

**DEMOCRACY AND EFFICACY IN SERVICE PROVISION:
A COMPARISON OF POST-REFORM DOMESTIC WATER
SUPPLY IN THREE INDIAN STATES**

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by

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**DEMOCRACY AND EFFICACY IN SERVICE PROVISION:
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The reigning consensus on decentralizing local governance to improve service provision, target development interventions and deepen democracy remains splintered on the question of *how* to decentralize. Articulated within two distinct discourses – the neoliberal and the communitarian – reform prescriptions include a variety of institutional propositions that differ fundamentally in their value premises, theoretical rationales and contextual assumptions. The common focus on the community as the locus for decentralized governance in the latter discourse masks a further divergence, between a ‘revised neo-liberal’ articulation that suggests partnership arrangements between local governments and private, non-governmental and community organizations, and a progressive vision of direct-democratic governance. There is, however, little understanding of the *relative* suitability of either type to different kinds of developing locations.

Focusing on India, this dissertation addresses the gap, by comparing the performance of devolved (Panchayat) and liberalized (Sector Reform-Swajaldhara Program) arrangements for domestic water provision in three Indian States, Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, with different economic, political and socio-cultural characteristics. The *efficacy* of the reformed institutional configurations that are instituted in each State, its *effectiveness* in water provision and the *inclusion* of women in the reformed decision-making processes are assessed, for both devolved and liberalized governance

configurations.

Cross-case comparisons show that both types of reformed arrangements improve water availability in all locations, but outcomes are equitable and processes inclusive only in a context of high political awareness, civic engagement and social development (as in Kerala). Also, though liberalized arrangements perform better than devolved arrangements in delivering water in all three States, disparities in access between households with private connections and households dependant on public sources are exacerbated in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Surprisingly, in Gujarat, with high economic development but moderate political and social development, decentralization of both types produce inequitous outcomes, problematizing the desirability of contextual fit. For in Madhya Pradesh, with poor social, economic and political development, and lacking enabling features for decentralized governance, devolution to elected local governments actually reduces disparities. The intersection of regulatory and constituent institutional elements that produce these varied outcomes is discussed.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The author entered the Ph.D program at Cornell with an undergraduate degree in Architecture from the University of Bombay and a masters degree in Environmental Planning from the Center for Environmental Planning and Technology. She was Lecturer at the Department of Architecture, College of Engineering and Technology at Bhubaneswar and Reader at the Institute of Environmental Design at Vallabh Vidyanagar in India. During this time she was also consulting architect and planner with two firms in Bhubaneswar and Ahmedabad, and worked on a number of research and professional projects.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADS	Area Development Society
AE	Assistant Engineer
AEE	Additional Executive Engineer
ARWSP	Accelerated Rural Water Supply Program
BC	Beneficiary Committee
BG	Beneficiary Group
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDS	Community Development Society
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DDWS	Department of Drinking Water Supply (Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India)
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DI&WS	Department of Irrigation and Water Supply (Government of Madhya Pradesh)
DLO	District Liason Officer (Madhya Pradesh Sector Reform Program)
DLTC	District Level Technical Committee (Kerala Local Government)
DP	District Panchayat
DPC	District Planning Committee
DPMU	District Project Management Unit (Gujarat Sector Reform Program)
DWS	Department of Water Supply (Government of Gujarat)
DWSC	District Water Supply and Sanitation Committee
DWSM	District Water and Sanitation Mission

EE	Executive Engineer
FC	Fully Covered (Government of India classification for villages with 40 lpcd of water available from safe sources)
GO	Government Order
GoG	Government of Gujarat
GoI	Government of India
GoK	Government of Kerala
GoMP	Government of Madhya Pradesh
GS	Gram Sabha
GVRT	Gram Panchayat Volunteer Resource Team
GWSSB	Gujarat Water Supply and Sanitation Board
HC	Health Committee
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IP	Intermediate Panchayat
KWA	Kerala Water Authority
Lpcd	Liters per capita per day
MoRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPHED	Madhya Pradesh Public Health Engineering Department
MPWSS	Mini Piped water Supply System (used in Madhya Pradesh)
NC	Not Covered (Government of India classification of villages with less than 10 lpcd of drinking water from safe sources)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHG	Neighborhood Group (Kerala)
NWP	National Water Policy

PC	Partly Covered (Government of India Classification for villages with available drinking water between 10 lpcd and 40 lpcd from safe sources)
PD	Project Director (Madhya Pradesh Sector Reform Program)
PMU	Project Management Unit (State-level unit for Madhya Pradesh Sector Reform Program)
PR/ PRI	Panchayati Raj / Panchayati Raj Institutions
PSU	Project Support Unit (District Level unit for Kerala Sector Reform Program)
PWSS	Point Water Supply Sources (Madhya Pradesh PHED)
RGNDWM	Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission
RWSS	Regional Water Supply Schemes (Gujarat)
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (Switzerland)
SE	Superintendent Engineer
SEUF	Socio-Economic Unit Foundation
SHG	Self Help Group
SLSC	State Level Steering Committee (State-level Committee for Kerala Sector Reform Program)
SRP	Sector Reform Program
SWSC	State Water and Sanitation Committee (Sector Reform Program)
SWSM	State Water and Sanitation Mission (Sector Reform Program)
TC	Temple Committee (community based organization in Madhya Pradesh villages)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VP	Village Panchayat (Village-level elected local government)

VWSC	Village Water and Sanitation Committee (Local government committee for the Sector Reform Program)
WASMO	Water And Sanitation Management Organization
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

Decentralization is determined by politics, as Manor and others observe, no doubt correctly.¹ Its success, however, lies in the details, as many other researchers have found – details of the policy, organizational structures, rules and procedures that are set in place for decentralized governance. Most authors agree that it is the design of the reformed arrangements and their contextual fit which determines the nature, extent and success of decentralized governance.² Planners who formulate details of the institutional rearrangements that are sketched by political leaders therefore face the question: *what are the most appropriate institutional arrangements for effective decentralized governance in this context?*

This, clearly, is *the* crucial question in decentralizing governance. Yet this question remains largely unanswered, despite the enormous attention decentralization has attracted in the last three decades. Much of the literature is normative, with propositions for decentralization more often resting on a belief in the idea than on incontrovertible theory or empirical evidence³. Theoretical arguments for decentralization converge on the notion of a centripetal dispersal of centralized state functions, but diverge widely on the *kinds* of decentralization that are proposed.

Moreover, the propositions provide only broad contours of the institutional changes

¹ See Rondinelli et al., (1984), Manor (1999), and Burki et al., (1999:Chapter 1).

² See, for example, Burki et al., (1999: Chapter 2), who discuss “Getting the rules right”, and the necessity to design decentralization in a way that makes sense in a particular country, and World Bank (2001:1) where it is concluded that “outcomes depend on its design and on the institutional arrangements governing its implementation.” Litvack et al (1998), Ribot (2001) and Kikeri and Nellis (2002), among others, also point to the need for context-appropriate design.

³ Ribot (2001) articulates this clearly: “... most of the literature on decentralization focuses more on expectations and discourse than on practice and outcomes.”(pp.vi). Slater (1989), Mohan and Stokke (2000) and Robinson (2003) have substantial critiques of decentralization, and there are now plenty of case studies that reveal ‘decentralization failure’. For the mixed results of various kinds of decentralization, see Sheahan (1997), Burki et al., (1999), Birdsall and Nellis (2002), Robinson (2003), Faguet (2004), Kikeri and Nellis (2004), Mansuri and Rao (2004).

that are to be made, and details of the organizational and institutional design are unclear. Theoretical prescriptions are also limited in their direct applicability, for the strict assumptions on which they are premised rarely match conditions in the real world. Empirical studies that examine the outcomes and impacts of various kinds of reforms do not offer clear answers either, for while they assess how reformed arrangements work in comparison with earlier (centralized) arrangements, there is little research on how alternate institutional arrangements would fare in the same context. There is thus little understanding of which, among the various institutional alternatives suggested by proponents of decentralization, would be most appropriate in a specific context.

Therein is a critical knowledge gap – proponents (and theorists) of decentralization offer a variety of institutional alternatives for decentralized governance, but the relative suitability of these alternatives to various kinds of developing contexts are still unclear. This understanding is important as much to extend and refine theories of decentralization and effective governance, as to develop appropriate policy and implement reforms successfully. Yet reliable, evidence-backed answers are not available in the literature.

In this dissertation I address the knowledge gap, by investigating the relative suitability of different types of reforms to the kinds of political, economic and socio-cultural contexts found in developing countries, and thereby identify which is likely to be more effective in those locations. To do this, I set the question in the context of reforms in the governance arrangements for domestic water provision in India, and compare the functioning of devolved and liberalized systems in three Indian States (Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh) that differ systematically in their political,

economic and socio-cultural characteristics.

In the sections below, I briefly discuss the epistemological location of the research, particularly the issue of institutional variety, sketching the debates on the application of different reforms to developing countries and the contours of the knowledge gap that emerges. I then provide an overview of the study, setting the general question of context-appropriate reform in the context of water provision in India, noting the specific research question, and outlining the methodology, research design and the structure of this report.

2. DISCURSIVE DIFFERENCES IN DECENTRALIZATION

There is substantial variation in the way decentralization is defined in the extensive literature on the topic, but by mapping the conceptual ground covered by authors in their use of the term (see Chapter I), it can be most clearly (and inclusively) defined as *a purposive set of actions by the state to disperse or distribute centrally held powers to a number of non-central entities*. The idea that such a centripetal dispersion of state responsibilities and authority would resolve a host of economic, political and social issues troubling nations rich and poor has had extensive support from development theorists, practitioners and most notably, international institutions⁴. Economists argue that private firms, local governments or community groups can provide services more efficiently (Bennett 1990, 1994; Savas 2000). Environmentalists point out that natural resources are better managed by residents whose livelihoods depend on local ecologies

⁴ Many see it as not as a theoretical idea supported by international aid institutions, but as the ‘Washington Consensus’ emerging from the need of western liberal democracies in the North to extend markets and contain the crises of capitalism. See Williamson (1993) for a discussion of the emergence of this Consensus among “economically influential bits of Washington, meaning the US government and the international financial institutions.” (Williamson 1993:1330).

(Baland and Platteau 1996, Farrington and Bauman 2000). Development theorists and professionals insist that programs are best implemented by those who are most familiar with the context (Cheema and Rondinelli 1983, Rondinelli et al 1989, Conyers 2000), public services best provided by local governments (Oates 1972, Bennett 1990, 1994; Wolman 1990) and economic development stimulated by enabling greater competition among state enterprises, organizations and firms (Kikeri and Nellis 2002). Decentralizing governance is the necessary prelude, and argued to be imperative for successful development and sustained economic growth by these authors, among others.

Substantial democratic gains are also expected from decentralization. Devolving power to local governments and ethnic groups that occupy distinct regions can, in itself, extend and deepen democracy (Blair 1998, 2000; Manor 1999), contain resurgent claims to territory and autonomy (Litvack et al 1998, Burki et al 1999, Ribot 2001), and sustain diverse identities and indigenous cultures in a globalizing world. For many of these authors, like Manor and Blair, such a ‘deepening’ of democracy is an end in itself; but for others, particularly international institutions, a liberal-democratic polity is also the necessary political structure for successful market economies (World Bank 1992, Williams and Young 1994).

This wide-ranging agreement on decentralizing governance, however, splinters on the question of *how* to decentralize. Proponents suggest a variety of reforms,⁵ ranging from liberalization of the economy to participatory local governance, and the institutional differences between most of them are substantial. Prescriptions differ

⁵ Such as de-regulation, liberalization, privatization (see Williamson 1990, 1993); government reform (Osborne and Gaebler 1992); and devolution to local governments (Blair 2000, Ribot 2001), NGOs and community organizations (See Uphoff 1993, Bucek 2000, World Bank 2000/2001; also see the review of arguments and experiences in Mansuri and Rao 2004, Pozzoni and Kumar 2005)

visibly in the kinds of changes that are entailed in the existing organizational ensemble for governance, but closer analysis reveals even deeper divergences. These stem from their articulation in *different discourses*⁶, centered in different theoretical rationales, assumptions, valued outcomes, political positions and material resources, which differentiate the discussions on decentralized governance. The reform prescriptions emerging from different discourses therefore differ in more than just organizational terms, for they connote different normative positions on governance and different visions of societal organization itself. The issue of selecting appropriate reforms and designing appropriate organizational configurations for decentralized governance in a specific country or sub-national region is therefore more than just instrumental; it implies changes in existing patterns of social, economic and political relations – in sum, the way of life – and is therefore both important and complex.

On parsing the decentralization literature, two major discourses are revealed. One is the easily distinguishable and predominant *neoiberal*⁷ discourse, which is premised on theories of public choice and state failure, and reifies market transactions as most efficient for allocation of resources. The other is a *communitarian*⁸ discourse, which is internally differentiated but distinguished by a common focus on the ‘local’ as the prime locus of development and governance action. One strand of this communitarian discourse emerges from a ‘revised neoliberal’ position that projects alterations in structures of local governance premised on individual rationality and self-interest, and a ‘harmony model of power’ in communities. Another strand, premised on a more

⁶ “A discourse is a shared means of making sense of the world embedded in language...grounded in assumptions, judgements, contentions, dispositions and capabilities...[It] will generally revolve around a central storyline, containing opinions about both facts and values...Discourses can be bound up with material forces. For example, material economic constraints on politics now make themselves felt through the discourse of market liberalism” (Dryzek 2000:18)

⁷ See Williamson (1993), Kohl (2002), Mohan and Stokke (2000).

