh Five Year Plan 2007-2012. 2 Vols. New Delhi: OUP, 2008. Also at <<http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/11thf.htm>>

a more exclusive advocacy group; and finally within the group itself on hierarchies and ideologies.²

The description and analysis would suggest that professional/economic discipline-derived intervention can make valuable changes in the approach and implementation of policies and programmes addressed to women, especially in the context of poverty eradication. Starting with using the weapons of the enemy, but re-designing them within the war zone, is an effective method for bringing forth a just economic programme derived from well-reasoned theoretical premises.

The setting up of an official committee of feminist economists was possible because for the first time, the Member, i.e., the person in charge of this sector in the Planning Commission, was a feminist. She explained it to the Undersecretary-General of the UN, Dr. Noleen Heyzer, as a 'good but lonely' experience working with the all-male team at the Planning Commission. The CFE made her conversant with the specificities of gendered economic development and helped her explain and defend the need for gender-oriented plans at India's highest planning forum. And conversely, her membership of the feminist movement enabled her to draw in her fellow members.

It has often been found that one of the main reasons for the opening of spaces for women in official settings has been the strategic collaboration between women.³ For example, women in government delegations who join forces with women officials within the Secretariat and women in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can collude to engineer a desirable outcome. This has been called the *velvet triangle*⁴, a metaphor to capture the three major groups of actors typically involved in gender/women's politics — first, *femocrats* and *feminist politicians*; second, *academics* and *experts*; and third, *non-governmental organizations*. The story

² Jain, Devaki. "To Be or Not to Be: The Location of Women in Public Policy." Paper presented at the International Conference on Development in Karnataka: A Multi-disciplinary Perspective, Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore: June 2005.

³ See Jain, Devaki. *Women, Development and the UN*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2005.

⁴ Woodward, Alison. 'Building Velvet Triangles: Gender in EU Policy-making', Paper in revision from the European Consortium for Political Research, 28th Joint Session, Copenhagen, April 2000.

explained in this paper has shades that support the theory of a strategic combine and its power.

Reviewing some of the literature in this field of strategic interventions in public policy, there are standard approaches set up by the UN agencies that are mirrored in national approaches to women's advancement. The paper proposes that sharp knowledge-driven knives cutting into economic designs for growth are more effective. That ideas and objectives like gender equity, mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting often remain parallel to core public investment and other triggering mechanisms at the national level. Therefore, it is an amalgam of knowledge – i.e., data, arguments, awareness of the template or drawing board, the feminist commitment to justice, and a navigator inside the system – that can make an impact, draw attention to the location and contribution of women to the economy, and thereby receive inclusion in the policy.

The paper is divided into eight sections: The Planning Commission; Women's Role in the Political Economy; Women and the Plans; The Disjunction; The Genesis of the Committee of Feminist Economists; The Value of a Feminist Leader; What was the Difference; and the conclusion.

In the post-Independence era (i.e., after 1947), the Planning Commission was set up in India, drawing from the social premises of the Directive Principles of State Policy which directed that: "The State shall strive to promote the welfare of people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may, a social order, in which justice – social, economic and political – shall inform all institutions of national life."⁵

In between 1950-2007, the Planning Commission prepared ten Five Year Plans. For the first eight Plans the emphasis was on a growing public sector with massive investments in basic and heavy industries, but since the launch of the Ninth Plan in 1997, the emphasis on the public sector has become less pronounced and the current thinking on planning in the country, in general, is that it should increasingly be of an indicative nature.⁶ India moved into the reform mode basically linked to economic

⁵ Constitution of India. Part IV, Directive Principles of State Policy, 38. 1950.

⁶ Government of India. Planning Commission. Data accessed on June 1, 2009 and available at <<http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/index.html>>

deregulation and liberalization. The role of the Planning Commission was to recast the economy onto new tracks.

In India, women's participation or intervention in the unfolding of the political economy design is not a recent development.

The issues and currents running through the Indian subcontinent as it moved towards defining nationhood and citizenship before 1947 were not only numerous, but also highly contentious, with strong players staking claims on very divergent and complex perceptions of identity and imagery.⁷ There were a variety of movements against the divisive expressions of caste, religion and class - Periyar (EV Ramaswami Naicker), Jyotibai Phule, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Narayana Guru and so on.⁸ Women's rights and location in these major sites of dispute and anxiety, was also tossed about with assorted and often contradictory imagery.

However, women spoke from within these movements – from within the anti-Brahmin movement of Periyar⁹, the Marxist revolutionary armed struggles,¹⁰ the INA,¹¹ the Gandhian organisations, the Indian National Congress,¹² and the Socialist parties. Looking back, there seems to have been a unity amongst these women in their articulation, challenging the various locations and images that the men were creating for them. They were able to perceive and accommodate a multiplicity of identities and roles for themselves. They flourished in fluid and flexible contexts of social relations challenging the mono- typing and rigidity that was and is so much a part of male rationality.¹³

⁷ Desai, Meghnad. Development and Nationhood: Essays in the Political Economy of South Asia. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁸ Indian Association of Women's Studies Conference Papers. "The Early Years of Indian Independence: Women's Perspectives." Baroda, August 9-11, 1997.

⁹ V. Geetha. "Periyar, Women and an Ethic of Citizenship." Feminism in India. Ed. Maitrayee Chaudhuri. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2004

¹⁰ Forbes, Geraldine. Women in Modern India, New Cambridge History of India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

¹¹ Ghosh, Ratna., ed. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Indian Freedom Struggle. New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 2006.

¹² Mohan, Rajan. Women in Indian National Congress: 1921-1931. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1999.

¹³ Indian Association of Women's Studies Conference Papers. "The Early Years of Indian Independence: Women's Perspectives." Keynote Address by Vina Majumdar. Baroda, August 9-11, 1997.

Thus in pre-independent India and immediate post-independence India, the women's movement was aware of the front-line ground-level political issues being debated within the political parties. The struggle against colonial rule intensified and nationalism became the pre-eminent cause.

In 1939, a sub-committee on women called Women's Role in Planned Economy (WPRE) was set up as part of the structure of the National Planning Committee, to chart the course of future planning in India. The sub-committee was to "deal with the place of woman in the planned economy..." ranging from family life, employment, education and social customs that prevent women's participation in the economy.¹⁴ The chairperson of the Committee was Rani Lakshmbai Rajwade, and the committee membership included prominent women of that time.¹⁵

Its depth of understanding as well its recommendations could have been taken place today – it was farsighted and covered several areas: civic rights, economic rights, property rights, education, marriage, family and issues like widowhood, caste, prostitution etc.¹⁶

The post-1975 era uncovered the situation and status of women, and brought them into the development design as a special category. This led to the inclusion of a chapter on women's employment in the Sixth Plan (1976-1981). Employment was the critical goal and bringing in data on women's position in the occupational classification of India's labour and other such information was a big leap forward.

¹⁴ Shah, K.T. "Introduction - Woman's role in Planned Economy." Report of the Sub-Committee, National Planning Committee series. Bombay: Vora & Co. Publishers, 1947. 27.

¹⁵ Members of the Women's Role in Planned Economy (WRPE) sub-committee: Sarla Devi, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Begum Zarina Currimbhoy, Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Joshi and Dr. (Smt. Muthulakshmi Reddy.

¹⁶ Notes: It was women who both challenged the actions taken by the male leadership on the abduction recovery issue, and plunged into refugee relief and rehabilitation work, which in a sense became the experience that directed their further contributions to Indian political economy, as we shall see. For example, as early as 1949, Rameshwari Nehru, honorary advisor to the government in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, resigned in protest against a policy that she believed worked against women. In a memorandum to the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, she said, "It is well known that a very large proportion of the women recovered in India were unwilling to go to Pakistan... but I regret to say that their protests, their hunger strikes, their pathetic and heart-rending cries of distress, widely witnessed by both workers and outsiders, were of avail, for they were eventually sent away to Pakistan... we must admit that we have sent away these unwilling and helpless women to a future they can neither control nor choose."

Simultaneously an enormous amount of research unfolded on women's location in the political economy as well as their capabilities in organising themselves to walk out of poverty and powerlessness.¹⁷ Several reports on women's status and location in the political economy appeared both from Governments (including the State Governments) as well as from women-led institutions.¹⁸

Over the next two decades (1981-2001) and four Plans, the issue of gender had been brought into each Plan as a chapter. Vibhuti Patel points out that the Planning Commission of India has always focused on women's issues as per the perceptions of their members on the status of women in the economy.¹⁹ Though there had been a vast amount of research done on women's work in India since the early nineties,²⁰ the Planning Commission members' perception played a bigger role in deciding how these issues would be dealt with. The chart on the next page captures the trend that indicates the shift in perception vis-à-vis women.

Women have not been able to claim their right full place either in material well-being or in the political economy design landscape. Bina Agarwal, while reviewing the period offers this comment, "Gender inequality did not emerge just fifty years ago, nor did the attempts to challenge it. But Independence brought new opportunities for transformation. What have we accomplished? Too little: whether it is the macro situation of the Nehruvian Model or post-reform Manmohan economics, there is a steady decline."²¹

¹⁷ Jain, Devaki. "Indian Women: Today and Tomorrow." Women's Quest for Power. New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1982.

¹⁸ Government of India. Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development. "Shramsakti." Report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector, New Delhi, 1988 and All India Women's Conference Papers. Indian women in the 1980s Development Imperatives, 1989

¹⁹ Patel, Vibhuti. "Gender in State and National Policy Documents – A Case Study of India." Paper presented at a Conference on Grassroots Participation in Governance. Reconstructing Governance: The Other Voice organised by Karnataka Women's Information and Resource Centre in partnership with United Nations Development Programme, New Delhi and Gender Studies Unit, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore on February 20-21, 2004

²⁰ Ed. Rao, Ghosh, Joshi, Acharya. Women at Work in India: Volumes 1 and 2. Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi, SAGE:1994

²¹ Agarwal, Bina. "Women: Still Mostly Poor and Landless." India: 50 Years. Times of India, Dt. August 14, 1997.

Plan	Activity	Approach
First Five-Year Plan (1951-1956)	Set up the Central Social Welfare Board	Welfare work through voluntary organizations and charitable trusts
Second Plan (1956-1961)	Supported the development of <i>Mahila Mandals</i> to work at the grassroots	Rural Development
Third, fourth and interim plans (1961-1974)	Provisions for women's education, pre-natal and child health services, supplementary feeding for children, nursing and expectant mothers	Women as “targets” of family planning and social sector “beneficiaries”
Fifth Plan (1974-1978)	Programmes and schemes for women in development	Shift in the approach from welfare to development
Sixth Plan (1980-1985)	Separate Chapter on Women in the Plan	Accepted women's development as a separate economic agenda; took a multi-disciplinary approach with a three-pronged thrust on health, education and employment
Seventh Plan (1985-1990)	Working Group on Employment of Women; Statistics on women: Quota for women in development schemes	Bringing women into the mainstream of national development.
Eighth Plan (1992-1997)	The core sectors of education, health and employment outlay for women rose from Rs. 4 crores in the first plan to Rs. 2,000 crores in the eighth	Paradigm shift from development to empowerment and benefits to women
Ninth Plan (1997-2002)	Concept of a women's component plan to assure that at least 30% of funds/benefits from all development sectors flow to women	Empowerment of women as its strategic objective
Tenth Plan (2002-2007)	Self help groups	Suggests specific strategies, policies and programmes for the empowerment of women

Table 1: Chart outlining the shift in perception with respect to women in the Plans

With all this to be considered, the question that arises then is, why does this disjunction exist after decades of what appears to be a vibrant and ostensibly effective partnership between policy makers and the women's movement? What are the methods feminist groups can use to remove this embedded inequality?

Three main reasons are emerging from the various analytical reviews: the first is a resistance to the accommodation of the knowledge that women are providing of the situation on the ground and their actual location in the Indian political economy as the main contributors to its economic sectors, be it agriculture or export industries. The second is the failure in the women's movement to forge a semblance of unity on public issues, which would gain them a space in the political discourse, as for

example, the women of the immediate post-independence era did. The third is the very nature of women's construction of knowledge and its use.

Gendering public policy is intimately related to our answers to these questions.

The Genesis of the Committee of Feminist Economists

There was already an existing loosely-connected group – many of the members who assembled to form the Committee of Feminist Economists (CFE) had been part of that earlier formation. They were eager to revive it as a value addition to feminist advancement, both in knowledge as well as in advocacy. Therefore, when the new administration – the United Progressive Alliance – was ushered in, this earlier group of friends and associates of EIWIG considered starting an economic policy watch as a way of critiquing and modifying programmes towards economic justice.

There were tensions as mentioned earlier but tensions are part of the feminist movement, and this illustration only adds to the difficulties that the movement faces in enlarging its influence as a politically significant voice in policy-making. Yet - the CFE did come out with a united view and presentation to the Planning commission, and that again suggests another important aspect of feminist politics – the uniting aspect: namely that the orientation of all their advice was towards the women from the less privileged sections of society. It was within the concept of economic justice, rights and equality.

The Value of a Feminist Leader

As a non-economist woman activist at the Planning Commission, my work was not easy. As Member responsible for Planning for the “soft sectors”- Women and Children, Village and Small Industry, my voice was sometimes lost in the cauldrons of power or replaced for “priority” area for action.

My texts had illustrated that women's issues should cut across all sectors, such as energy, water, environment, agriculture, rural development, and so when the process of writing began, I did not hold with the idea of bracketing into one chapter all issues pertaining to women. My field experiences had rewarded me with knowledge of the multiple burdens and multiple deprivations of women. I realized then that my primary goal would be Gendering the Plan. The synergy of these two phenomena led to a few interactions with eminent feminist economists of the country, the outcome of which was the establishment of a formal committee, namely the Committee of Feminist Economists.

It was a first in many ways - the usage of the word feminist in official bureaucracy and the mandate of scrutinizing all the chapters that today form the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The value of this initiative was that it argued for the moving away from the bracketing of women and children into a sector called "Development of Women and Children" to looking at women as growth agents in the political economy of India. Thus the major shift of this initiative was to move the gendering of public policy away from women's machinery, namely the Women and Child Ministry (which was the traditional space for women) into macro-economic space. Starting from addressing the *Approach* and *Chapter One* which was about inclusive growth, it moved to chapters like infrastructure, industry, agriculture, education, environment, health and so on. The feminist economists provided facts, critique of the draft and ideas for change. I was then able to arrange for them to meet with the full presence of the Planning Commission who had a lively discussion with the CFE after they presented their ideas and facts in a presentation. These are attached as in the appendix.

The Difference Between the Tenth and the Eleventh Plan

- Types of Data Included
- A separate chapter on Urban and Rural Livelihoods wherein the Village and Cottage Industries, handloom, handicraft, food processing and agro industries have been identified as engines of sustained and inclusive growth.
- The chapter ostensibly bracketed as Women and Child has been renamed Women's Agency and Child Rights, a tactical move to recognize the potential of the women beyond reproductive roles of child-bearing and care.

As a sample of the influence that the CFE had on the Eleventh Year Plan, enumerated below are the differences between the Tenth and Eleventh Plan in the Chapters on Agriculture:

Tenth Plan

Women were mentioned in the context of

- malnutrition and anaemia
- NGO's that work with poor women
- land on lease and credit infrastructure with regard to self-help groups and women's groups
- proportion of women in the tea industry

Eleventh Plan

Para 1.14 says "For growth to be at all inclusive, the agricultural strategy must focus on the 85% of farmers who are small and marginal, **increasingly female**, and who find it difficult to access inputs, credit, and extension or to market their output... credit has grown at unprecedented rates (30% per annum) to other sectors but not to small and marginal land holders and **women who lack collateral security**... One way forward to encourage marginal farmers and women to form groups for purposes of farming would be to shift at least some of the current subsidies to be available only to groups of such farmers rather than to individuals."

Para 1.115: "Small and marginal farmers often lack access to major agricultural services, such as credit, extension, insurance, and markets. **This is especially true of women farmers since there is pervasive male bias in provision of such services.**"

Para 1.148: Gender equity: **With the share of female workforce in agriculture increasing, and increased incidence of female-headed households**, there is an urgent need to ensure women's rights to land and infrastructure support:

- **Women's names should be recorded as cultivators** in revenue records on family farms where women operate the land having ownership in the name of male members.
- The gender bias in functioning of institutions for information, extension, credit, inputs, and marketing should be corrected by **gender-sensitizing the existing infrastructure providers.**

- Women's co-operatives and other forms of group effort should be promoted for the dissemination of agricultural technology and other inputs, as well as for marketing of produce.
- Wherever possible a group approach for investment and production among small scale women farmers, be it on purchased or leased land, should be promoted. **Women farmers are typically unable to access** inputs, information, and market produce on an individual basis. A group approach would empower them.

Change in Mechanisms Used

Conventionally the Planning Commission has always set up a steering committee starting from the Sixth Plan composed of members representing varied voices and spaces that reflect the diversity and heterogeneity of India. This steering committee oversees working groups which address specific subjects. They also use a smaller network of grassroots women's organizations who hold consultations in different regions of India with a larger group of grassroots organizations and bring recommendations from those consultations to the Planning Commission.

The New Mechanism – i.e., the CFE – was composed of women scholars, well recognized in the public space, famous or highly visible due to their academic contribution as well as participation in important structures of Government. Their names in some sense carried the aura of power. Thus, recommendations and demands coming from them were accommodated. [See the section for their work.]

Conclusion

Upon reviewing this experience, several pointers emerge for consideration by feminist economists who engage in public policy:

Firstly, the value of working within national spaces, unencumbered by international rubrics: international advisories, platform choices and methods advised usually linked to funding and to state machineries of governance cannot tether advocacy.

Secondly, the value of pulling together women economists who have engaged with the world of women – whether by studying action, innovation, reality in the fields, or

through research into specific areas – but with special reference to women’s link to them as collectivities or networks or friend groups. This kind of space has a double advantage: they learn from each other and they also can deal with the outside.

Thirdly, to highlight the importance of shifting – if not drawing more serious attention to – the location of women in economies and their role as economic agents apart from social actors. While education, health, gender relations and social services are all crucial inputs especially for women in deprivation, their role as economic agents need to be brought to the fore immediately. Most bail out packages, pack women into the safety-net areas, invest in free food, nutrition for their babies and so on. But one of the most crucial roles women play is to bring income to the household, apart from their own interest in earning a living.

Fourthly, with the knowledge of the impact of the recent financial crisis on women and more deeply so, there is need for strong global advocacy by feminist economists to draw attention to women as earners, whether in the formal or informal economy. Such an emphasis may be required more in relation to developing countries.

Fifthly, there is a need to understand and highlight the difference between the South and North in these domains. The emphasis on the care economy and the clubbing together of women’s roles in production and reproduction, are in some ways the concepts of the North, and more crucially relevant there. This is not to say that the double burden of earning and caring is not a universal phenomenon which also gives unity to the concept of an identity called woman, related to the stereotypical roles; the question is one of what is crucial, at what time, and where.

Finally, even more than social input, the crying need in countries like India is for the State and society to understand the economic roles that women, especially at the lower end of the income scale, are engaged with. Strong support with infrastructure, funding for organization, upgrading of skills and most of all labour protection laws, are needed urgently.

In the South, women have been the major workers in the export industries, drawn in for their willingness to work monotonously for low wages without security. The crisis

in exports, i.e., the market depression, has assaulted these vulnerable women. There is a lesson here for understanding women's location in economic growth strategies and especially differentiating the North-South.

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²² India. Planning Commission, Government of India. Eleventh Five Year Plan 2007-2012. 2 Vols. New Delhi: OUP, 2008. Also at <<http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/11thf.htm>>

²³ Jain, Devaki. "To Be or Not to Be: The Location of Women in Public Policy." Paper presented at the International Conference on Development in Karnataka: A Multi-disciplinary Perspective, Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore: June 2005.