⁸ Bardhan uses this term in discussing reform propositions (Bardhan, 1996), as do Mohan and Stoke (2000).

socially embedded rationality and group solidarity, emerges from more progressive and radical political positions that question the very notion of development and seek fundamental changes in power relations. Thus the communitarian discourse is articulated by authors in both the 'New Right' and the 'New Left', who ultimately converge on a 'post-development' that is premised on the agency of local actors. (Mohan and Stokke 2000)⁹

Neoliberal and communitarian discourses are closely interwoven in the decentralization literature, but are nevertheless distinctly identifiable by the difference between the theoretical bases, the reform prescriptions, and their pertinence to specific socio-economic and developmental contexts. Most important to this discussion is that the two discourses have very different institutional implications, which are more often contending than cohering. The neoliberal discourse prescribes liberalization, deregulation and de-licensing of state-controlled sectors and privatization of state-run enterprises, infrastructure and services, among other macro-economic measures.¹⁰ The communitarian counterpart of the neoliberal discourse prescribes devolution of service provision and development interventions from central to local governments. In turn,

⁹ As Mohan and Stokke (2000) explain, these positions emerge from two different directions. The discourse the authors call 'revised neoliberalism' sees civil society as important for exerting organized pressure on ineffective and unresponsive states and therefore building democracy and good governance; they can also be vehicles for participation of the poor and marginalized in development programs and their empowerment. (Desai and Imrie 1998, World Bank 1997, Chambers 1983, Stokke 1998, Mayo and Craig 1995). The second strand of communitarian thinking includes radical critiques of the development project and the construction of subjects therein, by post-Marxists and post-structuralists for whom empowerment is a matter of collective mobilization of marginalized groups against the disempowering activities of *both* the state and the market. Theoretical critiques of the structuralist tendency to treat politics in a reductionist way, and the focus on class as the locus of political consciousness, shifts the locus of action to local political actors and a celebration of their difference and diversity, and to social movements, which become the primary means of political engagement. An accompanying position is that only by listening to and revaluating alternative local knowledges can an alternative political model emerge. Authors such as Friedman (1992), Castells (1997), Escobar (1995), Shiva (1999) and Peet and Watts (1996), for example, articulate these positions. Mohan and Stokke (2000) also cite these authors, among others, in making their argument.

¹⁰ See, for example, Williamson (1990, 1993), World Bank (1997), Megginson and Netter (2001), IMF (2001), Savas (2000).

local governments are advised to function in public-private partnership models with local businesses, NGOs and other community groups, through contract-based delegation and divestment of service provision tasks.¹¹ Governments at all levels are to be reinvented to enable development of markets, private enterprise and self-provision of services, and “steer, not row” using corporate management principles.¹²

Progressive communitarian arguments also suggest devolution to local governments, but envision direct-democratic decision-making by citizens in assemblies or referenda at the local level. The proposition is substantial redistribution of state power over resources and law and policy-making to democratic local governments, which function with the direct participation of all citizens in local decision-making processes. This calls for patently different organizational and institutional arrangements for local governance than those suggested in neoliberal visions.¹³

Thus the variety of reforms suggested by different proponents entails notably different organizational and institutional shifts, though some share their basic premises.

Liberalization, de-regulation and privatization all denote different kinds of reform actions and structural changes, but are commonly directed to the construction of a market economy and the transfer of responsibilities and resources from state

¹¹ See World Bank (1990, 1995,1997); Pozzoni and Kumar (2005).

¹² Helmsing (2002); Rhodes (1997, 2000); Osborne and Gaebler (1992).

¹³ See Bucek (2000) and Bucek and Smith (2000) for an elaboration of different forms of community involvement that are attempted, and the distinction between ‘participatory’ and ‘direct-democratic’ modes of functioning. This use of the terms (which I adopt) is different from the use of the term ‘participatory democracy’ by democratic theorists (see Held 1993, 1996), including feminist political scientists like Phillips (1991, 1995), to represent wider participation by all citizens (or members in an organization) than is enabled by representative democracy. I refer to such plebiscitary modes as ‘direct-democracy’ in this dissertation, to distinguish it from the ‘participatory’ modes referred to in the development literature, where ‘community participation’ is used to denote the participation of individuals, groups or organizations which may or not be representative of the community. See also Abers (1998), Baiocchi (2001), Santos (1998) and Isaac and Franke (2000) for examples of direct-democratic local governance.

organizations to private businesses. As such, the three kinds of reform¹⁴ constitute a *category* (or *type*) of decentralization, which is oriented to *marketization*. Similarly, the institutional shifts articulated in both strands of communitarian discourse differ in the kinds of organizational re-configurations that are entailed, but all denote transfers from central to local governments and local organizations, and thereby constitute another category (or type), oriented to *democratization*.¹⁵ Different kinds of reform within each category are often complementary and represent actions pertaining to different aspects or domains of governance, such as the neoliberal propositions of privatization, liberalization and the reinvention of government ‘to steer, not row’. However, institutional prescriptions across the two types of reform, and across different kinds of democratization, are not equally co-terminus or compatible.¹⁶

The conflicts between the neoliberal and progressive-communitarian institutional prescriptions clearly stem from the differences in the underlying political and economic visions. For though many authors posit all reform to be driven by a neoliberal agenda (for example, Williamson 1993, Kohl 2002), their reading of the decentralization discourses is arguably partial. It elides the presence of other political-economic visions in the discussions, for example the communitarian perspectives

¹⁴ Other policy and legal changes are also part of the marketization category of reforms, as Williamson (1990) sets out, such as tax reform and withdrawal of subsidies; however, some, such as reduction of fiscal deficit, are outcomes of reforms rather than a reform in itself. The three mentioned here involve the most direct transfer of responsibilities from governments to the private sector and are therefore taken as emblematic of the type.

¹⁵ The *kinds* of democratization include both liberal-democratic and direct or participatory, of which the former provides a supportive institutional framework for development of markets. See Table 1.5 for the genetic similarities among different kinds of reforms within each category, and the distinctions between the two categories. Note also the organizational differences between the reforms prescribed by the two strands within the communitarian discourse – the ‘revised neoliberal’ and the progressive – which differ fundamentally in the kind of democratic arrangements they envision at the local level.

¹⁶ The institutional restructuring necessary for privatizing service provision, for example, is completely different from that required for community-based management, which differs yet again from that of service provision by local governments. Similarly, the arrangements for community participation through various kinds of organizations and directly by all citizens would necessarily differ.

animating alternative propositions like collective resource management (Ostrom 1990, 1992; Wade 1975) and service provision, Gandhian visions of ‘village republics’ (Gandhi 1962; Gupta 1966) and even more radicalized propositions for re-inventing social relations (see in Escobar 1992; Friere 1996)¹⁷. Admittedly, the neoliberal discourse has overshadowed – and often, co-opted – other contending discourses in the international arena, but they nevertheless persist, many of them anchored in national and sub-national contexts, and inform or affect governance reforms in developing countries¹⁸.

3. INSTITUTIONAL VARIETY, CONTEXT APPROPRIATENESS AND THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

The diversity in institutional prescriptions emerging from neoliberal and communitarian discourses poses a particularly difficult problem in crafting effective local governance in developing countries, because of the concurrent play of both discourses in relation to questions of appropriate governance and development. Neoliberal arguments, which emerged initially in the context of industrialized economies and welfare states, assume literate, politically empowered, mobile populations able to exercise ‘voice’ and ‘exit’, and communities that are relatively homogeneous.¹⁹ The existence of a vibrant civil society, private capital and entrepreneurship is also assumed. Progressive and radical communitarian

¹⁷ See Mohan and Stokke (2000) for an elaboration of these positions and the fundamental differences between the neoliberal and the communitarian and radical discourses.

¹⁸ Such as the debates underpinning the social movements, including the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT or the Workers Party) in Brazil, that are linked to the institution of the ‘participatory budgeting’ processes in municipalities (Santos 1998) and the visions of local self-governance that animates ‘people’s planning’ processes in Kerala, India (Isaac and Franke 2000).

¹⁹ Observations on the context-specificity of neoliberal propositions are made by many authors, for example in Litvack et al.,(1998) and Turner and Hulme (1997).

prescriptions, however, are more rooted in the realities of the global South,²⁰ characterized by substantial disparities in power and resources among different groups, and extensive poverty and lack of basic entitlements. Direct-democratic visions and social-mobilization theories that underlie progressive communitarian discourses respond to the Third World realities of poverty, marginalization and communities marked by social cleavages of various kinds, but also assume that the capability to organize, cooperate and deliberate in public fora exists in communities, group affiliations are strong and the poor can bear the costs of participation.

Given such distinctly different contextual assumptions of reform prescriptions, indiscriminate application of reforms without consideration of the context can sharply undercut positive outcomes. Application of neoliberal theories in developed contexts is not unproblematic, since theoretical assumptions about the context are only imperfectly reflected in real world situations. The application of neoliberal prescriptions in developing countries is even more confounding, since the socio-economic and political realities in the global South are, arguably, even further from the assumptions in public choice theory on which they are premised. Yet, neoliberal prescriptions have been applied to debt-ridden developing countries by international donors through aid-conditionality, and transferred elsewhere through global epistemic communities, overlying and intersecting the communitarian discourses (McCourt and Minogue 2001, Haque and Zafarullah 2007). This has resulted in implementation of different types of institutional reform in the same location – often in the same sector – irrespective of their contextual relevance or mutual inconsistencies.

²⁰ This does not imply that direct-democratic functioning and deliberative decision-making are not pertinent to developed situations, nor that such experiments are not being attempted. For example, Bucek and Smith (2000) note that direct and deliberative decision-making is increasingly being tried in UK and France.

This play of contending discourses and the often-incompatible organizational structures implied by their respective reform prescriptions is an important issue, for on its systematic resolution hinges the success of decentralization and progressive developmental outcomes. All discussions on decentralizing governance – normative, theoretical and empirical – emphasize the importance of tailoring reforms to the local context, noting that their effectiveness is closely shaped by the socio-economic, political and administrative circumstances in which they are instituted and function (WB 1992, Turner and Hulme 1997). Politics and policy design may determine the reformed institutional architecture, which is manifested in tangible form as an ensemble of organizations endowed with specific roles, functions and resources and working within a network of legislation, regulation, policy guidelines, rules and procedures. Outcomes, however, depend on the compatibility of this organizational ensemble with the larger environment within which it functions (Emery and Trist 1965; Lawrence and Lorsch 1967; Katz and Kahn 1966)²¹. That is, *the effective functioning of the reformed institutional architecture depends heavily on its coherence with the context, and inappropriate institutional configurations are unlikely to deliver desired outcomes.*

The task of identifying context-appropriate decentralization, however, is not as simple as ascertaining that only contextually rooted and indigenous prescriptions are applied, as many who contest the application of neoliberal reforms appear to suggest (for example, Shiva 1993, 2002; Barlow and Clarke 2002). For most developing locations, embody the contextual assumptions of both neoliberals as well as communitarian proponents, in different degrees and combinations. Thus, as critics illustrate from the

²¹ More recently, Turner and Hulme (1997) elaborate on these intricate connections of governance structures to the variables in the context.

experience of governance reforms in many countries, neoliberal reforms in most cases do exacerbate disparities and further weaken the access of the poor and marginalized to basic goods and services, and also widen the disparities *between* countries.²² But others also find that in many cases access of the poor to services has been extended, and economic opportunities increased for some groups, such as women.²³ On the other hand, devolution and participatory governance as suggested in communitarian discourses has more often led to elite capture of resources and decision-making fora, greater inequity in investment between poor and wealthy neighborhoods and occasionally, further entrenchment of regressive social and economic practices.²⁴

The contextual fit of any kind of reform proposition is therefore not a foregone conclusion, as the continuing debates on the appropriate *type* of decentralization, which surface the major differences among the proponents of the idea, illustrate. It remains an open question, and an important one for successful decentralized governance. The latter is important, for assessment of the outcomes of decentralizations, with methodologies of varying strength, provide a mixed picture relative to pre-reform situations, indicating that decentralizing governance can yield desired outcomes *if crafted in context-appropriate ways*. And the experience across countries, of centralized state provision of services and management of resources becoming increasingly ineffective, inefficient, costly, and corrupt, also makes a search for alternative modes of governance necessary. Finally, the idea of decentralization has wide appeal for its promise of autonomy and self-determination, policy innovation

²² For critical discussions of the neoliberal model, including its underlying and stated political and economic objectives and the equity effects of neoliberal policies, see Beneria and Feldman (1992), Sheahan (1997), Tussie and Aggio (undated). The growing inequality after liberalization and globalization is well illustrated in UN (2006).

²³ Reported in Robinson (2003), Fiszbein (1997), Work (2002).

²⁴ See Mansuri and Rao (2004), Pozzoni and Kumar (2005), Blair (2000), Crook and Manor (1998), Crook and Sverrisson (2001).

and preservation of heterogeneity.

The key question that emerges from this intersection of the normative idea, contestation of various reform prescriptions, and the need for context-appropriate structures for local governance that pre-empt perverse outcomes and yield desired ones is that of *the relative effectiveness of the various reform propositions in different types of developing contexts*. However, despite the now sizeable literature on reform experiences across countries, answers this question have yet to emerge. Reform experiences are almost all ‘before-after’ studies,²⁵ and while invaluable for the insights they frequently offer into the dynamics of the reform process and context, how these shape outcomes and how the outcomes compare with the pre-reform situation, these studies do not provide answers to the questions of the *relative* effectiveness of alternate types of reform.

Assessing the context-appropriateness of different types of reform is also necessary because, given the intricate connections between organizational functioning and its environmental variables, the learning in terms of effective institutional design cannot be directly transferred across locations. There can be no universalized ‘best practices’ for institutional design; even the World Bank, arguably among the biggest supporters of best-practices research, admits that such an approach fails to address important variables,

...(such as) differences in local conditions, ranging from social norms to geography..... Successful institutions are based on many factors, *mostly local*.... (including) existing levels of corruption, degree of transparency, underlying human

²⁵ There are a few exceptions, particularly in the studies of privatization of State-Owned Enterprises (see Megginson and Netter 2001). Pearce-Oroz (2003) compares centralized and decentralized arrangements for water provision in Honduras. But studies that compare the performance of *alternate* kinds of reformed arrangements in the same or similar locations did not emerge in the extensive search of the literature that was undertaken in this research.

capacity and technology.... '*Best practice*' in institutional design is a flawed concept'.
(World Bank 2002:2, italics and words in brackets mine)

In addition to the epistemic vacuum, there are also political and economic implications, for the lack of knowledge on questions of institutional appropriateness has not prevented a host of reforms being implemented in most countries across the world since the eighties. (Bennett 1994, Cheema and Rondinelli 2007). However, in the absence of clear understandings of their context-appropriateness, reform prescriptions and actions have remained primarily ideological and the comparative utility of the emergent arrangements uncertain. Even after two decades of decentralization of various kinds, Ribot observes,

All...assumptions [about decentralization] must be approached with caution since surprisingly little research has been done to assess whether [appropriate] conditions exist or if they lead to the desired outcomes. In practice there is considerable confusion and obfuscation about what constitutes decentralization. In the name of decentralization, powers over natural and other resources are being allocated to a variety of local bodies and authorities that may not be downwardly accountable or entrusted with sufficient powers. Many reforms in the name of decentralization do not appear to be structured in ways likely to deliver the presumed benefits...the term decentralization is often applied to programs and reforms that ultimately are designed to retain central control. (Ribot 2001: vi)

In sum, there are almost²⁶ no answers to the question: *What is the relative efficacy of the two generic types of decentralization reforms – marketization and democratization – in typical kinds of developing locations?*²⁷

²⁶ For certainly, there are some indications to be found on how characteristics of the context shape reform outcomes, which can be assembled to derive some idea of the suitability of the reforms to particular socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. But not only are they difficult to glean but again, without consideration of the counterfactuals, the *relative* performance of alternative arrangements cannot be reliably assessed.

²⁷ It can be argued that since reform choices are determined more by the prevailing political-economic circumstances and dominant ideological frameworks than by fully rational consideration of their suitability or efficacy, as Manor discusses (Manor 1999), this question is less important, if not totally irrelevant. This is however, not correct, for first, the epistemic value is not undermined by the extent of their utility and continues to be significant. Second, it is in the absence of more objective answers that political considerations get full play, and more often than not, enable the more powerful to co-opt or contain opposing factions. Third, as pointed out at the beginning, *details* of institutional arrangements are crafted by policy designers who therefore have substantial space for making choices, even within the contours of political decisions. Finally, answers to this would help the less powerful and those

4. THE RESEARCH CONTEXT, QUESTION, METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

This study makes a beginning towards addressing the knowledge gap, by exploring answers to the above question. To assess the relative efficacies of different types of reform, the question is set in the context of reforms in the governance arrangements for provision of domestic water²⁸ in India. The task of assuring sustained supply of at least minimum quantities of safe water for domestic consumption and hygiene needs has become a global priority, with more than a billion people still without access.²⁹ The increasing water scarcity, contamination of sources and most significantly, the failure of state-run systems, has deepened the search for alternative governance arrangements. Prescriptions for reform of this sector mirror the international discourses on decentralization, with neoliberal voices prescribing privatization and communitarians calling for devolution and community-provision.³⁰ The dimensions of the problem in India (which is home to almost a quarter of the global water-poor), and the discursive propositions for reform are no different, and both neoliberal and communitarian prescriptions have been implemented by the national government to decentralize water provision.

In line with the processes of governance reform initiated in India in 1991, state systems for water provision have been both devolved and liberalized. First, the responsibility for water provision, among other functions, was devolved to rural and

contesting dominant views, by providing alternative understandings and information. The question of the relative efficacies and context-appropriateness of various reform propositions therefore continues to be important, and the lack of adequate answers constitutes a critical gap.

²⁸ In the literature, the term used more widely is 'drinking water', though the reference is usually to the water used for drinking, personal ablutions, kitchen use and often, in the developing countries, for domestic cattle. Using the term 'domestic water' is more accurate.

²⁹ Though estimates vary, all sources agree that it is over one billion. See, for example, World Water Forum (2000) and WHO-UNICEF (2004).

³⁰ The divergent discourses are discussed in Chapter II, but see Saleth (2002), Shiva (2002), Petrella (2001).

urban local governments through Constitutional Amendment Acts in 1992-93³¹. What distinguishes this as a progressive communitarian measure is the specification for local government decisions to be made through deliberation by an assembly of all voters in the jurisdiction – the Gram Sabha³² and Ward Sabha. Subsequently, a Sector Reform Pilot program was introduced in 1999 (and re-launched as Swajaldhara in 2002), to liberalize State systems by enabling users to initiate and manage projects, contribute a portion of the capital expenditure and take full responsibility for – and bear the costs of – operation and maintenance. The neoliberal constructions underlying this program are clear in the stated objectives of the policy, as also in the ‘participatory’ structure specified (GoI 1999, 2003).

This situation provided an excellent setting to assess the relative efficacies of the two types of reform in various kinds of contexts, using a comparative case study approach. The functioning of Panchayat and Sector Reform arrangements (each constituting a case), was studied in three States – Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh – that differed systematically in political, economic and socio-cultural characteristics. The six cases enabled two kinds of comparison – between the two types of reform (devolved and liberalized) in the same (State) context, and of the same reform in three different contexts.

Reformed arrangements were compared on three parameters. First, the *efficacy*³³ of the

³¹ The Constitutional Amendments (GoI 1992) specified the devolution of 29 subjects to local governments, from among the ones held by the States. Among these was water provision.

³² This is arguably in line with domestic communitarian discourses which substantially predate the neoliberal wave. For a discussion of the history of the idea and practice of local self-governance in India, see Chiriyankandath (2001), also Mathews (2000).

³³ Note that efficacy, effectiveness and efficiency are three different concepts. ‘Efficacy’ is the capacity, or potential of the reformed institutional arrangements, and ‘effectiveness’ is the extent to which it actually achieves a stated objective. Efficiency refers to the relationship between the quanta of outputs to the costs of producing them; costs could include financial, temporal, personnel, environmental or other kinds.

specified organizational architecture, that is, its potential to change pre-reform patterns. The extent of decentralization that was instituted was used to assess efficacy, on the premise that greater decentralization would alter pre-reform patterns of functioning to a greater extent.³⁴ Second, the *effectiveness* of the arrangements, indicated by changes in the average quantity of water, the extent of disparity in quantities available to different segments in the population, number of household connections, the population within 50m of a protected source and those dependant on unprotected sources. Third, the *inclusion* of marginalized groups, such as women, in the reformed decision-making processes. Women are arguably the largest of marginalized groups, and in both types of reforms in India, legal provision has been made for their inclusion. Therefore the extent of participation of women, assessed by the extent and type of formal spaces created in the reformed structure for their participation and the actual use of the spaces, was used to indicate inclusiveness of the reformed arrangements.

The specific research question was as below –

What is the relative efficacy, effectiveness and inclusiveness of devolved (Panchayat) and liberalized (Sector Reform-Swajaldhara) arrangements for water provision,

(a) in the same kind of context, and

(b) in three contexts with different degrees of economic, political and social development, as in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh?

To find answers, the functioning of Panchayat and Sector Reform arrangements in each State was mapped by studying the process of development and operation of a number of village-level water supply projects (mini cases) developed through the two

³⁴ This was taken from the conclusions drawn by many authors studying reform experiences, that the inadequate extent of decentralization was primarily responsible for the ineffectiveness of the reformed arrangements and poor outcomes. These studies are discussed in Chapter I.

types of arrangements, in a cluster of villages. The effort was to build a picture of the typical pattern in each case, through document review, interviews with various actors in the process and other key informants, focus group discussions with users and non-participant observation. From the observed patterns, the performance of devolved and liberalized arrangements could be compared along three dimensions – the relationship between extent of decentralization and the outcomes in terms of effectiveness and inclusion, the relationship between participation and effectiveness, and the modulation of reformed arrangements by contextual variables, and how these shape outcomes.

The answers that emerge from this study challenge some current orthodoxies in reform discourse. *Both* types of institutional reforms improved the pre-reform conditions of water availability to all groups in all three States, reaffirming the value of decentralization per se,³⁵ but liberalized arrangements were more effective than devolved governance arrangements (in increasing the sheer availability of water), in all three contexts. This can ofcourse be attributed to the addition of water sources, and the greater availability of funds for the Swajaldhara program, but the increased scope for initiation of projects by non-state actors (citizens, NGOs or CBOs) in the liberalized program emerged as an important factor.

The issue of disparities in the amount of water available to households with private connections and those dependent on public sources, however, problematizes these findings, for liberalized arrangements are equitable only in Kerala, a state with high political and social development but only moderate economic development. In both Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, however, liberalized arrangements were found to be

³⁵ This is of course because of the addition of another water supply system in the village; there had been little possibility of (or plans for) such additional intervention in the study villages in the immediate future, and the very possibility was created by the reforms.

highly iniquitous in the distribution of benefits, and less inclusive than devolved governance configurations. This makes devolution of water provision to local governments (Panchayats) preferable in these two contexts and raises an interesting conundrum: The substantially greater aggravation of existing iniquitous patterns of water access in economically advanced Gujarat, in *both* types of decentralized provision is startling. Particularly so, when local government provision actually reduces disparities in MP, with its low economic, social and political development, and despite the resource-capturing proclivities of the local elite that are observed. These anomalous findings, discussed in more detail in the Conclusion, are further complicated by the relationships between the State context and reform designs, and the institutional arrangements at the local level.

5. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

A prime issue in at the beginning of this research was the lack of clarity or consistency in the definition of the central concepts – governance, institutions and decentralization – and the associated terms.³⁶ The first task was therefore to develop conceptual clarity and consistent definitions, and this was done by mining existing definitions in the literature and reconciling contrary usages by application of a logical framework. The existence of and distinctions between the two discourses in decentralization became obvious only when the notion of decentralization and the terms denoting various kinds of decentralization were defined clearly enough to discern their institutional and organizational dimensions. Normative and theoretical discussions were parsed using these definitions and the conceptual understanding of typologies, to reveal the inherent

³⁶ See Jessop (1998), Scott (2001) and Oyugi (2000) respectively for observations on the conceptual and definitional problems.

differences that signal the presence of two separate discourses in the literature. These efforts are set out in Chapter I, as is the review of empirical literature of reform experiences across countries, which was directed at discerning if there were any indications of the relative efficacy of different kinds of reform. In the last section of the Chapter, the conceptual framework for researching the question of relative and context-specific efficacies of different types of reform in the context of domestic water provision is discussed.

In Chapter II, the research context, location, methodology and design are described, beginning with a review of the discursive views on reforms in domestic water provision and the two types of reforms introduced in India to decentralize existing governance arrangements. The specific research questions, methodology adopted for the study (comparative case-study), parameters used for comparison (efficacy, effectiveness and inclusion), the research design and selection of cases (Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh), and methods of data collection and analysis are then discussed.

Chapter III contains the description of water provision through devolved (Panchayat) systems in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh respectively, and the comparative analyses of efficacy, effectiveness and inclusion in the three cases. In Chapter IV, water provision through the liberalized system (Sector Reform-Swajaldhara) in the three States is discussed, and the efficacy, effectiveness and inclusion in the three cases are compared. In these two chapters, the objective is to first illustrate how differences in the State context modulated the received institutional designs specified by the Government of India so that state-specific designs with different efficacies (potential for effectiveness) emerged. How these designed configurations intersected

with contextual conditions in the study villages to produce an emergent structure, and the varying degrees of effectiveness and inclusion that resulted, are then described, before comparing the pattern of outcomes for devolved and liberalized systems respectively.

Comparison of the performance of devolution and liberalization within each of the three different State contexts is contained in Chapter V, which provides a picture of how the two types of reformed arrangements intersect with context attributes to produce different outcomes. The analytical picture thus gained, is, however, disaggregated and nuanced, and does not directly provide policy implications. To derive these, the efficacy, effectiveness and inclusiveness of the reformed arrangements are amalgamated in each case, using a scoring system (explained in chapter II) to gain an overall picture of reform efficacy. By comparing these amalgamated scores across cases, policy implications become evident.

The Conclusion brings together the main findings of this research and the implications for policy, but also explores the reasons for the pattern of findings that emerged. Further, the findings and insights derived in the case studies are also set against the current discussions on effective reform, particularly the unresolved questions in decentralizing governance and women's inclusion. The directions for future research are also explored.

CHAPTER I

DECENTRALIZATION: DEFINITIONS, DISCOURSES AND REFORM EXPERIENCES

We all know that words are multi-meaning, that our concepts are conceived very differently, and that our arguments are plagued with ambiguities and inconsistencies. The point is what to do about all of this. Can the present-day chaos be turned into a cosmos that allows, at a minimum, for intelligible communication and constructive discussion? We believe so, and we attempt to show how this can be done. (Giovanni Sartori 1984:10).

The literature pertinent to the question of context-appropriate institutional design for decentralized governance is enormous, as one can expect from thirty years of attention.³⁷ Despite the interest, however, this literature is marked by a lack of consensus and clarity on the definition of the three core concepts – *governance* (the object of study), *institutions* (the unit of analysis) and *decentralization* (the process under study).³⁸ This study was therefore initiated with an exercise to derive unambiguous and defensible definitions for these concepts, through a critical review of definitions offered by significant authors in the respective domains and application of a logical framework as suggested by Sartori (1984).

Examined in the light of the conceptual map that emerged from the above exercise, the reform literature revealed two significant patterns. One was the existence of two, distinctly different, *discourses*³⁹ on the question of appropriate reform for

³⁷ The interest in decentralization has a longer history than the last two decades, as a number of authors note (see, for example Conyers 1984; Manor 1999). Cohen and Peterson (1999:1) suggest there have been “at least three phases of attention, each of which emphasized different but cumulative objectives”. Williamson (1993) describes the paradigmatic influence of the idea in contemporary development.

³⁸ Most authors writing on these topics preface their essay with a remark on this issue: on ‘governance’, see Jessop (1998), Pierre (2000), Peters (2000) and Kooiman (1993,2000); on ‘institutions’ see Scott (2001); on ‘decentralization’, see Oyugi (2000b), Ribot (2001).

³⁹ “A discourse is a shared means of making sense of the world embedded in language...grounded in assumptions, judgements, contentions, dispositions and capabilities...[It] will generally revolve around a central storyline, containing opinions about both facts and values...Discourses can be bound up with

decentralized governance, differing in their theoretical rationales, geographical moorings, assumptions and most importantly, in the institutional prescriptions. The other was a lack of attention to the question of the *relative* suitability of different types of institutional reforms to various kinds of developing contexts. Disentangling the two discourses and the embedded institutional propositions was particularly important for developing the conceptual framework for the study, and the literature on the reform experiences across countries helped to delineate the knowledge gap and specify research questions.