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knowledge-driven knives cutting into economic designs for growth are more effective. That ideas and objectives like gender equity, mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting often remain parallel to core public investment and other triggering mechanisms at the national level. Therefore, it is an amalgam of knowledge – i.e., data, arguments, awareness of the template or drawing board, the feminist commitment to justice, and a navigator inside the system – that can make an impact, draw attention to the location and contribution of women to the economy, and thereby receive inclusion in the policy.

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Section One

The Planning Commission

In the post-Independence era (i.e., after 1947), the Planning Commission was set up in India, drawing from the social premises of the Directive Principles of State Policy which directed that: “The State shall strive to promote the welfare of people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may, a social order, in which justice – social, economic and political – shall inform all institutions of national life.”²⁶ And further that: “The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing –

1. That the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood
2. That the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good
3. That the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment”²⁷

From this, the following functions were assigned to the Planning Commission²⁸:

- (i) To make an assessment of the material, capital and human resources of the country, and to augment those resources that are found to be deficient
- (ii) To formulate a Plan for the most effective and balanced utilisation of the country's resources after determining the priorities
- (iii) To indicate the factors that tend to retard economic development, and determine the conditions which should be established for the Plan's successful execution
- (iv) To determine the nature of machinery which will be necessary for securing successful implementation of each stage of the Plan in all its aspects
- (v) To appraise from time to time the progress achieved in the execution of each stage of the Plan and recommend for adjustments of policy and measures that such appraisal may show to be necessary

²⁶ Constitution of India. Part IV, Directive Principles of State Policy, 38. 1950.

²⁷ Constitution of India. Part IV, Directive Principles of State Policy, 39. 1950.

²⁸ Government of India. National Informatics Centre Portal; Accessed on 03 June 2009 and available at <http://dataserver.nic.in/rti/doc_rti/func.pdf>

In between 1950-2007, the Planning Commission prepared ten Five Year Plans. For the first eight Plans the emphasis was on a growing public sector with massive investments in basic and heavy industries, but since the launch of the Ninth Plan in 1997, the emphasis on the public sector has become less pronounced and the current thinking on planning in the country, in general, is that it should increasingly be of an indicative nature.²⁹ India moved into the reform mode basically linked to economic deregulation and liberalization. The role of the Planning Commission was to recast the economy onto new tracks.

²⁹ Government of India. Planning Commission. Data accessed on June 1, 2009 and available at <<http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/index.html>>

Section Two

Women's Role in the Political Economy – A Historical Unfolding

In India, women's participation or intervention in the unfolding of the political economy design is not a recent development.

The issues and currents running through the Indian subcontinent as it moved towards defining nationhood and citizenship before 1947 were not only numerous, but also highly contentious, with strong players staking claims on very divergent and complex perceptions of identity and imagery.³⁰ There were a variety of movements against the divisive expressions of caste, religion and class - Periyar (EV Ramaswami Naicker), Jyotibai Phule, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Narayana Guru and so on.³¹ Women's rights and location in these major sites of dispute and anxiety, was also tossed about with assorted and often contradictory imagery. However, women spoke from within these movements – from within the anti-Brahmin movement of Periyar³², the Marxist revolutionary armed struggles,³³ the INA,³⁴ the Gandhian organisations, the Indian National Congress,³⁵ and the Socialist parties. Looking back, there seems to have been a unity amongst these women in their articulation, challenging the various locations and images that the men were creating for them. They were able to perceive and accommodate a multiplicity of identities and roles for themselves. They flourished in fluid and flexible contexts of social relations challenging the mono-typing and rigidity that was and is so much a part of male rationality.³⁶

Thus in pre-independent India and immediate post-independence India, the women's movement was aware of the front-line ground-level political issues being debated

³⁰ Desai, Meghnad. Development and Nationhood: Essays in the Political Economy of South Asia. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004.

³¹ Indian Association of Women's Studies Conference Papers. "The Early Years of Indian Independence: Women's Perspectives." Baroda, August 9-11, 1997.

³² V. Geetha. "Periyar, Women and an Ethic of Citizenship." Feminism in India. Ed. Maitrayee Chaudhuri. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2004

³³ Forbes, Geraldine. Women in Modern India, New Cambridge History of India, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

³⁴ Ghosh, Ratna., ed. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Indian Freedom Struggle. New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 2006.

³⁵ Mohan, Rajan. Women in Indian National Congress: 1921-1931. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1999.

³⁶ Indian Association of Women's Studies Conference Papers. "The Early Years of Indian Independence: Women's Perspectives." Keynote Address by Vina Majumdar. Baroda, August 9-11, 1997.

within the political parties. The struggle against colonial rule intensified and nationalism became the pre-eminent cause.

Gandhi legitimised and emphasised a new space in pre-existing feminine roles (care-giver, nurturer, mother, wife) resulting in an essentialist model of Indian womanhood akin to that of Victorian womanhood, while simultaneously moving them into political struggle. His ideas and methods for the regeneration of India, which were based on so many evocative ethical ideas and the ethical foundations of simplicity and non-violence, as well as his own personal saintliness, attracted women in multitudes. There was noteworthy participation by women,³⁷ both at the levels of visible leadership – such as of Sarojini Naidu and Kamla Devi – and the less visible – such as Chameli Devi – the Jain woman went into the fray with an undaunted spirit and physical determination, she sat in picketing lines, she marched with thousands of other women, she was jailed.³⁸ Women who came from reformist families seeking to challenge their subordinate position had preceded these efforts. Swarnakumari Devi had started the Sakhi Samaj in Bengal in 1882, Pandita Ramabai the Arya Mahila Samaj (also in 1882) and the Bharat Sri Mahamandal (1901). Saraladevi Chaudhurani started the first all-Indian women’s organisation.³⁹ Durgabhai Deshmukh founded the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) in 1953 to promote welfare through voluntary agencies.⁴⁰ These organisations and individual women set the stage for the role of women in the development history of India much earlier than the UN and other international initiatives.

Important Step Related to Planned Development

In such an atmosphere, it is not surprising that in 1939, a sub-committee on women called Women’s Role in Planned Economy (WPRE) was set up as part of the structure of the National Planning Committee, to chart the course of future planning in India.

³⁷ Kumar, Radha. The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women’s Rights and Feminism in India 1800–1990. Kali for Women and Verso, 1993

³⁸ Taneja, Anup. Gandhi, Women, and the National Movement, 1920-47. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publishing, 2005 and “Journey of a Freedom Fighter.” Mainstream, 22 August 1981.

³⁹ Khullar, Mala ed. Writing the Women's Movement: A Reader. New Delhi: Zubaan Publications, 2005.

⁴⁰ Jain, Devaki. “Women’s Contribution to Political Economy: Then and Now.” The Vocabulary of Women’s Politics. New Delhi: Freidrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2000.

The sub-committee was to “deal with the place of woman in the planned economy...” ranging from family life, employment, education and social customs that prevent women’s participation in the economy.⁴¹ The chairperson of the Committee was Rani Lakshmbai Rajwade, and the committee membership included prominent women of that time.⁴²

Its depth of understanding as well its recommendations could have been taken place today – it was farsighted and covered several areas: civic rights, economic rights, property rights, education, marriage, family and issues like widowhood, caste, prostitution etc.⁴³

But those currently engaged in designing public policy with the knowledge and views of women would not be surprised to learn that most of these issues and recommendations by the Committee were not incorporated into the first Five Year Plan, and that women’s role was only considered a 'social' and 'welfare ' issue for a long time, until the first break-through in 1981, with the sixth Five Year Plan.

Much has been written about the period 1951 to 1975, and the invisibility of women both as a distinct category of citizens, as well as in leadership, which furthered the welfaristic approach to women in those decades.⁴⁴ It is argued that while there were powerful and progressive women in the national and state-level firmaments, their vision did not identify the situation of women on the ground to build up a cause. It is

⁴¹ Shah, K.T. “Introduction - Woman’s role in Planned Economy.” Report of the Sub-Committee, National Planning Committee series. Bombay: Vora & Co. Publishers, 1947. 27.

⁴² Members of the Women’s Role in Planned Economy (WRPE) sub-committee: Sarla Devi, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Begum Zarina Currimbhoy, Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Joshi and Dr. (Smt. Muthulakshmi Reddy.

⁴³ Notes: It was women who both challenged the actions taken by the male leadership on the abduction recovery issue, and plunged into refugee relief and rehabilitation work, which in a sense became the experience that directed their further contributions to Indian political economy, as we shall see. For example, as early as 1949, Rameshwari Nehru, honorary advisor to the government in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, resigned in protest against a policy that she believed worked against women. In a memorandum to the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, she said, “It is well known that a very large proportion of the women recovered in India were unwilling to go to Pakistan... but I regret to say that their protests, their hunger strikes, their pathetic and heart-rending cries of distress, widely witnessed by both workers and outsiders, were of avail, for they were eventually sent away to Pakistan... we must admit that we have sent away these unwilling and helpless women to a future they can neither control nor choose.”

⁴⁴ Mazumdar, Vina. “An Unfulfilled or a Blurred Vision? Jawaharlal Nehru and Indian Women.” Centre For Women and Development, New Delhi: 1998.

argued that the UN declaration of International Women's Year in 1975 and the next decade as the Women's Decade changed this invisibility.

A momentum was built, unfolding knowledge backed by advocacy, leading to attention for a special social category called women, their voices and their needs. In India, this declaration led to the appearance of two defining documents, one by the CSWI (*Towards Equality*⁴⁵) and the other a volume titled 'Indian Women,'⁴⁶ India's official entry into the Mexico Conference of 1975. Further, a Bureau of Women's Affairs was also set up, and this is now called the Ministry for Women and Development.