Both these exercises are discussed in this chapter. First, the definitions identified or derived, and the conceptual mapping through which the latter emerged, are discussed in sections 1 and 2. Meanings identified for the terms ‘governance’ and institutions, where the definitional confusion has been addressed to a degree, are laid out in Section 1, and in Section 2, the derivation of definitions of ‘decentralization’ and allied terms is discussed. In the third section, I use these definitions to review the theoretical and normative literature on decentralizing governance and discuss the two discourses that are revealed, and the respective institutional prescriptions and contextual assumptions. The fourth section reviews the literature on reform experiences and the empirical findings on the outcomes of different types of decentralizations in different contexts. Finally, I discuss how neither the theoretical nor empirical literature offers answers to the question of context-appropriate reform, and the implications for developing a research design.

material forces. For example, material economic constraints on politics now make themselves felt through the discourse of market liberalism” (Dryzek 2000: 18)

1. THE DEFINITIONAL ISSUE AND ITS RESOLUTION

Authors frequently remark on the confusion in the usage of the terms ‘governance’, ‘institutions and ‘decentralization’ that afflicts the literature on these subjects⁴⁰, but the issue has been addressed systematically by authors in the first two cases. From among the attempts to define ‘governance’, the conceptual examinations by Kooiman (1993, 2003) and Jessop (1998) provide the clearest definition and a consistent analytical framework for investigating governance. Referring to ‘institutions’, Scott (2001) has followed his observation of the prevailing conceptual differences with a systematic review and reconciliation of the many definitions. The definition that emerges, with clear differences drawn between institutions and organizations – terms which are often used interchangeably by authors - and the analytical framework developed for understanding institutions are set out below. Unfortunately, no such effort has been made by any of the significant authors on the subject of decentralization⁴¹, and appropriate definitions had to be derived; this is discussed in the next section.

1.1. GOVERNANCE: THE OBJECT OF ANALYSIS

Despite the wide-ranging interest in the concept⁴², and the prevailing ambiguity in the usage of the term ‘governance’⁴³, few attempts have been made to reconcile the

⁴⁰ In the case of ‘governance’ see for example, Rhodes (2000); Pierre (2000), Kooiman (1993) and Jessop (1998). Oyugi (2000a, b), Ribot (2001), Silverman (1992), Litvack (1998), Wolman (1990) among many others note this problem in respect of both ‘decentralization’ as a concept, as well as in the case of the many other terms used to denote specific kinds of reform such as devolution, delegation, privatization, and liberalization, to name a few.

⁴¹ Various authors, including those noted just above, set out definitions, but the issue of inconsistency across authors is not addressed.

⁴² Spanning across the fields of development (Rondinelli et al. 1989, Rondinelli 1990, Bardhan 1996, 2002, 2006; WB 1992, UNDP 1997), public administration (Rhodes 1996, 2000; Minogue et al. 1998), political science (Leftwich 1993, Manor 1999; Blair 1996, 1998) and economics (North 1990; Williamson 1996)

⁴³ Noted, for example, by Pierre (2000), Rhodes (1996; 2000), Zafarulla and Haque (2006)

multiple meanings, though Rhodes (1996, 2000) maps a variety of usages. An extensive review of definitions, including widely-used ones developed by multilateral development organizations, reveals that only a few authors actually define the concept and not all are consistent. Most explain the term by reference either to contextually and historically contingent *structures* through which governance occurs such as through networks or by government; to the *central actors* such as civic, governmental/state or market; its *location or context* such as ‘corporate’/organizational, societal/national or ‘international’ and determinants of its *quality* such as extent of trust, accountability and transparency. These aspects are analytically important, but do not constitute adequate definitions.⁴⁴

Definitions developed by Kooiman (1993, 2000, 2003) and Jessop (1998), however, are notable in their clear specification of the term and how it differs from ‘government’ and ‘governing’. Jessop identifies two (nested) meanings of governance, which are also consistent with most others offered in the literature. In the wider and generic meaning, it refers to ‘*the pattern (or mode) of coordination of interdependent activities*’. A more restricted usage is to denote ‘*governing through ‘self-organizing, inter-organizational networks*’, i.e., the particular *mode* of governing that has increasingly drawn attention in the contemporary era of reform (Jessop 1998). Because the latter covers only a subset of the phenomena/processes included by the former, the generic definition is arguably more suitable for investigating the conduct of public affairs in the context of post-colonial societies where modernization is still uneven and multiple patterns and modes of governance coexist.⁴⁵ Jessop also points

⁴⁴ Sartori (1984), explains essential features of a definition – clear specification of a set of unique characteristics of the phenomenon and boundary conditions that distinguish it from related terms – and sets out methods by which they can be derived. More recently Scott (2001) takes a somewhat similar but less semantic approach to define ‘institutions’.

⁴⁵ See Ananthpur (2004), Ananthpur and Moore (2007) and Kohli (1990, 1994) for a discussion of the way in which traditional or customary and modern modes of governance are typical of developing

out that the use of the term has shifted historically, with the current usage differentiating it from the allied notion of ‘government’, while expanding the meaning to include actors and processes outside government.

[Governance]...originally referred to the manner of governing, guiding, or steering conduct, and overlapped with ‘government’, [now] ...governance would refer to the resultant modes and manner of governing, government to the institutions and agents charged with governing, and governing to the act of governing itself...[As such, it] ...can refer to *any* mode of coordination of interdependent activities.... (Jessop 1998; italics and words in parentheses mine).

Kooiman (1993, 2003) and Jessop (1998, 2000) also offer cogent conceptual frameworks for studying governance within any socio-political system,⁴⁶ such as rural or urban settlements, regions or countries (see Table 1.1 below). Governance, in a societal context, includes *actors*, both individual and organizational, *processes* and *structures*. Also, *diversity* of actors, processes and structures, *complexity* of relations between these and *dynamics*, that is, tensions and changes in their inter-relationships, characterize governance at all levels – local, regional, national and international.

Kooiman also suggests that governance can be in three fundamental modes – *anarchic*, *hierarchic* and *heterarchic* – which co-exist in any system as ideal types or variants.⁴⁷ Moreover, governance occurs, and can therefore be studied, at three levels or orders – *interpersonal*, *inter-organizational* and *inter-sectoral*. Jessop (1998) distinguishes these levels in correspondence with the distinction made by Luhman (1992)⁴⁸ between three levels of social structure (interaction, organization and

situations. Bakker (2003b) illustrates the co-existence and inter-relatedness of multiple modes of governance in her mapping of water supply systems in the South, as in an archipelago.

⁴⁶ ... ‘a system being a whole of entities which display more interrelations among themselves than with other entities’ (Kooiman 2000: 140)

⁴⁷ It is perhaps not a coincidence that these correspond to the three types of coordination discussed in organizational theory – direct supervision (hierarchic), mutual adjustment (anarchic) and distributed (heterarchic).

⁴⁸ Cited in Jessop (1998).

functional system or institutional order), and by a correlative distinction between different forms of social embeddedness – the social embeddedness of interpersonal relations, the institutional embeddedness of inter-organizational relations, and the societal embeddedness of inter-systemic relations.

Table 1.1
A Framework for Analyzing Governance
(derived from Kooiman 2000, 2003; Jessop 1998).

Modes →	Anarchic (Self-governing) Example. Markets	Hierarchic (Command-control) Example: Bureaucracies	Heterarchic (Co-governing) Example: Networks
Orders or Levels ↓			
<i>3rd</i> – Meta-governance (governing values, paradigms & approaches across sectors in societies or countries)	Inter-governmental negotiation, bargaining and trade	Macro-policy, political agreements, constitutional provisions	Inter-systemic networks
<i>2nd</i> – Institutional-organizational level (organizations within sectoral environments)	Inter-organizational competition, negotiation and exchange.	Sectoral Policy, Regulation, Licensing	Inter-organizational networks
<i>1st</i> – Routine, action level (individuals, in organizational settings)	Individual competition, exchange	Intra-organizational policy, rules and procedures	Interpersonal networks

Since the notion of governance refers to *any* mode of coordination of societal tasks, in itself the concept of decentralization refers only to the dispersal of the existing state-centered structures and processes, and does not privilege any particular mode of governing. Dispersal could be geographical or territorial, political, sociological or organizational. Moreover, the processes could include organizational actors or agents inside and outside government. With this conceptualization, the object(s) of attention for reforming governance arrangements includes the ensemble of organizations and processes involved in any task – for example, provision of a basic service within an

area. That is, looking for answers to the question of context appropriate, decentralized local governance involves going beyond an analysis of governmental systems to examine the nature and functioning of related actors outside government, and the inter-relationships between them, including those that may not be formally ‘charged’ with governing.

1.2. INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The term ‘institution’ has taken diverse meanings over time as significant authors within economics, political science, sociology and organization theory have engaged with it, making delineation of an appropriate and robust definition a “challenge... [which] resides in the varying meanings and usages of the concept” by different groups (Scott 2001:xx). Scott meets this challenge by coherently juxtaposing the multiple conceptions of the term in different strands of literature to derive a rich, synthesized, definition. According to him institutions are “[*multifaceted, durable*] social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience.... composed of cultured-cognitive, normative and regulatory elements, that together with associated activities and material resources, provide stability and meaning to social life”⁴⁹ (Scott 2001:48, bracketed words taken from his ensuing elaboration).

By weaving together the multiple views, this holistic definition successfully captures the essential facets that contribute to the ubiquity, persistence and significance of institutions. Authors train different disciplinary lenses that focus on specific facets of the whole concept and accordingly define the term. Institutional economists, public

⁴⁹ As is clearly evident from his extended discussion, Scott’s use of ‘social’ is in its broadest sense of including economic, political, legal and other structures that combine to produce what is experienced as ‘social life’.

administration theorists and some political scientists focus on the *regulative elements* and define institutions as a stable system of statutory rules, either formal or informal, backed by surveillance and sanctioning power. Other political scientists, organization theorists and sociologists who see institutions as systems of normative rules that introduce a prescriptive, evaluative and obligatory dimension to social life (through values and norms), focus on the *normative elements*. The conception of rules here is broad, including ‘routines, procedures, conventions, roles, strategies, organizational forms, and technologies...beliefs, paradigms, codes, cultures and knowledge’ (March and Olsen 1989:22, also cited in Scott 2001) – with a focus on social obligations as the basis for compliance. Finally, anthropologists and sociologists view institutions as ‘sedimentation of meanings or, to vary the image, a crystallization of meanings in objective form’ (Berger and Kellner 1981: 31, also cited in Scott 2001), stressing the importance of shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made; that is, the *cultural-cognitive elements* of institutions.

The three facets of institutions are not only manifested in specific carriers respectively (see Table 1.2 below) but also have corresponding bases of compliance, order and legitimacy. They are also associated with indicators that not only proclaim and solidify their existence, but can also be used to signal compliance. Table 1.2 summarizes the overall conception of institutions, their carriers and the elements that contribute to their functioning and persistence. All three facets – regulative (rules), normative (norms, values) and cultural-cognitive (beliefs, schema) – and the various elements that carry the institutional burden in each case, are vital ingredients, forming a continuum ‘from the conscious to the unconscious, from the legally enforced to the taken-for-granted’ (Hoffman 1997:36). All contribute, in independent and mutually

reinforcing ways, to giving institutions their power; their ‘directive force’ results from being ‘over-determined in the sense that social sanctions, plus pressure for conformity, plus intrinsic direct reward, plus values, are all likely to act together’ (Andrade 1984:98).

Table 1.2
Pillars, Elements, Carriers and Functioning of Institutions
(derived from Scott 2001: 52, 77)

	<i>Institutional Pillars</i>	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-Cognitive
Institutional Carriers	Symbolic systems	Rules, Laws	Values, Expectations	Categories, Schema
	Relational systems	Governance systems, Power systems	Regimes, Authority systems	Structural Isomorphism, Identities
	Routines	Protocols, Standard Operating Procedures	Jobs, Roles, Obedience to duty	Scripts
	Artifacts	Objects complying with (legally) mandated systems	Objects meeting conventions, Standards	Objects possessing symbolic value
Institutional Functioning	Bases of Compliance	Expedience	Social Obligation	Taken-for-grantedness, Shared understandings
	Bases of Order	Regulative rules	Binding Obligations	Constitutive Schema
	Nature of Mechanisms	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
	Logic	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
	Indicators	Rules, Laws, Sanctions	Certification, Accreditation	Common Beliefs, Shared logic of action
	Bases of Legitimacy	Legally sanctioned	Morally governed	Comprehensible, Recognizable, Culturally supported

Clearly, distinctions between formal-informal, customary-statutory, or regulatory-normative-cultural-cognitive institutions serve analytical purposes only, but do not necessarily connote any greater significance or importance in institutional terms; it is coherence and mutual reinforcement across these distinctions that make institutions

stable, durable and effective in their purpose. Institutions develop (or change) with the collective development of both *regulative rules* – that attempt to influence ‘antecedently existing activities’ – and *constitutive rules* that ‘create the very possibility of certain activities’ (Searle 1995:27). Constitutive rules construct the social objects, events and activities to which regulative rules are applied and therefore make possible their effective operation, but because they are so basic to social structure, so fundamental to social life, they are often overlooked.

The term ‘organization’ is often used interchangeably with ‘institution’, but it is conceptually different. An organization is ‘the structural expression of rational action’ (Selznick 1948:25); a mechanistic instrument designed to achieve specified goals. As ‘structures of recognized and accepted roles’, organizations can become more or less ‘institutionalized’ over time to the extent that they enjoy special status and legitimacy for having satisfied people’s needs and met their normative expectations (Selznick 1948; Huntington 1965; Uphoff 1986, 1993). Organizations are instruments, goal-oriented structures of roles, rules and procedures, but ‘[b]ecause organizations are social systems, goals or procedures tend to achieve an established, value-impregnated status ... they become *institutionalized*.’ (Selznick 1949:256-57). Institutionalization occurs through a process of value-commitment to structures, people or procedures extending beyond their instrumentalities, whereby organizations become ‘*infuse[d] with value* beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand.’ (Selznick 1957:16-17, emphasis in original). Many organizations are therefore not institutions, which concept includes only practices, rules, places, people, structures or organizations that have acquired value beyond their immediate utility or instrumentality, and therefore persist.