However it can also be argued that some of the initiatives and campaign choices of women in India prior to 1975 were both "modern" and basic, e.g., lobbying for voters' registration during elections or emphasising women's education and consumer vigilance. Many set up innovative institutions, made up of the buzzword of today, "private-public" partnerships such as the Central Social Welfare Board, master-minded by Durga Bai Deshmukh; the All India Handicrafts Board and cooperative marketing by Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay; amongst many other innovative development initiatives which determined public policy and influenced national budgeting.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Government of India. Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. "Towards Equality." Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974.

⁴⁶ Jain, Devaki. Ed. Indian Women. Publications division, Govt. of India, 1975.

⁴⁷ Jain, Devaki. "Women's Contribution to Political Economy: Then and Now." The Vocabulary of Women's Politics. New Delhi: Freidrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2000.

Section Three

Women and the Plans

From the First Plan (1951-56), the goals of development in India were specifically addressed to removal of poverty, unemployment and historical inequalities. Women were the main actors in the programs of the khadi and village industries or the development of handicrafts. However, the energy and mobilisation generated in the post-1975 era uncovered the situation and status of women, and brought them into the development design as a special category. This led to the inclusion of a chapter on women's employment in the Sixth Plan (1976-1981). Employment was the critical goal and bringing in data on women's position in the occupational classification of India's labour and other such information was a big leap forward.

Simultaneously an enormous amount of research unfolded on women's location in the political economy as well as their capabilities in organising themselves to walk out of poverty and powerlessness.⁴⁸ Several reports on women's status and location in the political economy appeared both from Governments (including the State Governments) as well as from women-led institutions.⁴⁹

Over the next two decades (1981-2001) and four Plans, the issue of gender had been brought into each Plan as a chapter. Vibhuti Patel points out that the Planning Commission of India has always focused on women's issues as per the perceptions of their members on the status of women in the economy.⁵⁰ Though there had been a vast amount of research done on women's work in India since the early nineties,⁵¹ the Planning Commission members' perception played a bigger role in deciding how

⁴⁸ Jain, Devaki. "Indian Women: Today and Tomorrow." Women's Quest for Power. New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1982.

⁴⁹ Government of India. Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development. "Shramsakti." Report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector, New Delhi, 1988 and All India Women's Conference Papers. Indian women in the 1980s Development Imperatives, 1989

⁵⁰ Patel, Vibhuti. "Gender in State and National Policy Documents – A Case Study of India." Paper presented at a Conference on Grassroots Participation in Governance. Reconstructing Governance: The Other Voice organised by Karnataka Women's Information and Resource Centre in partnership with United Nations Development Programme, New Delhi and Gender Studies Unit, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore on February 20-21, 2004

⁵¹ Ed. Rao, Ghosh, Joshi, Acharya. Women at Work in India: Volumes 1 and 2. Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi, SAGE:1994

these issues would be dealt with. The chart below captures the trend that indicates the shift in perception vis-à-vis women.

Plan	Activity	Approach
First Five-Year Plan (1951-1956)	Set up the Central Social Welfare Board	Welfare work through voluntary organizations and charitable trusts
Second Plan (1956-1961)	Supported the development of <i>Mahila Mandals</i> to work at the grassroots	Rural Development
Third, fourth and interim plans (1961-1974)	Provisions for women's education, pre-natal and child health services, supplementary feeding for children, nursing and expectant mothers	Women as “targets” of family planning and social sector “beneficiaries”
Fifth Plan (1974-1978)	Programmes and schemes for women in development	Shift in the approach from welfare to development
Sixth Plan (1980-1985)	Separate Chapter on Women in the Plan	Accepted women's development as a separate economic agenda; took a multi-disciplinary approach with a three-pronged thrust on health, education and employment
Seventh Plan (1985-1990)	Working Group on Employment of Women; Statistics on women: Quota for women in development schemes	Bringing women into the mainstream of national development.
Eighth Plan (1992-1997)	The core sectors of education, health and employment outlay for women rose from Rs. 4 crores in the first plan to Rs. 2,000 crores in the eighth	Paradigm shift from development to empowerment and benefits to women
Ninth Plan (1997-2002)	Concept of a women's component plan to assure that at least 30% of funds/benefits from all development sectors flow to women	Empowerment of women as its strategic objective
Tenth Plan (2002-2007)	Self help groups	Suggests specific strategies, policies and programmes for the empowerment of women

Table 1: Chart outlining the shift in perception with respect to women in the Plans

Section Four

The Disjunction

Women have not been able to claim their right full place either in material well-being or in the political economy design landscape. Bina Agarwal, while reviewing the period offers this comment, “Gender inequality did not emerge just fifty years ago, nor did the attempts to challenge it. But Independence brought new opportunities for transformation. What have we accomplished? Too little: whether it is the macro situation of the Nehruvian Model or post-reform Manmohan economics, there is a steady decline.”⁵²

This comment matches the overall worldwide view.⁵³ There is recognition that over the past six decades, two trajectories relative to women and development indicating oppositional trends had emerged. The first trajectory is the emergence of a strong political presence in the national and international scene of the women's movement. There is now a widespread consciousness of the necessity of engaging in gendered analysis that recognizes both difference and inequality and its implications for development design. The other trajectory reveals that the situation on the ground for many women, especially those living in poverty and in conflict-ridden situations, seems to have worsened, despite the fact that it has been addressed specifically by both the State and development thought.

Civil society including the women's movement is becoming stronger on the one hand but also paradoxically more fragmented. There is also a return to conservative politics, and various forms of fundamentalism, across the globe. Simultaneously there are the usual paradoxes in women's domain. There is an increase in the political participation of women in governance, especially at the local level. There is an

⁵² Agarwal, Bina. “Women: Still Mostly Poor and Landless.” India: 50 Years. Times of India, Dt. August 14, 1997.

⁵³ Report by UNRISD. Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World. Geneva: UNRISD, 2005 and

Heintz, James, “Employment Strategy Papers – Globalisation, Economic Policy and Employment: Poverty and Gender Implications.” ILO: 2006 and
Papers from “Beijing at10: Putting Policy into Practice” INSTRAW, 2004

increase in the capabilities and power of the women's movement, in knowledge and organisational capacities in the informal economy as workers and traders, and to contest violence against women. There is a shift in the nature of employment opportunities. There is an increasing absorption of female labour into new opportunities for earning income like in export processing and simultaneously a decline in the opportunities for men. This arises because of the nature of the growth poles and the nature of the organisation of production and trade. Women are on the move, selling either their bodies or their time into earning income for their families.

The UN report on women and development for the year 2004 shows how the largest group or proportion of workers uncovered by any protection are women and women migrants. The demand for women as workers in the flesh trade has made the flow of women across borders jump by leaps and bounds. The value of the flesh trade is now greater than the value of the trade in narcotics.⁵⁴

Women are the majority of the poor, of the unemployed, of the physically violated, of the national and transnational unprotected migrants, of the workers in the least secure and most underpaid jobs, of those affected by HIV/AIDS, apart from being the majority of the victims of local and other conflicts.⁵⁵

And this is also true of India's women, despite the many positive characteristics, such as being such a critical mass of elected representatives in the Panchayat Raj system.

At the world level, conferences in Mexico, Nairobi and Beijing, and women's participation in them, have offered crucial handles to redress cruel customs, laws, and systems of exclusion especially in many conservative countries. There has been the usual gain of exchange and competitiveness, and external triggers have evened out the sharp wounds in specific cultural identities.

⁵⁴ Jain, Devaki. "To Be or Not to Be: The Location of Women in Public Policy." Paper presented at the International Conference on Development in Karnataka: A Multi-disciplinary Perspective, Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore: June 2005.

⁵⁵ Gupta, Geeta Rao. Gender Issues in HIV/AIDS Research. Shalini Bharat: November 2002
Information available at <<http://www.genderandaids.org>> and
Nath, Madhu Bala. Gender, HIV and Human Rights – A Training Manual, UNIFEM: 2000.

However despite the gains, none of these advances have significantly reduced the reality on the ground – the exclusions and oppressions endured by women. In fact, data world-wide shows that there is an increase in domestic violence against women (for e.g. in India), higher and more virulent dowry demands and of course a wider spread of sex-selective abortion,⁵⁶ not to mention the feminization of poverty, of hunger, of HIV, etc.

Even in this time of economic crisis, women and girls are the first to be hit and the worst-hit. A paper prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), of the UN for the March 2009 meeting of the Committee on the Status of Women states that the “economic recession in many developed and developing countries, as well as ongoing restructuring in countries with economies in transition, had a disproportionately negative impact on women's employment.” Women are the first to be let go as men are traditionally considered the ‘breadwinners.’ Women in the informal sector (including agricultural labourers, home workers, artisans, weavers and vendors) especially are hard hit, as the demand for the informal sector’s output decreased substantially.

Why does this disjunction exist after decades of what appears to be a vibrant and ostensibly effective partnership between policy makers and the women's movement? What are the methods feminist groups can use to remove this embedded inequality?

Three main reasons are emerging from the various analytical reviews: the first is a resistance to the accommodation of the knowledge that women are providing of the situation on the ground and their actual location in the Indian political economy as the main contributors to its economic sectors, be it agriculture or export industries. The second is the failure in the women’s movement to forge a semblance of unity on public issues, which would gain them a space in the political discourse, as for example, the women of the immediate post-independence era did. The third is the very nature of women’s construction of knowledge and its use.

⁵⁶ Jain, Devaki. “Weaving Participation: Women's contribution to Internationalism” Presented in the Panel on Reflections: "From Mexico City to Beijing and Beyond." NGO at CSW, New York, February 27, 2005.

For example, Ann Tinckner says:

“Feminists in all the disciplines have been acutely aware of the relationship between knowledge and power and the ways that traditional knowledge has been constructed in the interests of the powerful. Feminist scholarship has emerged from a deep skepticism about knowledge which, while it claims to be universal and objective, is not. In reality, such knowledge is usually partial, created by men and based on men’s lives. Sensitive to gendered differences in these regards, feminists see their scholarly responsibility as creating new knowledge that is less andocentric, more genuinely universal, and that produces research that is useful to women.”⁵⁷

Amina Mama agrees:

“...we women are in no position to deprive ourselves of the intellectual tools that can assist us in pursuit of gender justice. The arena of the intellect has been used to suppress us. We cannot afford to ignore the importance of intellectual work, especially in the 21st century when knowledge and information define power more than ever before.”⁵⁸

Helen Longino in her reflections on “Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Problems of Knowledge” comments:

“The problems of knowledge are central to feminist theorizing, which has sought to destabilize androcentric, mainstream thinking in the humanities and in the social and natural sciences.”⁵⁹

Further, feminists seem to resist the developing of boxes and strict models – this seems to be a part of the intellectual preference unhappiness over constructing ‘boxes’, to contain phenomena within strict boundaries.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Tickner, Ann. “On the Frontlines or Sidelines of Knowledge and Power? Feminist Practices of Responsible Scholarship.” Presidential address prepared for delivery at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, California, March 23, 2006.

⁵⁸ Excerpt from interview of Elaine Salo with Amina Mama, *African Feminisms I*, no.50 (2001), 58-63 Accessible at <http://www.wworld.org/programs/regions/africa/amina_mama.htm>

⁵⁹ Helen E Longino, “Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Problems of Knowledge.” *Signs*. Autumn 1993, Volume 19 No. 1, pp 201-212.

⁶⁰ Barriteau, Eudine. “Feminist Theory and Development: Implications for Policy, Research and Action.” *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*. Ed. Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau, IDRC, Canada: 2000

There is a tendency amongst the women advocates themselves to question every notion or concept which attempts an arrival at a boundary for identity fixing. I call this the '*nethi nethi* syndrome', borrowing from the Upanishads. It is definition by negation. But such an over-critical viewing of identity that negates any bonding impedes the participation of women in policy as a political presence drawn from a collective identity. Their heterogeneity is a part of their experience, but they have not transformed it to a philosophical or ethical unity. They celebrate this diversity.

An identity tag, (based on some markings, bodily or through the experience of subordination and exclusion), is crucial for claiming rights and special attention.⁶¹ Such a clear identity tag, which is more easily available to, say, dalits⁶², or to African-Americans in Africa or other nations, is difficult to forge for the woman-identity due to her presence in all these other categories with all their separate politics.

Gendering public policy is intimately related to our answers to these questions.

⁶¹ Jain, Devaki. "Globalism and Localism: Negotiating Feminist Space, Rethinking Gender, Democracy and Development: Is Decentralisation a Tool for Local Ownership of an Effective Political Voice?" Paper presented at Ferrara University and Modena University, Italy, 2002.

⁶² Dalit: A self-designation for a group of people of South Asian (Indian) descent who were traditionally regarded as 'untouchables' or 'low-caste' Hindus.

Section Five

The Genesis of the Committee of Feminist Economists

One of the highlights of the Indian women's movement is the birth and journey of the Indian Association of Women's Studies (the IAWS). Its philosophical base reflects the feminist approach to knowledge and an interdisciplinary approach to understanding phenomena. In April 1981, their first National Conference on Women's Studies defined women's studies as a critical perspective and recommended the integration of the 'woman's question' in all disciplines.⁶³

This conference led to the birth of a network called Economists Interested in Women's Issues Group (in order to be inclusive of men) or EIWIG. This group was encouraged by the Ministry of Labour as well as other ministries and held four conferences on special issues such as industry, agriculture, poverty and invisibility in statistics. Selected papers from those conferences were published as a book entitled "Tyranny of the Household"⁶⁴ edited by Devaki Jain and Nirmala Banerjee.

Hence, there was already an existing loosely-connected group – many of the members who assembled to form the Committee of Feminist Economists (CFE) had been part of that earlier formation. They were eager to revive it as a value addition to feminist advancement, both in knowledge as well as in advocacy. Therefore, when the new administration – the United Progressive Alliance – was ushered in, this earlier group of friends and associates of EIWIG considered starting an economic policy watch as a way of critiquing and modifying programmes towards economic justice.

A meeting of this group with Dr. Syeda Hameed (after she was made a Member of the Planning commission) gave further impetus to this idea. The Committee was able to make a difference not only to the understanding of women and their roles at the lower ends of the economy, re-named as growth agents, but also went through the pangs of all feminist attempts at collective voice.

⁶³ Indian Association of Women's Studies. Data accessed on June 1 2009 and available at <<http://www.iaws.org>>

⁶⁴ Ed. Jain, D and Nirmala Banerjee. Tyranny of the Household: Investigative Essays on Women's Work. New Delhi: 1985

Therefore, when the CFE came onto the scene, it was seen as a betrayal to the women's networks mentioned above, as it was perceived to be exclusive and denying space to the earlier more vibrant and participatory effort. Many members of the CFE had also been part of that national consultation. But those consultations had been self-generated ideas describing realities on the ground and what was needed to respond to those, whereas the CFE on the other hand, was mandated to scrutinize existing documents and provide critiques and inputs to those propositions and data sets.

In another space, namely within the CFE, the work and the atmosphere were not necessarily peaceful. Many felt that the group was still too heterogeneous and could not possibly bring out an agreed set of proposals. Some were informal members of the left parties, others were in NGOs which were funded by the World Bank and other donors who were considered unpalatable by the left, some were very well-known influential scholars, and others not so. The commitment to group activity moved in waves, forwards and backwards, with an attitude of denial about its existence, much less optimism about an agreed outcome. Attempts to continue it as a meaningful network with a hub and a set of activities failed because of this – yet, when there was a call from the Planning Commission for a consultation on the crisis, the response was immediate and complete.

Such tensions are part of the feminist movement, and this illustration only adds to the difficulties that the movement faces in enlarging its influence as a politically significant voice in policy-making.

The CFE did come out with a united view and presentation to the Planning commission, and that again suggests another important aspect of feminist politics – the uniting aspect: namely that the orientation of all their advice was towards the women from the less privileged sections of society. It was within the concept of economic justice, rights and equality.

The next section is about Dr. Hameed's version of the process.

Section Six

The Value of a Feminist Leader

Dr. Syeda Hameed's account of her experience as a member of the Planning Commission:

As a non-economist woman activist at the Planning Commission, my work was not easy. As Member responsible for Planning for the “soft sectors”- Women and Children, Village and Small Industry, my voice was sometimes lost in the cauldrons of power or replaced for “priority” area for action.

The most important function of India's Planning Commission is writing the Five Year Plan for the country. Our work began in 2006 after the Mid-Term Appraisal of the Tenth Five Year Plan. The Eleventh Plan was for the period of 2007–2012. To make the planning process inclusive we held wide consultation. My colleagues and I held regional consultations: North, South, East, West and North East. Each consultation was spread over two days: day one was for interaction with Chief Ministers and State Officials and day two was reserved for interactions with civil society, professionals, and social activists. My priority was to enlist the views of civil society actors and their experiences in the field – priority areas of work, convergence tactics and recorded best practices. Strife and perseverance are terms we have learnt in the women's movement; my sensitivities were drawn from many years of working with women, particularly my previous experiences as a member of the National Commission for Women. I traveled across the country and witnessed the disproportionate physical, social and economic poverty of women: women's lack of access to land, water, sources of energy, education and social services; deprived of decision- making, even within their own families.

My term of office with the Planning Commission commenced mid-way into the Tenth Plan. It became all too obvious that women were invisible on many agendas, and I had to call attention to the cause. In both my assignments, first as Member of the National Commission for Women and then as Member of the Planning Commission I traveled across the country; often to the remotest corners. I witnessed deprivation of food, of water, livelihood, and infrastructure. I saw dysfunctional health care centers,

malfunctioning systems and rampant corruption at all levels. My engagement with the field often contradicted the figures that were laid before me by officials in the sanitised rooms of the Commission. The excellent schemes drawn up at the planning level did not seem to reach the ground-level.

My texts had illustrated that women's issues should cut across all sectors, such as energy, water, environment, agriculture, rural development, and so when the process of writing began, I did not hold with the idea of bracketing into one chapter all issues pertaining to women. My field experiences had rewarded me with knowledge of the multiple burdens and multiple deprivations of women. I realized then that my primary goal would be Gendering the Plan. The synergy of these two phenomena led to a few interactions with eminent feminist economists of the country, the outcome of which was the establishment of a formal committee, namely the Committee of Feminist Economists. The group began its work with a political philosophy-political economy piece called the *Approach to the Eleventh Plan*. The group of economists was thus constituted with specialised knowledge of women in the economy and the women's movement in the country. It is with pride that I say that their footprints appear in many chapters of the Eleventh Five Year Plan Document.

The CFE was established in 2007 and officially recognized by the Planning Commission. It was a first in many ways - the usage of the word feminist in official bureaucracy and the mandate of scrutinizing all the chapters that today form the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The value of this initiative was that it argued for the moving away from the bracketing of women and children into a sector called "Development of Women and Children" to looking at women as growth agents in the political economy of India. Thus the major shift of this initiative was to move the gendering of public policy away from women's machinery, namely the Women and Child Ministry (which was the traditional space for women) into macro-economic space. Starting from addressing the *Approach* and *Chapter One* which was about inclusive growth, it moved to chapters like infrastructure, industry, agriculture, education, environment, health and so on. The feminist economists provided facts, critique of the draft and ideas for change. I was then able to arrange for them to meet with the full presence of the Planning Commission who had a lively discussion with the CFE after they presented their ideas and facts in a presentation. These are attached as in the appendix.

Section Seven

What was the Difference?

The question then is: has there been a noticeable difference in terms of the understanding of gendering between the Tenth and the Eleventh Plan? What are these?

Types of Data Included

With the basic premise of women as economic agents of change, the Eleventh Plan includes data like the differential wage earnings of men and women to reflect on the discrimination faced by women. There are data inclusions on female workforce participation in India and other countries, emphasizing the double burden of women in India. The Eleventh Plan for the first time includes an entire section on unorganized sector and home based workers and female concentrations in both. The data provided in both these sections are drawn from feminist economist work in the field.