What are the implications of these conceptual understandings for the decentralized governance problematic? First, that while the discourses in decentralization center on the reform of regulatory frameworks and the organizational architecture through which they function, it is clear that the effective and stable operation of decentralized governance arrangements rests not only on the design of the statutory provisions and organizational structures for their operation – which constitute the ‘regulative’ elements – but from their coherence with normative and cultural-cognitive elements in the local context, which are the ‘constitutive’ elements⁵⁰. Also, while the instrumental objectives of reform must be adequately met (for example, effective provision of a basic service), the stability and sustainability of the reformed arrangements depends to an extent on the active *de-institutionalization* of the pre-reform arrangements, and interventions for the *institutionalization* of the latter.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Such coherence is likely to be a matter of degree, and clearly, the question is of finding *degrees of fit* that enable success of various kinds of decentralization. Moreover, systematic efforts to alter the normative and cultural-cognitive elements in the context so as to enable greater fit, such as training or educational programs, or the demonstration effect of changed circumstances can also alter the initial degree of coherence. The question then is of the cost of such additional efforts and the time required for effect; ultimately, the more efficient and effective approach would be to identify the kinds of decentralization that have greater coherence with different kinds of contexts – the exact burden of this research.

⁵¹ On the basis of these understandings, one could hypothesize that the efficacy of reformed arrangements would depend on (a) the extent to which they prove more effective in providing (perceptually) safer, more reliable, regular and/or convenient services than earlier arrangements, (b) the extent to which they cohere with existing norms, beliefs, patterns of behavior and activity. Also, one could hypothesize that (1) if the first is very significant, the second would matter less in terms of *how quickly* the newer arrangements are accepted, but the longevity and sustainability of reformed arrangements may require more frequent attention, (2) if the first is insignificant, reforms would either be a non-starter and die quickly where the coherence between regulative and constitutive rules is less, but persist for a long time despite their ineffectiveness, where the reformed arrangements cohere highly with normative and cultural patterns in the environment.

2. DECENTRALIZATION: DEFINITION, DEGREES AND TYPES

Even after decades of discussion about decentralization and application of the concept, the multi-valence of the term persists.⁵²

What is clear..... is that people who are regarded as authorities on the subject are yet to agree on what exactly the concept [of decentralization] entails. And unless a consensus is reached, more conceptual confusion in the name of identifying new typologies of decentralization will persist. (Oyugi 2000a:iii)

Though most authors preface their writing with similar observations, they have either adopted existing definitions and proceeded with their enquiry, or set out a new set of definitions for the purpose of their research. Neither of the two approaches resolves the issue of inconsistency across studies, and in the latter approach, a fresh set of definitions and meanings are created that add to the existing confusion. In this study, therefore, neither of these strategies was adopted. Instead, following Sartori (1984), definitions were derived by critically evaluating existing ones for *specificity with regard to the object it signifies* and its *clarity in terms of the boundary conditions that distinguish it from allied terms*, two necessary characteristics of an epistemologically defensible definition.⁵³ The specific delineation of the core concepts and accurate definitions of various terms in the decentralization lexicon are discussed below.

⁵² A major proportion of authors whose writing was reviewed in this project preface their essays with this observation, but it is most emphatically pointed out by Silverman (1992), Cohen and Peterson (1999), Ribot (2001) and World Bank (2003), among others.

⁵³ Sartori suggests 3 successive steps towards defining a term, (1) anatomy – sorting out the constitutive elements of a given concept – i.e., its characteristics, properties or attributes (2) reconstruction – recombining and organizing these elements in some meaningful and logically sound fashion (3) concept formation – selecting a definition or definitions of a concept on warranted and explicated grounds (Sartori 1984).

2.1. DEFINING THE CONCEPT

The most widely used definitions of decentralization in the literature are taken from the UN⁵⁴, Rondinelli (with various co-authors, in 1983, 1984, 1989, 1990), Mawhood (1983) and Smith (1985), and are listed in Annexure I. These were all formulated before the current phase of interest in decentralization, and suffer from some ambiguity and conceptual limitations. The first issue is that the concepts of ‘*power*’, ‘*authority*’ and ‘*responsibility*’, are used interchangeably, though they have clearly different legal and functional implications⁵⁵. A second issue lies in the use of the words *transfer* or *cede*, both of which restrict decentralization to ‘handing-over’ of powers held by the central authority and exclude other deliberate processes and actions that could also constitute decentralization.⁵⁶ Thirdly, in these definitions, all kinds of transfer of powers are included, including to *another centralized or single entity*, such as a para-statal, private enterprise or voluntary agency, operating in a monopolistic situation⁵⁷, which may not disperse or distribute power, authority or

⁵⁴ Oyugi (2000:iii) observes that the UN definition remains the standard definition today, but none of the many reviews I examined adopted this definition or referred to it, though other content from that source has been cited by some (eg, Cohen and Peterson 2000).

⁵⁵ Balogun’s definition, that it is the “...transfer, in varying degrees, of the sovereign power, functions, responsibilities, and resources of the state from the center to ...” (Balogun 2000:154) does better, but is not adopted by others. Transfer of each of these connotes different things – transfer of *responsibilities* without the authority to act to discharge them would be meaningless; but even the holding of authority does not necessarily lead to the discharge of shifted responsibilities, if resources – or the authority to marshal them and the possibility of their availability – are not ensured. And this – the presence of both authority *and* resources, together – would constitute power. Therefore, when all three – responsibility, authority and resources – are not transferred together, there is no transfer of ‘power’, making the decentralization either meaningless or ineffective. This alerts us to the fact that such inadequate and partial changes may be effected in practice in the name of decentralization, constituting of at best very partial steps, (when at least responsibilities and authority are granted), or at worst political posturing (when only responsibilities are transferred). These constitutive *elements* of power, however, must not be conflated with different *degrees* of power, which represent an orthogonal variable.

⁵⁶ These could include strengthening or granting official recognition to non-central governing entities such as customary or community-based organizations or NGOs, altering legal structures to enable the functioning of entities other than the government in tasks or functions that were earlier in the exclusive domain of the state, and similar instances. Mawhood and Smith are less exclusive, including ‘*any act that formally cedes power*’. (italics and emphases mine)

⁵⁷ Manor (1999) finds this typical of privatization processes, which he therefore excludes as instances of decentralization. While the issue of whether all privatization processes need be excluded on this basis

responsibility. Finally, and most importantly, these definitions are conceptually and empirically limited in the face of the variety of processes currently included in the discourses and practices of decentralization, though they well reflect “the decentralization efforts that have been tried in developing countries since the early 1970s” (Rondinelli et al., 1984:9). Changing notions of the nature of public goods and the appropriateness of their production, supply and distribution through market processes, neoliberal concerns with downsizing of governments and bureaucracies, political concerns with extending and deepening democracy as well as a groundswell for local and regional autonomy on the basis of religion, ethnicity, or indigeneity in the late ‘80s and ‘90s, have all added multiple strands and conceptual variations of the notion of decentralization (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007)⁵⁸. These are not adequately reflected in the older definitions, in which there is only a peripheral concern with political decentralization⁵⁹ and privatization⁶⁰, the explicit focus being the sharing of power between the central government and its sub-ordinate units (Smith 1985;

bears examination, but the point about non-distributive transfers not being ‘decentralization’ is well made. Ribot also excludes privatization but on different grounds – that there is an “exclusive” logic to it that is contradictory to the “inclusive public logic” of decentralization (Ribot 2002:iii).

⁵⁸ For discussion on the multiple concerns and reasons around the contemporary heightened interest in decentralization, see also Bennett (1990), Manor (1999), Cohen and Peterson (1999), among others.

⁵⁹ That is, the sharing of governing powers between different units or tiers in a political system. While local governments find mention as one kind of entities to which authority can be transferred, the focus is instrumental - they figure only as an alternative *implementing* unit for central government programs. It is recognized that they are political bodies (elected, nominated or customarily constituted), which is why, transfers to them are referred to as political decentralization later by Rondinelli (1990a) but the concern is not as much with sub-national political development and the transfer of political power, as with delegated administrative authority and responsibility to implement specified development projects and programs (Slater 1989).

⁶⁰ Privatization was included only in the sense that these “evolved from situations in which private sector firms offered goods and services which government provided poorly, or not at all, or only in some parts of the country”, rather than from deliberate efforts by governments to divest themselves of public functions. It is only later that privatization in the latter sense of the term is included, and a clear shift in focus is visible, with decentralization itself being additionally defined as “a situation in which public goods and services are provided primarily through the revealed preferences of individuals through market mechanisms” (Rondinelli et al, 1989:59, see also Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). Though Oyugi suggests that the interest in decentralization in the developing countries in the earlier phase (‘70s) was due to pressure for privatization by multi-lateral agencies, other authors do not suggest this – in fact, most clearly see the neoliberal agenda for privatization as a driving force in the 80s and 90s (eg., Cheema and Rondinelli 2007).

Mawhood 1983; Rondinelli et al. 1989; Slater 1989; Oyugi 2000, Cheema and Rondinelli 2007).

These definitions are therefore particularly limiting, in the face of the strong normative pressures for privatization, liberalization and democratization in the current discourses. For example Balogun asserts that the idea of decentralization embodies a “...concern for equity, through the redistribution of power.” (Balogun 2000:155) and Ribot emphasizes that there is an ‘inclusive logic to decentralization’ (Ribot 2001:v). Others equally strongly advocate privatization (Littvack et al 1998, Savas 2000). Therefore, using the older definitions limits and de-politicizes the discussions on decentralization – a charge leveled by critics such as Slater (1989, 1990)⁶¹ and later, Mohan and Stokke (2000).

In contrast, Wolman offers a ‘common-sense’ and inclusive definition – “*the dispersal or distribution of powers away from the center*” (1990:29), which succinctly and uniquely specifies the action(s) denoted by the term, and is yet broad enough to cover the variety of processes which are currently included in the rubric of decentralization. It is also surprisingly robust in providing specific distinguishing features and boundary conditions for the kind of institutional changes that can be included, as I explain below. This generic definition can apply to different contexts⁶², but in this research, I use it (as Wolman has) in the context of governance arrangements for discharge of public functions⁶³.

⁶¹ See also Samoff (1990), Rondinelli et al. (1989), Rondinelli (1990) for a debate on this issue.

⁶² Decentralization in this sense can also be discussed in the context of various types of private organizations; in a slightly altered meaning, has been used in relation to geographic dispersal of human settlements, economic enterprises etc. There is parallel literature on decentralization of decision-making power or information within corporate, manufacturing and various other kinds of organizations (see, for example, Sherwood 1969, Kochen and Deutsch 1980).

⁶³ It is to be noted that the domain so delineated is not restricted only to government reform i.e., the dispersal of power away from central and state governments, which has been a predominant focus of the

By this definition, decentralization implies a redistribution of power from central to a *number of non-central* entities, as is clear from the words ‘dispersal’ and ‘distribute’. There is no inherent normative prescription of an ideally decentralized or centralized situation; only a specification that there be an *outward or centrifugal dispersal* from whatever distribution exists. Also, as a verb (*‘to decentralize’*) it clearly indicates that the set of actions that constitute or result in this process are *purposive* – that is, the dispersal was intended, and was not an unintended or exogenous result of other processes. Finally, the definition is also consistent with those suggested by other authors, for there is no disagreement that decentralization refers to centrifugal dispersal of powers already held or assumed to be held – explicitly, by default, or as residuals – by the ‘center’.

Wolman’s generic formulation, in addition to connoting governance reforms that explicitly transfer powers already being exercised by the state away from itself (as in the previous definitions), also covers other processes that have been a part of decentralization reform in many countries. These include legal actions by the centralized state to institutionalize, formally recognize, or strengthen the exercise of powers by non-central actors already exercising the same – such as the granting of Constitutional status to local governments that existed in India but did not have legislative mandate. It also does not preclude processes of organizing non-centralized institutions and endowing them with powers that were not explicitly held by any ‘center’⁶⁴. This definition therefore effectively includes various types of policy and

literature. It also includes instances such as the restructuring of private or parastatal organizations that are performing public functions monopolistically, such as Boards, Corporations or Trusts dealing with housing, water supply, sanitation or public transport systems.

⁶⁴ For example, the strengthening of local governments and imbuing them with planning powers by Constitutional Amendment in India. In this case, comprehensive and strategic local development planning of rural areas was not previously undertaken by the Central Government nor the powers explicitly held by any other State or non-State entity (only welfare and employment programs for rural

legislative actions that lead to formal realignment/ redistribution of powers within a national system, effected by legal statute. For there is another important attribute – that decentralization, to any degree or in any respect, necessarily involves *explicit state action*.⁶⁵

Each of these conditions represents a necessary defining characteristic, and together they provide a reasonably unambiguous set of characteristics that can be used to distinguish among various state actions and state-initiated processes to identify what does or does not constitute decentralization. Therefore, by adding these to Wolman's definition in the context of redistribution of public functions and state responsibilities, *decentralization can be defined as a purposive set of actions by the state to disperse or distribute powers from central to a number of non-central entities.*

This definition does not preclude any of the wide variety of institutional mutations that is currently connoted by this term and affords legitimacy and space to political, economic, organizational, administrative, fiscal or other discussions within the rubric of decentralization. However, the very width of this definition makes it necessary to unpack the term and conceptually distinguish between different kinds of decentralization, not only for analytical purposes, but also to understand the different implications – for efficiency, effectiveness, equity or any other valued notion – of various kinds of decentralizing actions and processes. Various terms have been used in the literature to denote these, but not all are specific and clear enough to be acceptable

areas were developed and implemented by Central and state governments, and municipal and local parastatal bodies existed for development planning in urban areas)

⁶⁵ Legislative or executive action is necessary for decentralization because, in all but the most federal of systems, residual powers generally accrue centripetally/ upwards to the center, and explicit state action is necessary for other entities to hold any authority or power. However, without explicit legal action(s) of this nature, there is no decentralizing involved; where dispersed arrangements for discharge of public or common functions already exist, these constitute examples only of decentralized systems, which can be described, studied and lessons learnt.

definitions. Therefore a logical method to distinguish between different kinds of decentralizations is set out below, and applied to the existing vocabulary to derive clearer and unambiguous definitions for the terms currently in use.

2.2. DISTINGUISHING DECENTRALIZATIONS: DEGREES AND TYPES

Terms widely used in the early eighties to denote different kinds of decentralizing actions and which still remain in use are *deconcentration*, *delegation*, *devolution* and *privatization* (Cheema and Rondinelli 1983; Rondinelli et al 1984). *Divestment* and *deregulation* have been added subsequently (Rondinelli et al. 1989; Cohen and Peterson 1999; Savas 2000; Balogun 2000; World Bank 2003). Also, meta-categories of decentralization have been named as *spatial*, *administrative*, *political*, *fiscal* and *market* types (Rondinelli 1990a; Cohen and Peterson 1999; Manor 1999; World Bank 2003). Finally, a number of other less-used terms also surface – for example, Silverman (1992) lists *top-down principal agency*, *bottom-up principal agency* and *hybrid decentralization*⁶⁶; Mathur (1983) uses the term *debureaucratization*, Haque (1997) uses *intermediation* and Balogun (2000) *de-linking*. Since these latter are not widely used, and in most cases refer to processes already covered by other terms, they not discussed here⁶⁷.