Taking a step ahead from the approach of the Tenth Five Year Plan that lay down a three-fold strategy for empowering women, the Eleventh Plan lays out a five-fold agenda for handling the challenges to gender equity. It calls for ensuring economic empowerment, engineering social empowerment, enabling political empowerment, effective implementation of women related legislations, creating institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and delivery mechanisms. Specific locations of women are identified (women in the unorganised sector and agriculture) and specific issues highlighted (access to land, to homestead, to credits, employment, amenities for urban poor and the impact of globalisation).

The inclusions of boxes exemplifying best practices from the field are a first for the Eleventh Five Year Plan document. The Ghadchiroli Model that has reduced neonatal mortality, the lijjat papad model of growth, the nalli experience for marketing of handloom products and the grassroots movements of the single women – Ekal Nari have all found mention in the Eleventh Five Year Plan document for India. Many important subjects like mental health, internally displaced women, women with disabilities, and women affected by disaster have also found their place in the Plan

document. In putting forth strengths and failures, the Eleventh Plan has taken the experiences of the field to examine where women’s participation in the Panchayati System has worked and where it has not.

One of the greatest accomplishments has been the inclusion of a separate chapter on Urban and Rural Livelihoods wherein the Village and Cottage Industries, handloom, handicraft, food processing and agro-industries have been identified as engines of sustained and inclusive growth. These sectors have been identified for the role in providing employment to thousands of people. The Urban and Rural Livelihood chapter identifies the specific vulnerabilities of groups working in this sector and their potential for contribution to India’s economic growth.

Another is that the chapter ostensibly bracketed as Women and Child has been renamed Women’s Agency and Child Rights, a tactical move to recognize the potential of the women beyond reproductive roles of child-bearing and care.

Tenth Plan	Eleventh Plan
<p><u>Types of Data</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contains no section on the unorganized sector or home-based workers 2. Laid down a three-fold strategy for empowering women 3. No reference to best practices 4. Contains a specific chapter on Women titled ‘Women and Child.’ 5. Only includes data from the Census of India 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Includes a section on the unorganized sector and home-based workers and female concentrations in both. 2. Uses a five-fold strategy to empower women: specific locations of women are identified, and specific issues highlighted. 3. Inclusion of Best Practice boxes throughout the document 4. Has renamed the chapter ‘Women’s Agency and Child Rights’ and includes a gender perspective across sectors. 5. Includes data from the Census, UN bodies, academics and well-known civil society organisations.

Table 2: Differences in types of data included

As a sample of the influence that the CFE had on the Eleventh Year Plan, enumerated below are the differences between the Tenth and Eleventh Plan in the Chapters on Agriculture⁶⁵ and Health⁶⁶:

Agriculture

Tenth Plan

Women were mentioned in the context of

- malnutrition and anaemia
- NGO's that work with poor women
- land on lease and credit infrastructure with regard to self-help groups and women's groups
- proportion of women in the tea industry

Eleventh Plan

Para 1.14 says "For growth to be at all inclusive, the agricultural strategy must focus on the 85% of farmers who are small and marginal, **increasingly female**, and who find it difficult to access inputs, credit, and extension or to market their output... credit has grown at unprecedented rates (30% per annum) to other sectors but not to small and marginal land holders and **women who lack collateral security**... One way forward to encourage marginal farmers and women to form groups for purposes of farming would be to shift at least some of the current subsidies to be available only to groups of such farmers rather than to individuals."

Para 1.115: "Small and marginal farmers often lack access to major agricultural services, such as credit, extension, insurance, and markets. **This is especially true of women farmers since there is pervasive male bias in provision of such services.**"

⁶⁵ India. Planning Commission, Government of India. Eleventh Five Year Plan 2007-2012.: Volume 3. Chapter 1: Agriculture. New Delhi: OUP, 2008 and Tenth Five Year Plan 2002-2007.: Volume 2. Chapter 5: Agriculture and Rural Development. New Delhi: OUP, 2002

⁶⁶ India. Planning Commission, Government of India. Eleventh Five Year Plan 2007-2012.: Volume 3. Chapter 3: Health and Family Welfare. New Delhi: OUP, 2008 and Tenth Five Year Plan 2002-2007.: Volume 2. Chapter 2.9: Health. New Delhi: OUP, 2002

Para 1.148: Gender equity: **With the share of female workforce in agriculture increasing, and increased incidence of female-headed households,** there is an urgent need to ensure women's rights to land and infrastructure support:

- **Women's names should be recorded as cultivators** in revenue records on family farms where women operate the land having ownership in the name of male members.
- The gender bias in functioning of institutions for information, extension, credit, inputs, and marketing should be corrected by **gender-sensitizing the existing infrastructure providers.**
- Women's co-operatives and other forms of group effort should be promoted for the dissemination of agricultural technology and other inputs, as well as for marketing of produce.
- Wherever possible a group approach for investment and production among small scale women farmers, be it on purchased or leased land, should be promoted. **Women farmers are typically unable to access** inputs, information, and market produce on an individual basis. A group approach would empower them.

Health

Tenth Plan

In the Tenth plan, the chapter on Health mentioned women mainly in the context of statistics for different public health challenges, and in a few interventions in occupational health and eye care.

Eleventh Plan

In the Eleventh Plan, there were a number of interventions with regard to pregnant women and maternal health. Apart from these, the recommendations submitted by the CFE resulted in the following:

Para 3.1.7 Although it has been said in plan after plan, it needs to be reiterated here that the Eleventh Five Year Plan will give **special attention to the health of marginalized groups like adolescent girls, women of all ages,** children below the

age of three, older persons, disabled, and primitive tribal groups. It will view gender as the cross-cutting theme across all schemes.

Para 3.1.77 Since one-third of elected members at the local bodies are women, this is an **opportunity to promote a gender-sensitive, multi-sectoral agenda** for population stabilization with the help of village level health committees. All this will remain rhetoric until the elected women are trained and empowered. Under the NRHM, ASHAs are envisaged to be selected by and be accountable to the village Panchayats. Involvement of PRIs will also be necessary to improve the coverage and quality of registration of births, deaths, marriages, and pregnancies in all States.

Para 3.1.132 The Government of India has recently approved the implementation of Home-based Newborn Care based on the Gadchiroli model, where an appreciable decline in IMR has been documented on the basis of work done by a VO called SEARCH. Gadchiroli has shown **how ordinary women can do extraordinary things**: a well-trained local woman can not only lower neonatal mortality but can also bring about attitudinal change. The women *Shishu Rakshaks* of Gadchiroli have managed to dispel many myths surrounding pregnancy and have been able to ensure better nutrition, care, immunization, and hygiene.

Change in Mechanisms Used

The Earlier System

The Commission has always had a mechanism to consult the women's movement in its various shapes, sizes and platforms. For example, conventionally the Planning Commission has always set up a steering committee starting from the Sixth Plan composed of members representing varied voices and spaces that reflect the diversity and heterogeneity of India. This steering committee oversees working groups which address specific subjects. The secretariat for the steering committee comes from the Ministry of Women and Child Development. After a couple of consultations a draft is submitted to the steering committee, which then is finalized to be included in the Plan. (The Planning Commission also encouraged and supported the regional consultations which were organized in collaboration with State Governments.)

Another mechanism which has been functioning for the last three Plans (Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh) is a smaller network of grassroots women's organizations who hold consultations in different regions of India, usually North, South-East, West and North-East, with a larger group of grassroots organizations and bring recommendations from those consultations to the Planning Commission. There are publications like 'Engendering the Eleventh Five-year Plan,'⁶⁷ which is a benchmark documents on the ideas of the broad-based women's movement.

The New Mechanism

However, for the Eleventh Five Year Plan, there was a difference in the mechanism used, i.e., the tool accounting for the change. The difference that can be identified between these efforts and the contribution of the CFE Committee was that the CFE was composed of women scholars, well recognized in the public space, famous or highly visible due to their academic contribution as well as participation in important structures of Government. Their names in some sense carried the aura of power. Thus, recommendations and demands coming from them were accommodated. [See the section above for their work.]

⁶⁷ Anand, Anita. Ed. Engendering the Eleventh Five Year Plan: Removing Obstacles, Creating Opportunities. National Alliance of Women, Ministry of Women and Child Development, UNDP, UNIFEM: New Delhi, 2008.

Section Eight

Conclusion

Upon reviewing this experience, several pointers emerge for consideration by feminist economists who engage in public policy:

Firstly, the value of working within national spaces, unencumbered by international rubrics: international advisories, platform choices and methods advised usually linked to funding and to state machineries of governance cannot tether advocacy.

Secondly, the value of pulling together women economists who have engaged with the world of women – whether by studying action, innovation, reality in the fields, or through research into specific areas – but with special reference to women’s link to them as collectivities or networks or friend groups. This kind of space has a double advantage: they learn from each other and they also can deal with the outside.

Thirdly, to highlight the importance of shifting – if not drawing more serious attention to – the location of women in economies and their role as economic agents apart from social actors. While education, health, gender relations and social services are all crucial inputs especially for women in deprivation, their role as economic agents need to be brought to the fore immediately. Most bail out packages, pack women into the safety-net areas, invest in free food, nutrition for their babies and so on. But one of the most crucial roles women play is to bring income to the household, apart from their own interest in earning a living.

Fourthly, with the knowledge of the impact of the recent financial crisis on women and more deeply so, there is need for strong global advocacy by feminist economists to draw attention to women as earners, whether in the formal or informal economy. Such an emphasis may be required more in relation to developing countries.

Fifthly, there is a need to understand and highlight the difference between the South and North in these domains. The emphasis on the care economy and the clubbing together of women’s roles in production and reproduction, are in some ways the

concepts of the North, and more crucially relevant there. This is not to say that the double burden of earning and caring is not a universal phenomenon which also gives unity to the concept of an identity called woman, related to the stereotypical roles; the question is one of what is crucial, at what time, and where.

Finally, even more than social input, the crying need in countries like India is for the State and society to understand the economic roles that women, especially at the lower end of the income scale, are engaged with. Strong support with infrastructure, funding for organization, upgrading of skills and most of all labour protection laws, are needed urgently.

In the South, women have been the major workers in the export industries, drawn in for their willingness to work monotonously for low wages without security. The crisis in exports, i.e., the market depression, has assaulted these vulnerable women. There is a lesson here for understanding women's location in economic growth strategies and especially differentiating the North-South.

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Appendix One: Composition of the CFE

List of Members of the Committee of Feminist Economists:

- 1) Prof. Bina Agarwal, Professor of Economics, Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi
- 2) Prof. Ritu Dewan, Professor at the Centre for Women's Studies (Gender Economics) Department of Economics, University of Mumbai
- 3) Renana Jhabvala, President , Self Employed Women's Association, SEWA Bharat New Delhi
- 5) Prof. Gita Sen, Professor at the Centre for Public Policy, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore
- 6) Devaki Jain, Former Director, Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi
- 7) Ratna Sudarshan, Director, Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi
- 8) Nirmala Bannerjee, Sachetana Information Centre, Kolkatta
- 9) Dr Aasha Kapur Mehta, Professor of Economics, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi
- 10) Dr. Padmini Swaminathan, Fellow, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai
- 11) Prof. Jayati Ghosh, Professor of Economics at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- 12) Dr. Mary E. John, Director, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi
- 13) Dr. Indira Hirway, Director, Centre for Development Alternatives, Ahmedabad
- 14) A.K. Shiva Kumar, New Delhi
- 15) Dr. Jeemol Unni, Reserve Bank Professor of Economics, I R M A Gujarat
- 16) Prof. Indira Rajaraman, Professor Emeritus, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy or Member, Thirteenth Finance Commission of India
- 17) Santosh Mehrotra, Senior Consultant, Planning Commission of India
- 18) Maithreyi Krishnaraj, Former Director, Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai

20) Dr. Mridul Eapen, Associate Fellow, Centre for Development Studies,
Trivandrum

21) Yamini Mishra, Executive Director, Centre for Budgeting, Governance and
Accountability, New Delhi

Appendix Two: Minutes of the first CFE Meeting

Summary Record of the First Meeting of the Group of Feminist Economists held on 18.4.07 under the Chairpersonship of Dr. Syeda Hameed, Member, Planning Commission.

1. The major observations that emerged in the meeting were as follows:

i) The basic idea behind constitution of the Committee of Feminist Economists (CFE) is to provide a forum for broad based consultation on gender issues. The Committee has to look beyond the contents which were the basis of consultations in the various Working Groups and Steering Committees. Broadly the Group should consider and look into various macro economic issues, policies and programmes which have bearing, directly or indirectly on gender empowerment initiatives in the country. The outcome of deliberations can be utilized to negotiate with the full Planning Commission so that gender aspects are adequately taken care of while formulating 11th Five Year Plan.

ii) The CFE may work with both short term and long term goals. The short term goal is to produce a composite knowledge paper which can be referred to Planning Commission for necessary action at the time of formulation of the 11th Plan. The long term objective of the CFE should be to work as a Standing Committee to advise the Planning Commission and Union Government, from time to time on various aspects to promote and protect gender interests. However while the decision regarding long term status of the CFE has to be decided separately by the Planning Commission, the CFE has to first, through its work demonstrate and establish the desirability of institutionalizing it beyond 11th Plan.

iii) The recommendations of the CFE should be to ensure inclusive growth as stated in the Approach to the 11th Plan. The recommendations should also be substantive and based on sound reasoning to promote gender equity in the development process.

iv) State/UT Governments are ultimately the agencies to implement various programmes, policies and schemes at the field level. The CFE, in its report should, therefore, adequately spell out the mechanisms for involvement of the States/UTs to promote gender equity in development.

v) Regional disparities in gender empowerment has to be a major focus area of the CFE, besides focus on specific groups like SCs, STs, OBCs and Minorities. The issue of women empowerment has to be attended to not only with respect to the Ministry of Women and Child Development but also across all sectors.

vi) Some of the specific areas which may need substantive attention of CFE are - drinking water supply, strengthening women in agriculture especially through group approach to farming, education, health and nutrition etc.

vii) Ultimately the report that the CFE intends to submit to the Government has to be a coherent document with feminist perspectives on all issues which can be a reference material for the planners and development professionals in coming years.

2. The CFE accordingly felt that the gender concerns emerging from the recommendations of various sectoral Steering Committees for the 11th Plan should be reviewed and gaps, if any, be brought to the notice of Planning Commission so that the same are appropriately attended to and reflected in the 11th Plan document. The CFE thus decided that the task of reviewing the sectoral reports should be entrusted to the Members as per their areas of interest as follows:

- Agriculture - Prof. Bina Agarwal and Dr. Aasha Kapur Mehta
- Backward Classes - Dr. Aasha Kapur Mehta and Dr. Mary. E. John
- Communication & Information - Nil
- Development Policy - Dr. Nirmala Bannerjee and Dr. Ratna Sudarshan
- Education - Dr. A. K. Shiva Kumar, Dr. Mary. E. John, Dr. Padmini Swaminathan
- Environment & Forests - Prof. Bina Agarwal
- Financial Resources - Prof. Ritu Dewan
- Health & Family Welfare - Dr. Aasha Kapur Mehta and Dr. A.K. Shiva Kumar
- Housing & Urban Development - Dr. Renana Jhabvala, Prof. Jayati Ghosh and Dr. Mridul Eapen
- Industry & Minerals - Dr. Padmini Swaminathan and Dr. Jeemol Unni
- Labour, Employment and Manpower - Dr. Ratna Sudarshan, Prof. Jayati Ghosh, Devaki Jain.
- Multi Level Planning - Nil
- Power & Energy, Energy Policy and Rural Energy - Dr. Nirmala Banerjee
- Programme Evaluation Organization - Nil
- Rural Development - Dr. Mridul Eapen, Prof. Bina Agarwal, Dr. Devaki Jain.
- Social Justice & Women Empowerment - Dr. Mary E. John
- Science & Technology - Dr. Padmini Swaminathan
- State Plan - Prof. Ritu Dewan (for J&K portion of State Plan), Ms. Yamini Mishra (North Eastern States), Dr. Devaki Jain (North Eastern States)
- Tourism - Prof. Ritu Dewan
- Transport - Prof. Ritu Dewan
- Village & small enterprises - Dr. Mridul Eapen, Dr. Ratna Sudarshan
- Voluntary Action Cell - Nil
- Water Resources- Prof. Indira Rajaraman
- Women and Child Development - Ms. Yamini Mishra, Dr. A.K. Shiva Kumar (Child Development portion of the report)
- International Economics - Dr. Ratna Sudarshan

3. The sectors for which Members could not be identified to review the reports may be subsequently referred to other Members who could not attend the first meeting of the CFE, but as per their area of interest.

4. The sectoral reports of the Steering Committees are likely to be available by the middle of May, 2007, soon after which the same will be made available to the respective Members by the WCD Division through email. The consolidated observations/comments of the Members on the reports will be discussed in the next meeting of the CFE which may be held sometime in the middle of June, 2007.

5. The meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.

Appendix Three: Record of the Meeting between CFE and Planning Commission

Summary Record of the meeting for presentation of the Committee of Feminist Economists regarding gender issues in the 11th Plan before the Internal Planning Commission held on 29.8.07 under the Chairpersonship of Deputy Chairman

List of participants

Members, Planning Commission

1. Dr. Abhijit Sen
2. Dr. Kirit S. Parikh
3. Dr. V.L. Chopra
4. Dr. (Ms.) Syeda Hameed
5. Dr. Anwarul Hoda

Members of Group of Feminist Economists

1. Ms. Ratna M. Sudarshan
2. Ms. Renana Jhabvala
3. Ms. Yamini Mishra
4. Ms. Ritu Dewan
5. Ms. Devaki Jain
6. Ms. Mridul Eapen
7. Ms. Jeemol Unni
8. Ms. Asha Kapur Mehta

Planning Commission

1. Dr. S.N. Dash, Pr. Adviser.
2. Shri Paul Joseph, Pr. Adviser
3. Smt. Manjulika Gautam, Sr. Adviser
4. Shri A.N.P. Sinha, Sr. Adviser
5. Shri Gajendra Haldea, Adviser to DCH
6. Shri L. Rynjah, Sr. Adviser
7. Smt. Jayati Chandra, Sr. Adviser
8. Dr. N.K. Sethi, Sr. Adviser
9. Dr. Santosh Mehrotra, Sr. Consultant
10. Shri L.P. Sonkar, Adviser
11. Shri G.B. Panda, Adviser
12. Shri Harish Chandra, Adviser
13. Ms. Preeti Madan, Director
14. Shri Anil Bisen, Director
15. Shri Srikara Naik, Director
16. Ms. Indu Patnaik, Dy. Adviser
17. Dr. R.V.P. Singh, Research Officer
18. Ms. Hemi Shah, Consultant
19. Mr. Manish Kr. Thakur, Consultant
20. Ms. Ruchi Gaur, Consultant

21. Ms. Krishnaveni Motha, Consultant

1. The Feminist Economists, while making their presentation before the Internal Planning Commission (IPC), made the following initial suggestions:

i) Women and Children sectors should be dealt separately and there should be a separate chapter for each in the Plan document in future. Different chapters of the Plan document need to include analysis of women's location in each sector and intersect with the women's chapter. Issues regarding women empowerment and gaps, disadvantages etc. towards the same in women's chapter should be linked with sectoral programmes and policies.

ii) The Economy is directing itself to an export/ trade mode. Women, although, are a major work force in the export sector, work in very insecure conditions. It is necessary to recognize the role of women in the export sector and steps be taken to improve their working conditions.

iii) Macro economic policies, programmes and schemes need to accommodate regional differences in socio-economic conditions. For instance NRHM in health sector has to be flexible enough to accommodate ground realities in different states.

iv) An effective integration of the PRI institutions with policy and programme design is crucial.

2. In their presentation the Feminist Economists highlighted the following major areas of concern, which need attention in the 11th Plan.