The use of these terms, however, varies across authors, though there is less disagreement or ambiguity about some, for example deconcentration, than others.

⁶⁶ In a very interesting endnote (Notes: Chapter 1, No.1; p. 49), Silverman (1992) notes a number of other terms used such as divisionalization (Kiggundu, 1989) and ‘polycentric or non-centric governance systems’ (Ostrom et al 1989), and dismisses them as either an extreme form of devolution (the former) or because they are essentially the same as devolved systems (the latter). (citations in original)

⁶⁷ As Oyugi (2000) points out, both *delinking* and *intermediation* are defined the same as *delegation*; Silverman’s agency additions refer to specific delegation arrangements between particular organizations, the notion of ‘*hybrid*’ decentralization does not refer to a class but to the fact that in any sector, there is a variety of arrangements coexisting.

However, by applying a logical framework suggested by the very definition of decentralization set out above to the definitions offered by various authors, a defensible and reasonably consensual specification of each term is obtained, that clearly distinguishes between various kinds of institutional reforms that qualify as decentralization. At least three classificatory parameters are immediately obvious – *what types* of powers are involved, the *extent or degree* of power transferred and *to whom* (i.e., the *kinds of organizations*) it is transferred⁶⁸. These can be used to classify different types, degrees and kinds of decentralization, in specific sectors and to different kinds of organizational entities.

Conceptually, the *kinds of power* decentralized could be any or a combination of any of the three enjoyed by states - legislative, judicial and executive. Though in earlier phases of decentralization attention was focused on reassignment of executive powers, and specifically, administrative powers held by the executive branch of government, examples of, and discourses on, transfer of legislative and judicial powers to regional or local governments have become increasingly pertinent in recent decades⁶⁹.

The *degree* to which powers are transferred, i.e., *the extent to which autonomy in its*

⁶⁸ This is used by Rondinelli and his co-authors, as discussed later. (Cheema and Rondinelli 1983; Rondinelli et al 1984). Another important classificatory parameter is *domains or sectors* of State action. States, through its various governing structures, exercise these powers and discharge the related functions in numerous domains or sectors ranging from defense and foreign affairs, regulation and operation of the monetary and financial systems, provision of a variety of public services from maintenance of law and order to infrastructure and utilities, transportation, health and education. Powers may be transferred or otherwise dispersed in any or parts of any of these. The decentralization of public services and implementation of development programs has been the focus of much of the literature, particularly in the context of developing countries, but other state functions (such as revenue collection) can also be involved (for examples, see Rondinelli et al 1984,1989; Savas 2000). These domains differ along a number of dimensions - for example in the nature of the goods and services that are involved or the historical, economic, political or other issues related to provisioning arrangements in specific sectors. Separating the issues related to decentralization sectorally would therefore be useful for analysis, policy and practice.

⁶⁹ For example, in the formation of or granting of greater autonomy to existing, regional governments in Canada and the United Kingdom; in the Indian context, the issue of Nyaya Panchayats, also, devolution to Scheduled VI areas or regional autonomy such as in the northwestern states.

exercise is granted, has been widely used to distinguish between different kinds of administrative decentralization processes – deconcentration, delegation and devolution. Differences in the types of powers transferred as well as the functions to which they pertain clearly have different political as well as practical implications; therefore these become important bases for distinction. Executive powers of the government pertain to functions such as policy design, planning, finances and budgeting, personnel, operations and maintenance, supervision, monitoring and evaluation (Silverman 1992; Cohen and Peterson 1999). The degree of transfer relates to the functions that are transferred, from among these, with devolution including a full transfer of the whole range of functions, including policy-making and legislating.

This terminology was consistent with public administration praxis in the 80's, when intra-governmental decentralization was the main focus of decentralization (see Cheema and Rondinelli 1983; Rondinelli et al 1984, 1986, 1989). Even at present, there appears little disagreement to what the terms essentially connote, though the boundary conditions are less well specified. However, there is little reason to restrict its use to administrative decentralization only, for such gradations can also feature in the transfer of powers other than administrative ones, and to organizations outside the administrative structure of the state as described by Savas (2000).

Finally, the *type of organizations* or entities to which powers are dispersed is arguably an important basis for distinguishing among various decentralization processes.

Organizations differ in their nature, constitution and mode or basis of operation. Some or all of such differences would inevitably have distinctive political, economic and functional implications, making the nature of the recipient organizations an important basis for classifying decentralizations. Uphoff (1986, 1996) offers a broad typology of

organizations engaged in development, based on nature of ‘ownership’, which can be further extended to include a full range of types as shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3
Types of organizations to which powers may be transferred in decentralization processes, developed from the typology delineated by Uphoff (1986, 1996).

Types		Non-Commercial	Commercial
Public	Local Administration	Central/ regional government departments, revenue or other local administration of central/regional ministries etc.	
	Local Government	Elected councils or boards, at municipal district, county or other regional levels	
	Parastatals	Utility corporations or Boards, special-purpose districts (eg, school districts)	Public Enterprises
Membership-based (or Associative)	Area-based Associations	Neighborhood or street associations, village institutions, etc	Any of the same, engaged in trade or commerce
	Affine Organizations	Caste, community or religious associations	Any of the same, engaged in trade or commerce
	Interest-based Associations (incl. Cooperatives)	Trade unions, Employee associations, Housing cooperatives, environmental groups, women's groups, etc.	Any of the same engaged in commercial activity (eg., producer and marketing cooperatives)
Private	Trusts, Societies	NGOs, Voluntary orgns, Charitable orgns	
	Businesses (firms)		Private Enterprises

A consideration of organizational differences may have been less pertinent till the 80's when transfer to sub-national and local governmental units of different kinds was the major concern, but in the last two decades transfer of powers and functions to both commercial and non-commercial organizations outside the state have drawn substantial attention. Distinction between the organizational varieties outside the government (or in 'joint' formations) is therefore necessary.

On the basis of these three dimensions – *types* of power transferred, *degree* to which

powers are transferred and the *kind of organizational entities* to whom powers are transferred – some terms in the decentralization lexicon, such as deconcentration, delegation, devolution, privatization, divestment and de-nationalization, can be specified as in Table 1.4 below.

Table 1.4
Specific functional and organizational characteristics of different kinds of decentralization.

<i>Term</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Organizations involved</i>
Deconcentration	'internal shifting of workload' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only administrative responsibilities ▪ No discretion or autonomy- only operational autonomy granted 	Within the central government only. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Field administration ▪ Local administration
Delegation	'Specified managerial functions and duties, with broad discretion; principal-agency relationship' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indirect control by the transferring entity; through setting objectives and guidelines. ▪ Ultimate responsibility with transferring entity. 	'An <i>agent</i> , within or outside the regular bureaucratic structure' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parastatals, public corporations ▪ Private enterprises ▪ Membership organizations ▪ Lower level of government
Devolution	'Transfer of legislative, policy-making and/or planning powers' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recipient organization substantially outside the control of central government ▪ Maximum autonomy in exercise of devolved powers ▪ Strengthening of financial and legal powers 	'Independent/ autonomous entities with corporate status' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local 'governmental units' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Local elected governments -- Local administration ** -- Parastatals ** ▪ NGOs, customary authorities, private bodies etc (Ribot 2001) **
Privatization (a) by Delegation (‘contracting out’, public-private partnerships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transfer of specific tasks through contract, franchise, grant, voucher, mandate, etc. ▪ State remains responsible for function; continuing, active involvement by govt. ▪ Selected tasks/ activity transferred 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Private enterprises, ▪ Private non-profit organization
Privatization (b) by Divestment (also called Denationalization)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transfer of ownership, decision-making powers, through sale, conversion to joint holding, sale of shares, free transfer, liquidation or any other way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Private enterprises, ▪ Private, non-profit organizations
Liberalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relaxation of restrictions on trade, economic activity, financial transactions etc., by the state 	
Deregulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removal or decrease of regulations pertaining to a state function or activity 	

** Some authors include these, but the interpretation is inconsistent with wider usage, and also logically, as has been explained in the text.

Two terms that are extensively used in the contemporary discussions on decentralization, ‘liberalization’ and ‘de-regulation’, do not fit as neatly into this matrix, as they do not include the direct transfer of functions to specific organizations. They nevertheless constitute decentralization, for they involve explicit state action to disperse centralized powers and functions held by the state. Liberalization refers to the legal reduction of previous government restrictions, usually in areas of social or economic policy, to enable the participation of non-state actors in the governance process. De-regulation involves the removal, reduction, or simplification of restrictions on business and individuals by governments, with the intent of encouraging the efficient operation of markets.

Though the terms are often used interchangeably, deregulation is different from liberalization because the latter refers to the ‘opening-up’ of areas of public action that were previously the exclusive preserve of government to non-government or private actors, which may or not involve decrease of regulation. In fact, new, different or additional regulations may be developed, to increase efficiency, ‘level the playing field’, protect the environment or consumer's rights, or other publicly valued objectives; one example is anti-trust legislation.⁷⁰

It must be noted that these terms only define ‘pure-types’; there may be gradations and variants in practice. Also, there could be a variety in the transfers to a single

⁷⁰ Deregulation and liberalization are also different from privatization. Privatization involves the transfer of functions performed by the state or state-owned organizations to the *private* sector, to make the privatized enterprise more subject to market forces than was the state-owned entity. It may or not be accompanied by the reduction of regulation of the sector/ market (i.e., de-regulation), though it is one way in which to liberalize. Liberalization, however, is a larger concept, referring to a range of state action(s) to enable non-state entities to operate in arenas previously the domain of the state, including those aimed at supporting/ enabling the development of markets in those domains. Liberalization may or not be accompanied by de-regulation and/ or privatization; while as a concept it subsumes the latter two terms, it cannot be used interchangeably with either.

organization. For example, powers pertaining to some functions may be *devolved* and other powers *delegated* to a local government. Or a local user group may be allowed to freely tap, allocate and supply water – under powers *divested* to them – with a local government or irrigation department employee placed with them to collect dues and maintain accounts (*deconcentration*). Or a public utility organization producing electric power, for example, may devise a *public-private partnership (PPP)*, contracting out the tasks of designing, setting up and maintaining distribution grids to a private company, while it generates and actually distributes power. Silverman (1992) refers to this as *hybrid* decentralizations; while the term does convey the idea of ‘mixed’ kinds of transfers, it may not be entirely appropriate, as in itself, each kind of function and the degree of power transferred remains distinctive and differentiable. A more accurate picture is that of a non-homogenous ‘bundling’ of different degrees and kinds of powers in respect of various functions.

2.3. CATEGORIES (OR TYPES) OF DECENTRALIZATION

In the 1990s, the variety of possible institutional reforms discussed above have been also been differentiated into categories or types⁷¹: *spatial, administrative, market and political* (Rondinelli 1990a, also cited in Cohen and Peterson 1999); also *economic* (Wolman 1990; World Bank 2003); *fiscal* (World Bank 2003; Litvack et.al.1998; Manor 1999; Ribot 2001; Smoke and Lewis 1996) and *democratic* (Ribot 2001; Manor 1999). Only in two instances do the authors explicitly state the basis for their categorization – Cohen and Peterson, who differentiates the various kinds of decentralizations on the basis of different ‘*objectives of the process*’, and Wolman,

⁷¹ The words forms/kinds/types are variously and interchangeably used by different authors; see Cohen and Peterson (1999) for a discussion on this.

who uses the *different nature of the powers/ decisions transferred*. Both bases, however, are questionable as differentiating parameters. In the first place, ‘objectives’ of any decentralization reform can rarely be readily ascertained and will frequently be a matter of debate, for even stated objectives if they exist may not reflect the actual objectives, since multiple sources of impetus and discursive formations often underlie decentralization reforms (see discussions in Manor 1999; Kim 1992). Moreover, any reform process may have multiple stated objectives or different kinds of reforms may realize the same objective; expectations of a variety of objectives from decentralization processes are endemic in the literature, as discussed later (section 3). Wolman’s differentiating parameter is equally problematic, for the ‘nature’ of any reform is rarely singular and every kind of reform would have administrative, political, economic and social implications and consequences.

Other authors such as Manor (1999), Ribot (2002), Littvack et al. (1998) and the World Bank (2003) interpret these same terms in different ways, without any explicit specification of a classifying principle or basis⁷². Their perspectives however provide important insights, and are analytically helpful when triangulated with the categorization of Cohen and Petersen (1999) and Wolman (1990) on one hand and the definitions derived in the previous section on the other. It then emerges that many terms denoting categories actually refer to cross-cutting dimensions or aspects of various kinds of decentralization reforms rather than constituting categories in themselves. One reason is that the domains charted by the terms are not mutually exclusive – public functions entail economic, political, fiscal and administrative

⁷² There are, of course, implicit perspectives evident in the respective discussions, more or less easily discernible. Manor and Ribot clearly are approaching the decentralization rubric from a democratization perspective, and are interested in the political aspects; Littvack et al (1998) are oriented towards the issues of resource mobilization and allocation for service delivery and implications for macro-economic stability, from the perspective of the World Bank.

decisions and these are bundled to different degrees when powers to undertake such functions are transferred. So while the extent of spatial, administrative, political and economic decentralization that occurs in any institutional reform may vary, all would involve some degree of change along these dimensions. Littvack, et al (1998), point this out in their discussion of administrative decentralization -

Administrative decentralization is concerned with how political institutions, once determined, turn policy decisions into allocative (and distributive) outcomes through fiscal and regulatory actions. The political decision to devolve powers from central government, for example, can only be translated into actual powers being shifted if subnational governments have the *fiscal, political and administrative capacity to manage this responsibility*. (1998: 6, emphasis mine).