(i) The 11th Plan should meet the 'inclusive needs' by encompassing the vision of equality, shifting perception from benefaction to Agency/Participation, perceiving the excluded as engine of growth, locating growth more broadly and recognizing organization and voice as central to institutional and financial arrangements for engineering a just and equitable society;

(ii) The Plan has to recognize that inclusive growth is not compatible with increasing inequality. Accordingly it has to identify policies which increase inequality like tax concession to SEZ/EPZ/multiplexes, user fees/indirect taxes on essential commodities, licenses for large retailers and none for small ones, increasing credit to large firms and farmers and decreasing credits to women, SC etc., large projects which dislocate, technology which displace employment and promote policies which increase poor people's and women's access to employment, higher incomes, skills, assets, social services and voice.

(iii) Women's experience can provide ideas and practices for a more inclusive growth strategy.

(iv) There is changing demographics of agriculture i.e. growing feminization as men move to non-farm sectors. 75% of all women workers and 85% of rural women workers are in agriculture. Hence, achievement of agricultural growth targets will depend increasingly on policies that increase the efficiency of women farmers. To increase their efficiency women farmers need land titles, credited and infrastructure support (technology, extension, marketing support etc.)

(v) Women's access to land can be enhanced by improving claims to family land, improving access to public land and improving access to land via market through subsidized credit for the poor for land purchase or lease.

(vi) The 11th Plan must prioritize livelihoods and food security over commercialization especially for prime agricultural land. Tiny plots are critical as sources of food security for the poor and government schemes to encourage such homestead plots should be encouraged. Mechanisms should be set in place to protect small and marginal farmers, especially women farmers, against land speculation, shifts to non-agricultural uses, and contract farming, etc.

(vii) Women's contribution in non-agricultural sector especially in industry and services is significant and has to be recognized. It is necessary to ensure recording of such contribution and empowering and increasing their access to non-agriculture sector with large scale investment for skill development and by facilitating them with works spaces, common facilities, access to new technologies, special credit schemes, exclusive marketing platforms, social security etc. Special attention is also needed by women from caste and minority based exclusion within gender.

(viii) A large proportion of workers in all informal enterprises are women. They are engaged in trade small manufacturing activities mainly on sub-contract basis. Strengthening of women operated enterprises would require access to credit and women friendly banking, technology support and skill training, industry specific inputs, development of clusters with concentration of women enterprises etc.

(ix) 11th Plan should also have focus on financial inclusion as women and the poor are increasingly excluded from formal sources of finance. Financial inclusion can be assured by providing saving services near work and home sites, and by increasing women's access to all types of credit sources like commercial banks, RRBs, co-operatives, MFIs, etc. Women should also have access to insurance services. The 11th Plan should have a special pensions scheme for poor women as well.

(x) The Plan emphasizes large infrastructure like highways, ports, airports etc. But for poor women infrastructures mean drinking water, toilets, houses etc. 62% of slum dwellers do not have access to toilets and 25% of slum women and higher proportions of rural women to drinking water. Tiny enterprises and slums are displaced to accommodate infrastructure projects- increasing dispossession and destroying livelihoods. The 11th Plan should have provision to deal with such situations.

(xi) Large infrastructure projects should be drawn up in consultation with people who may be displaced. Rehabilitation measures should include land titles in name of women, housing for poor on large scale, including housing finance without collateral.

(xii) Women's work and lives are inextricably linked to water-in terms of time and physical burden, health and other costs. But Plan prioritizes increasing irrigated areas only. Planning for drinking water is also critically necessary, especially for its sustainable use. Water which is a public good should be given over to the market. It is necessary to enhance & protect water resources and invest and protect women's access to water. Drinking water should be available for all urban and rural households. Every urban-dweller, whether "authorized" or not should have access to toilets.

(xiii) A large number of women are in household, unpaid work and care economy. Current economic and social policies are increasing women's role in the care economy (both paid and unpaid) and decreasing their perceived status. Policies need to focus on social services to support women's care roles (old age, child care) in preference to targeting families and pregnancies.

(xiv) The plan should strengthen gender data base by improving collection and presentation of women's contribution to the economy. Women's predominant engagement within the households/family and in non-monetized contributions requires visibility through new methods and measures. Data collecting agencies, especially the Statistical Commission need to revise the definitions and methods of bringing visibility to women's contributions and constraints

3. The following points also emerged in the course of discussion:

i) Facilities of sanitation and water should be made available to all. Dr. Kirit Parikh, Member, observed that only after ensuring these basic services to people that clean sewage can be maintained and rivers can be kept free from pollution. Women's work and lives in urban and rural are linked to water in terms of time, physical burden and health. The task cannot be left to the market. Water is a public good and it does need Government intervention. Women should have access to water and to enhance and protect water resources. Government needs to enhance its investment on watershed-based schemes.

ii) Quality of drinking water is also a major issue. Prevalence of diseases, especially in rural areas is common because of poor quality of drinking water. Deputy Chairman (DCH) desired that the issue regarding quality of water needs to be addressed both in rural and urban areas. A high standard has to be maintained for potability in bottled water. Dr. Abhijit Sen, Member, reminded that municipalities have water standards. Monitoring of water standards should also be linked to various usages of water. If ground water level is high only then it should be exploited.

iii) DCH in this context observed that giving water to the market is not the Government policy. But in case of power there are views that it should be given to private sector. The State contracts the private sector to deliver services but that doesn't alter the state's responsibility of playing its role and charging what is appropriate. There are two issues regarding water – one, high degree of inequality in the amount of water supply; and second freezing a particular area, which is run inefficiently, and allowing the same to be run by contract. This is a difficult area and government can move ahead only after due consultations with all concerned and by addressing all questions.

iv) Member Dr. Sen referred to the issue that rural ground water is being monitored but there is no monitoring of industrial and urban use of ground water. DCH was of the view that government has to address the issue not only in urban areas but also in rural areas. Drinking water scarcity is a major issue and women are affected most by decline in ground water. It has not got the degree of attention it deserves.

v) In response to the query by DCH as to what the Feminist Economists had in mind in their presentation on the issue of raising of user fees on essential commodities/services (slide no. 4), Feminist Economists clarified with some examples. Toll taxes on State highways is fine for private vehicles but for Government/ State transport it leads to increase in fare and discourages people from using State transport system. This results in State transport sector becoming sick and unit closing down. It happened in Madhya Pradesh. DCH in this context observed that many State Governments are deliberately withdrawing from public transport as they are not able to run them efficiently because of large scale leakages and corruption. Secondly the issue of electricity. The sub urban area in Mumbai is controlled by Reliance and other areas are handled by Government. Reliance controlled areas charge higher for electricity than Government controlled area. Government areas also maintain a better continuity of supply than Reliance area. There is apprehension that if water too is privatized the same thing might happen. The issue of user fees particularly in hospitals was also referred to. Women as such have very little or no access to hospitals. With the introduction of user fees women's visit to hospitals gets drastically curtailed. Poor health and expenditure on health are major causes for families to enter into the poverty trap. User fees should be fixed in accordance with income levels. There should also be stringent monitoring of hospitals maintaining a prescribed percentage of beds for poor patients with penalty for non-compliance.

vi) DCH in this context invited suggestions as to whether they wanted subsidized free access for the poor or keep the fees of the hospitals uniformly low. The state should offer 100% premium subsidy on health insurance to designated categories that are deemed to be poor. Poor women need some support and for some categories the entire burden should be borne by the Government.

vii) The Group was of the view that ICDS has to be modified to allow flexibility like community participation. Often local community, organizations, panchayats are ready to pay more and have ICDS balwadi like child care centre by increasing the working hours and paying more to anganwadi worker for the same. In some cases working women and employers of women workers are ready to contribute for additional honorarium of anganwadi worker on the condition that she stays for 6 hours instead of 3 hours and look after the children of working women. But this is not allowed by CDPOs. Sr. Adviser (WCD) clarified that there is nothing in the guidelines, which prevents such participation in ICDS by the community or PRIs or any other organization.

viii) The Group also suggested that ICDS should have a qualifier saying that state can reconvert it into area specific package and encourage community participation wherever desirable/feasible. For in instance children of a tea plantation area may need ICDS with a separate package like enhanced working hour of anganwadi matching the

working hours of mothers of children and facilities of crèche and additional food for children etc.

ix) Dr. Devaki Jain stated that there was a suggestion in the past by a Group set up by the Government that ICDS should be taken away from the category of Centrally Sponsored Schemes. Other Ministries agreed but M/o WCD didn't as it was their biggest National programme. ICDS as of now is mainly seen as a children feeding and a preschool programme. Children of working women also need care. The guidelines of the scheme should be changed to unbundle it and allow State-specific flexibilities.

x) DCH mentioned that Planning Commission supports decentralized procurement of food grains under ICDS. DCH agreed to include the provision of extended hours of working and paying more to anganwadi workers by the community wherever such situation arises. Three things which often come from all the discussions on ICDS are decentralization of the procurement of food grains, involvement of community in the distribution of food grains and extra anganwadi worker. He invited the Feminist Economists for specific suggestions for restructuring of ICDS.

xi) The group also wanted flexibility with regard to other schemes. DCH assured the Group that if a State Government has a sufficient and convincing ground for flexibility then that would definitely be supported. In fact in every meeting with the States, Chief Ministers are invited to suggest specific flexibilities, which they require. However except in few cases the response is not encouraging. PRIs are also now playing an important role. There is a deeper integration of PRI institutions with policies and programme designs. One third of the funds in every State have to be devolved to local bodies. Panchayati Raj institutions should be allowed effective role in planning and implementation of the schemes.

5. Member (SH) reiterated the suggestion of Plan chapter to include analysis of women's location in various sectors and intersecting with women chapter which she considered to be a milestone.

6. It was agreed in the meeting to share other sectoral draft chapters of the 11th Plan with the Members of the Group. The convenience of DCH was also requested for another meeting where the Members can present their views on different chapters and make other suggestions for the 11th Plan.

The Meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.