The terms spatial, political, administrative, political and economic, therefore, more accurately connote the different crosscutting *dimensions* of any decentralization process than *typologies* of decentralization. This perspective is also shared by Oluwu who also identifies all of them (except spatial) as cross-cutting dimensions (1995, cited in Oyugi, 2000:6). The same is true of ‘fiscal decentralization’, defined as the decentralization of fiscal resources and revenue generating powers (Ribot 2001; World Bank 2003, Manor 1999; see also Smoke and Lewis 1996)⁷³. Therefore to perceive such dimensions as different kinds of decentralizations and delineate categories on that basis is clearly a conceptual error.⁷⁴

⁷³ Manor defines fiscal decentralization as the process “by which higher levels in a system cede influence over budgets and financial decisions to lower levels” (1999:8). There appears to be a conceptual confusion here, in the conflation of the different notions of *fiscal* and *financial* powers. For ‘fiscal’ conventionally refers to decisions about raising of revenues through taxation and allocation of expenditures through public decision-making within the political system; ‘financial’ on the other hand, relates to a private-sector context and to raising of non-tax monetary resources and administration of funds – collection, disbursal, accounting etc. Fiscal decision-making is related to public policy making and planning processes, whereas financial decision-making is related to private enterprise management.

⁷⁴ In other words, any kind of dispersal of power held by the centralized authority, whether (for example) it is through deconcentration to field administrators, delegation to private entrepreneurs, devolution to neighborhood associations or delegation to local governments – will have spatial, economic, political, fiscal and administrative dimensions, in greater or lesser degree. Devolution to local governments or privatization to commercial organizations, of any important public function, may have wider and more direct political effects than deconcentration to field offices or contracting out of

Finally, therefore, it emerges that market and democratic are the only terms that indisputably represent distinct categories of decentralization, involving different organizations and processes. **Market decentralization** (or **marketization**)⁷⁵ “focuses on creating conditions that allow goods and services to be produced and provided by market mechanisms sensitive to the revealed preferences of individuals” (Cohen and Peterson 1999: 23). It involves state action to move functions to commercial organizations operating in markets, and the pricing of goods and services in response to demand; decisions about production and allocation are re-located to business organizations. There is little disagreement on the definition of this term, though it is incorrect to use it interchangeably with economic decentralization⁷⁶.

Democratic decentralization (or **democratization**), on the other hand, is the transfer of functions and attendant decision-making to organizations representative of and downwardly accountable to user populations. Production and allocation decisions are made through a deliberative process, by users themselves or their representatives. It must also be noted that ‘marketization’ and ‘democratization’ are generic categories or types that are premised in different beliefs about the capacities of markets and states in the allocation and management of public resources, are oriented to different ends and

administrative/ operational tasks to local entrepreneurs, but even these changes have political implications, as Manor observes (1999:8). Also, there are spatial and economic dimensions in all such institutional changes, though they may differ in degree or immediacy of effect. And any kind of decentralization inevitably includes administrative and fiscal/ financial changes, for without such alterations, the transfer of functions would be ineffective.

⁷⁵ The term ‘marketization’ is broader in scope than ‘market decentralization’ as it can also refer to the shift of activities to the market *without* state intervention, as when housework is transferred from the household to a paid activity. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term as “the act or process of entering into, participating in or introducing a free market economy” (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/marketization); it is only the last which connotes decentralization, for it involves state action. The term is used here in that interpretation, as is common in recent writings on decentralization (for example, Ravich 2000, Bloom and Standing 2001, Taylor 2000).

⁷⁶ Such usage is problematic, even though the World Bank uses this latter term, for ‘economic’ refers to more than transactions in the market, and ‘economic value’ and ‘market value’ are conceptually and practically different.

differ along multiple dimensions. The two types include in their fold different kinds of reforms (as listed in Table 1.5), which share the defining assumptions and key institutional objectives that characterize the type, and differ only in the specific organizational entity to which powers are transferred. That is, democratization and marketization both represent institutional changes, while privatization, for example is an organizational shift.⁷⁷ It is only in the transfer of responsibilities to collective (democratic) organizations that function commercially (for example, cooperatives) that both types overlap.

The tendency to treat the transfer of responsibilities to private non-profit agencies engaged in various developmental and service functions (such as NGOs, charitable or voluntary organizations and the like), as a transfer to civic organizations, is also problematic, for the same reason. This kind of decentralization is more accurately termed privatization, since the decisions about production, operation and allocation are, in the case of NGOs as much as in private companies, made by the proprietors or managers.⁷⁸ Moreover, such transfers represent an organizational shift, and whether they also involve institutional changes depends on the nature of the transfer.

⁷⁷ Bakker (2003) makes a parallel distinction between *commercialization* and *privatization*, in discussing the privatization of water provision.

⁷⁸ By the same logic, the question arises if marketization (and privatization) should be considered decentralizations at all. This question itself appears heretical in the face of the widespread neoliberal proposition of decentralizing economic decision-making to markets. But moving economic decisions from (democratic) states to markets, they are transferred from the purview of decision-makers – bureaucrats and elected representatives – who are *de jure* accountable to all citizens, to proprietors or managers representing a much smaller group of investors clearly concentrates rather than disperses decision-making. On the same principle, liberalization, de-regulation and divestment would also not qualify as decentralization. However, considering the usage in the contemporary discourses and the fact that they are pre-dominant types of reform actually being undertaken, in this study they are included as kinds of decentralization. Also, as Savas (2000) points out, the distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ is blurred when functions are transferred to companies with a large number of small shareholders.

Table 1.5
Varieties of Decentralization

		Kind of power transferred →	Internal shifting of workload	Transfer of specified managerial functions and duties, with broad discretion; principal-agency relationship.	Transfer of legislative, policy-making and/or planning powers, in addition to managerial functions
		Nature of organization ↓			
Public	Non-commercial		Local administration (Intra-governmental decentralization)	De-concentration	Delegation
		Local Government (Inter-governmental decentralization)		Delegation	Devolution <i>DEMOCRATIZATION</i>
		Public sector entities Corporations, Boards, special-purpose Authorities or Districts		Delegation (Delinking)	
	Commercial	Public Enterprises		Delegation <i>MARKETIZATION</i>	
Membership-based	Non-commercial	Area-based Associations		Delegation	Devolution or Divestment? <i>DEMOCRATIZATION</i>
		Affine-based Associations (e.g., based on caste, religion, kinship)		Delegation	Devolution or Divestment? <i>DEMOCRATIZATION</i>
		Interest-based Associations/ Non-commercial Cooperatives		Delegation	Devolution or Divestment? <i>DEMOCRATIZATION</i>
	Commercial	Commercial cooperatives , Enterprises run by trade unions or employee associations		Delegation <i>MARKETIZATION</i>	Divestment <i>MARKETIZATION</i>
Private PRIVATIZATION	Non-commercial	NGOs, Voluntary Organizations , Charitable organizations, etc.		Delegation	Divestment
	Commercial	Private Enterprises		Delegation <i>MARKETIZATION</i>	Divestment <i>MARKETIZATION</i>

Other terminological issues also emerge from this exercise. For example, there are no specific terms suggested in the literature to denote the transfer of public functions to collective organizations of various kinds to distinguish them from decentralization to private or public/governmental entities⁷⁹. This is a significant terminological gap, which constrains analysis in an era of various kinds of CBOs and SHGs are increasingly expected to be involved in the provisioning of basic services such as water⁸⁰. I argue that all instances of transfer to non-commercial membership organizations should be considered as democratization, except when public functions transferred to them are discharged on a commercial basis for largely non-member customers. This is because such organizations are formally democratic in structure, and users/members participate in the decision-making, though they vary in other ways.⁸¹

Despite these gaps and contentious issues, laying out the various kinds of

⁷⁹ In fact, transfers to such organizations have been conflated either with ‘privatization’ (from Rondinelli in 1983 to Savas in 2000, and many in between) or with ‘devolution’ (eg., Ribot 2002); the former because they are clubbed with NGOs or ‘voluntary’ organizations and the latter because of their perceived representative nature. In short, their distinctive characteristics and extensive variety have been generally missed in the decentralization literature. While examining this in any detail is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is an important area that needs attention in the context of decentralization. In particular, the distinctions between different kinds of organization within this set and corresponding implications for the valued objectives of decentralization – growth, democratization, efficiency, equity, or any other – urgently need to be explored. This is because, not only are the *inter-organizational* structural relationships between various organizational actors involved in governance important, but also their *intra-organizational* structure and nature of operation, to critically analyze validity, efficacy and effectiveness of decentralizations.

⁸⁰ Sartori (1984), for example, explains how lack of categorical vocabulary and definitional rigor constrains analysis.

⁸¹ There are normative differences within what appear to be structurally and politically similar processes across different kinds of membership organizations. The key distinction is the underlying institutional conception of democracy that informs the analysis: direct or representative, in the case of local governments, or pluralistic and associative in the case of other kind of organizations based on common interests. The former constructs the individual as citizen and as part of a community of citizens with respect to a state founded on an implicit social contract; the latter constructs her as a self-interested rational agent bound by explicit choice to others of similar interest, consistent with a liberal political framework. Organizations that are area-based such as Neighborhood Groups or Residents Associations, where all adult residents or all households are members by virtue of their residence in the area, are more akin to local governments. In such cases, the functioning may be representative (through an elected executive) or participatory wherein decision-making is through deliberation in the general assembly.

decentralization as above and clarifying the definition of various terms associated with the process, provides a clear analytical framework to investigate questions of governance reform. Using this conceptual map to parse the decentralization literature also reveals that the normative and theoretical arguments for decentralizing governance contain significant divergences and differences. I discuss these differences, and the respective discourses that are thereby constituted, in the next section.

3. DISCOURSES IN DECENTRALIZATION

Examining the literature on decentralization in the light of the conceptual map developed in previous sections, reveals two characteristics that are important to answering the question of context-appropriate institutional design. One is the internal divergence within the apparently wide-ranging agreement on decentralization as the most desirable development strategy. Discussions of governance reform are not homogeneous but composed of *two distinctly different discourses* – an easily distinguishable and predominant *neoliberal* discourse, and another that is internally differentiated but can be best characterized as ‘*communitarian*’⁸².

“A discourse is a shared means of making sense of the world embedded in language...grounded in assumptions, judgements, contentions, dispositions and capabilities...[It] will generally revolve around a central storyline, containing opinions about both facts and values...Discourses can be bound up with material forces. For example, material economic constraints on politics now make themselves felt through the discourse of market liberalism” (Dryzek 2000: 18)

True to this definition, the two discourses in decentralization are centered in unique

⁸² Bardhan uses this term in discussing reform propositions (Bardhan, 1996), as do Mohan and Stoke (2000).

rationales or ‘storylines’ and theoretical propositions, and linked to particular sets of assumptions, valued outcomes, political positions and material resources. Most important to this discussion is that they have different institutional implications, not all of which are cohering or compatible. The two discourses are closely interwoven and apparently converge on certain positions such as the primacy of the ‘local’ as the locus of development, but are nevertheless clearly identified by the difference in the theoretical bases, the reform prescriptions, and their roots in specific socio-economic and developmental contexts. The other characteristic of the literature is that, despite the different geo-historical moorings and political-economic pertinence of the two discourses, both intersect in the discussions on decentralization and development in the Third world, and figure simultaneously in reform policies and practices in developing countries.

Few authors recognize the discursive differences, as they frame their discussion within a singular conceptual or developmental framework (as in Manor 1999; Ribot 2001; Roychoudhury 2002; Oyugi 2000a,b). This undifferentiated approach results in considerations of all kinds of decentralization as institutionally co-terminus and consistent. Normative and practical differences between kinds of reform, and the contextual appropriateness of specific kinds of institutional changes,⁸³ are therefore elided. The distinction sometimes drawn between *economic* and *political* (as in Wolman 1990) appears to be a close parallel, but fails to recognize that any reformulation of governance arrangements implicates both economic and political

⁸³ Some of the purely theoretical literature (eg., in public choice) does link particular kinds of reform action (like fiscal decentralization) to specific desired outcomes, and often also specifies conditions under which they happen. The normative and prescriptive discussions which dominate the field, however, fail to do so, except in categorical terms such as ‘privatization’ or ‘devolution’, which terms cover a number of different kinds of organizational shifts and institutional changes, as discussed in the previous sections.

dimensions⁸⁴. In identifying *discourses*, the distinction I draw is not between economic and political arguments, but in the differences, *in both economic and political terms*, in the origins, objectives, theoretical premises, and institutional instrumentalities that characterize the two discourses.

The existence of two discourses is implicit in the exchanges between Slater, Rondinelli, Samoff and others⁸⁵ on the de-politicisation of development and governance reform and the construction of decentralization as a-political reconfiguration of public administration. The distinction is more explicitly recognized by Mohan and Stokke (2000) in their analysis of the apparent convergence between the ‘new Right’ and the ‘new Left’ on “‘the local’ as the site for empowerment and therefore as a locus of knowledge generation and development intervention” (Mohan and Stokke 2000:247-48). In this context, they identify two strands of development thought and practice – ‘revisionist neoliberalism’ and ‘post-Marxism’ – and explicate how the emphases on community participation and empowerment in both are rooted in divergent theoretical critiques of the state and opposing valuations of the development project. The discourses on decentralization are well differentiated in Mohan and Stokke’s analysis of the political use of ‘the local’ by hegemonic and counter-hegemonic interests, but their focus on the political bypasses the issue of institutional differences and the links between specific reforms and outcomes in any detail.

Below, I discuss in turn the two discourses – neoliberal and communitarian –

⁸⁴ Reforms that constitute ‘economic’ decentralization (eg, liberalization, privatization) has extensive political implications, in the reallocation of economic opportunities and restructuring of economic relations that reconstitute the distribution of power among different groups in society. Equally, so-called ‘political’ decentralization, in reallocating access to state authority and public resources, also involves a restructuring of economic relations between different groups.

⁸⁵ See Slater (1989), who critiques the prescriptions of decentralization by Rondinelli and others as emerging from a-political constructions of governance and governance reform, both of which are inherently political. See also Samoff (1990), Rondinelli et al. (1989), Rondinelli (1990) for a debate on Slater’s critique.

delineating their respective theoretical rationales, adaptations and variations, institutional prescriptions, contextual assumptions and critiques. I then trace the policy transfers that lead to a simultaneous application of both discourses in developing countries, before reviewing the empirical literature on the efficacy of the resultant variety of institutional reforms.

3.1. THE NEOLIBERAL DISCOURSE: DECENTRALIZATION AS *MARKETIZATION*

In a dramatic shift from the belief in state production of goods and services which are natural monopolies in the 60s and 70s, the neoliberal discourse centers on the promotion of markets as the most efficient in delivering services, economic growth and social development. Rooted in public choice theories, which address the question of efficient governance within economic frameworks of competitive markets and welfare-maximizing, rational individuals, the proximate concerns are accelerating macro-economic growth and more cost-efficient production and provision of public services (see Williamson 1993). Many authors, however, read the central objectives of this development paradigm to be economic reforms that enable the extension of global markets into newer geographical locations, goods and services, and political reforms that enable and support this process.⁸⁶

The theoretical scaffolding that supports the neoliberal case for decentralizing public service provision and divesting public enterprises includes theories of bureaucratic inefficiency and ‘government failure’ and Tiebout’s (1956) model of public choice. The former emerges from the empirics of government ownership and technological and ideological changes that eroded the indivisibility of natural monopolies that had

⁸⁶ See discussions in Kohl (2002), also World Bank (1992), Leftwich (1993,1996).

been understood to preclude competitive production.⁸⁷ Reducing government control of economic activity and liberalizing trade, financial markets and other sectors is expected to increase economic growth by increasing investments and competition. Decentralizing service provision to private businesses and local governments is expected to be more efficient, because,

Regional or local governments are in a position to adapt outputs of public services to the preferences and particular circumstances of their constituencies, as compared to a central solution that presumes one size fits all. Moreover, *in a setting of mobile households*, individuals can seek out jurisdictions that provide outputs well suited to their tastes, thereby increasing the potential gains from the decentralized provision of public services (Tiebout 1956). Finally, decentralization may encourage experimentation and innovation as *individual jurisdictions are free to adopt new approaches to public policy*; in this way, decentralization can provide a valuable “laboratory” for fiscal experiments. (Oates, 2006:1, italics mine)

The central tenet of public choice, thus, is that information of citizen-consumer preferences can be better captured at the local level by their exercise of voice and exit, that is, by them ‘voting with their feet’. Localization also reduces transaction costs of service delivery and allows the capture of citizen preferences through user groups and citizen boards at the local level. While agreeing with this, others add that privatizing or contracting out services is even more efficient than municipal supply since private providers operate in a competitive market whereas bureaucratic monopoly encourages rent-seeking and parochial decision-making that leads to oversupply and inefficiency (Boyne 1998, Zafarulla and Haque 2006)⁸⁸. The main argument here is that the price mechanism best captures user preferences and leads to cost-efficient provision.

Another market solution is inter-municipal contracting, whereby adjacent

⁸⁷ See Littvack et al (1998) for a review of the many reasons offered for decentralizing as well as the (inconclusive) theoretical underpinnings to the argument

⁸⁸ There was little evidence to substantiate such arguments to start with, and in recent years, there is increasing evidence that these suppositions are incorrect – that privatization does not increase efficiency or reduce costs, among other failures (Bel and Warner 2008)

municipalities contract out to each other in a public market to obtain economies of scale (as noted by Warner and Hebdon, 2001; Warner and Hefetz, 2002).

These arguments are complemented by propositions of the ‘New Public Management’, a set of prescriptions for government reform. These include changing government roles from ‘rowing’ to ‘steering’,⁸⁹ and introduction of business management principles and practices in public sector organizations to increase bureaucratic efficiency (Osborne and Gaebler 1992). Local governance, in this discourse, should be reformed by transferring service production and distribution, to private organizations; by applying user charges and similar fees for public services; by ‘reinventing’ government to play a primarily regulatory role; by restructuring government to increase intra-governmental competition and promote bureaucratic efficiency; and by granting greater autonomy to local governments in the kinds and extent of public services offered, to increase inter-jurisdictional competition.

Reforms prescribed are predominantly of the marketization type. As Mohan and Stokke observe, “the organizational arrangements for decentralization include, *in order*, privatization, deregulation, delegation, devolution and deconcentration” (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 251, emphasis mine). At the macro-level, the institutional vision includes liberalization of trade, financial and other regulated markets, and extensive divestment. Except devolution, all these kinds of reform fall into the ‘marketization’ category; that is, they are genetically identical in that they all involve the shifting of functions from the state to business organizations. They differ only in the kind of (business) organization and the degree to which functions are transferred;

⁸⁹ That is, from producing and delivering services to enabling private providers and regulating provision.

other institutional elements and assumptions that embody the neoliberal paradigm for governance, incorporating liberal economic and political philosophies, remain common⁹⁰. Devolution, which is also prescribed, is institutionally different, but as configured within the neoliberal discourse shares the same basic premises as the marketization reforms. The World Bank, in fact, defines marketization as allowing “functions that had been primarily or exclusively the responsibility of government to be carried out by businesses, community groups, cooperatives, private voluntary associations and other non-government organizations.” (World Bank 2003). Some authors located within the Bank also see privatization as the most complete form of decentralization (Litvack et al 1998:25), though there are many who disagree with this; in fact, there is some consensus that it is not decentralization at all, such as Ribot (2001), Manor (1999) and Balogun (2000), among others.⁹¹

These theoretical propositions rest on assumptions of perfectly mobile citizenry who are fully informed of service levels in different municipal jurisdictions, who make (re)location choices based solely on services available (and not, for example, employment location) in a perfectly rational manner, no costs of relocation, no externalities from services provided within a jurisdiction beyond its boundaries and sufficient number of private suppliers and demand to develop a competitive market,

⁹⁰ For example, the transfer of responsibilities for public service production and distribution to private organizations; the application of user charges and similar fees for public services, and ‘reinventing’ government to play a primarily regulatory role.

⁹¹ This question, whether ‘marketization’ qualifies as a process of decentralization needs to be considered carefully. Marketization connotes processes that involve not just a shift of decision-making power from a center to non-central entities, but also a paradigmatic shift in the basis and nature of decision-making itself. It is not only who decides or on what that is changed, but the normative framework and principles within which the decisions are made. Decision-making in regard to public functions is moved from a discourse of macro-economic stability, political accountability, citizen needs, state responsibility and authority, to one of micro-economic viability, financial desirability, consumer preference, market demand and supply. This is a paradigmatic shift, of a different order than in case of the delegation or devolution of state functions to geographically dispersed locations, parastatals or local governments.

among others. Some other conditions have also been specified – that the services be ‘fully congestible’ or close to it – i.e., services in which increasing the number of users will raise marginal costs of provision proportionately, and which the central government is obliged to provide uniformly across all jurisdictions. Another is that the unit cost of production of the service/public good is equal across jurisdictions, but demand differs sharply and is price-inelastic – the more price inelastic the demand for the public good, the greater the economic gains from decentralization (Seabright 1996, Oates 1997, 2006). Finally, there is an implicit assumption of reasonable market conditions, such as availability of private capital and entrepreneurship, a relatively homogenous access to information and a level of effective demand (as opposed to need) signified by the willingness to pay, which enables development of a market.

There are substantial critiques of these propositions for decentralization. The link between liberalization and growth is neither unambiguous nor universal, for it will depend on the specific circumstances of each country, the timing and sequencing of reforms and the social policies put in place to offset the ‘adjustment shocks’.⁹² Moreover, the link between growth and reduction in poverty and inequality is a contested one, for growth without distribution can increase inequalities, and neoliberal theories are silent on distributive aspects (Birdsall and Nellis 2002). The theoretical benefits of decentralizing to localities may not accrue in practice, for the strict assumptions on which they are based rarely, if ever, match ground realities. Relaxing them to approximate reality weakens the public choice argument for decentralization considerably. In a situation of asymmetric information and incomplete contracts, centralization can actually increase welfare by improving coordination and accounting

⁹² For trade liberalization, see Tussie and Aggio (undated); for liberalization in general see Sheahan (1997) and Berg and Taylor (2000).

for spillover effects (Seabright 1996). Where mobility is constrained and linked to employment, or when the public goods are less than fully congestible, the welfare function is not as optimal (Oates 2006). Decentralization also leads to the loss of economies of scale, negative externalities, deepening disparities between communities in levels of services and tax burdens, privileging the sovereignty of individual preferences over widely held national values such as equity and redistribution, and reduction of within-community diversity (Wolman 1990).

Also, the merits of the actual institutional arrangements must be ascertained as they may not all be similar, and not only in terms of efficiency; for, as Warner and Hefetz point out,

Although efficiency is important, public service provision is also about equity, democracy, and community building (Frug 1999). Ensuring citizens equitable access and voice in public decision making is an important part of the public service. Market solutions to metropolitan service delivery—private or public—must be assessed for their performance with respect to all three governance goals: efficiency, equity, and voice. (Warner and Hefetz 2002: 71, citation included in original)

Others (deLeon and Denhardt 2000, Self 1993) also have normative objections to the marketization approach, for its conflation of the state-citizen and market-consumer relationships –

Voters are likened to consumers, political parties become entrepreneurs who offer competing packages of services and taxes in exchange for votes, political propaganda parallels commercial advertising, government departments are public firms dependant on receiving adequate political support to cover their costs and interest groups are cooperative associations of consumers or producers of public goods, i.e. all those goods supplied through a political instead of a market process. (Self 1993:3)

These critiques are significant and cogent; but the democratizing propensities of decentralization are also among the public-choice arguments offered by authors

writing in the framework of this discourse. Wolman (1990) and Bennett (1994), for example, argue for devolution of substantial functions and fiscal powers to local governments to increase local voice and thereby, government responsiveness and accountability to citizens, to provide a proximal site for political and civic participation, political education and leadership development, and to protect democracy by fostering countervailing centers of power. The political vision in these accounts is discernibly liberal-democratic, of rational choice, individual interests and representative government, and as articulated in the neoliberal discourse, framed in a 'narrative of capital and 'efficiency' (Mohan and Stokke 2000:250).

This neoliberal discourse is clearly rooted in the geo-historical and economic context of the Atlantic seaboard and its state-centered governance paradigm. Initially centered on divestment of public sector organizations, it gathered momentum in the early 80's Thatcher-Reagan responses to stagflation, the Washington Consensus, fiscal imbalances at national, regional and local levels, rising cost of public services and growing public antipathy to 'big' government (Bennett 1990, Litvack 1998) This contextual origin of the neoliberal wave is important, *for the rationale and theories then rest on the assumptions of the kind of conditions that prevail in developed countries, including a historically contingent backlash to the growth of the welfare state in post-industrial economies.*⁹³ Despite this original location-specificity of the discourse, however, the prescriptions for smaller government, privatization, liberalization and de-regulation have been transferred to the developing economies of the global South – and therein lies a major issue, as I discuss later.

⁹³ A number of authors point this out (for example, Leftwich 2005, Turner and Hulme 1997), but see Bennett (1990a), Osborne and Gaebler (1992), Self (1993), Holtham and Kay (1994), Manor (1999), Savas (2000) and Barton (2001) for the constructions of the arguments for decentralization, which assume conditions in western industrialized democracies.

3.2. COMMUNITARIAN DISCOURSES: DECENTRALIZATION AS *DEMOCRATIZATION*

Paralleling the neoliberal discourse of ‘state-downsizing’ and centripetal transfer of responsibilities, there is a centrifugal location of governance responsibilities in the community, which is constructed as the prime locus of governance and development action by decentralists across the political spectrum (Bardhan 1996). This apparent convergence articulates a communitarian discourse that is, however, internally differentiated in the location of its proponents, the frameworks of articulation and the divergence of the basic premises.

[Decentralization] holds up a promise of the re-ordering of political space and a revitalization of ‘the local’ in terms of accountability and choice ... [But it] constitutes a flexible discourse that can be utilized by different ideological interests ... the major lenders have promoted decentralization as a means of breaking the power of central ministries, increasing revenue generation and shifting the burden of service delivery onto local stakeholders. This is a very different inflection compared to liberal and radical approaches that see devolution of power to local government as a means of promoting a new communitarian spirit and forming the seedbed of democratic practice.” (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 250)

The hegemonic strand of this discourse is a ‘revised neoliberal’ vision wherein devolution to local governments is “part of a broader market-surrogate strategy” (World Bank 1983:123). Increased involvement of local interest groups is stressed in this donor-led discourse; local participation, in the World Bank’s articulations, refers to local businesses, NGOs, user groups and other civil-society organizations (World Bank 2003:website). The primacy of local knowledge, community-driven development (CDD) and importance of ‘social capital’ animate this development narrative and practice, and partnership approaches involving the local state, private businesses and civil society organizations (Mohan and Stokke 2000). Institutionally, it recommends transfer of responsibilities to local actors in this spectrum.

A more radical and counter-hegemonic notion of decentralization is articulated by a range of proponents including political theorists interested in deliberative democracy, the 'new Left', and social and environmental activists (such as Shiva 1989; see Escobar 1995). Emerging from both academic explorations into deepening democracy through wider participation in deliberative fora (Bohman and Rehg 2002, Fung and Wright 2001), and more radical critiques of existing power relations (Friere 1996; Laclau and Mouffe 1985) that reject both the state and market as locii of development, a 'bottom-up' approach based on conscientization and social mobilization to challenge existing power relations is articulated. These visions are premised, variously, on the primacy of local knowledge for effective development, ideals of citizen participation and control over local decision-making, collective ownership and stewardship of natural resources for sustainable development, and community rights to local autonomy, particularly in the case of indigenous populations and ethnic groups. Institutionally, the more radical versions privilege social movements that challenge existing power structures, while others focus on the devolution of powers, functions and resources to local governments or community-based organizations (CBOs) organized for direct, deliberative and participatory decision-making.

Thus the communitarian discourse includes two different strands: articulations by academics (Blair 1996, 1998; Manor 1999; Bardhan 1996, 2002, 2006) and international institutions (World Bank 1995, 2002, UNDP 2002) on one hand, but also from theorists (such as Dryzek 2000) and activists with liberal (Chambers 1994, 1997) and radical (Shiva 1989) perspectives, on the other. Local participation, traditional knowledge, development choices and action by communities figure in the visions of both groups. The difference lies in the political-economic visions, and constructions of social change and the development project held by the respective proponents, as also

in the prescriptions for institutional and organizational reform.

Though both groups prescribe devolution to local governments, the ‘revised neoliberal’ discussions refer to representative government within a liberal-democratic framework⁹⁴ while the others configure a participatory democracy at the local level. In the former, community participation ensues through the engagement of local businesses, NGOs, user groups and the like, and is expected to make governance more transparent and accountable, and thereby reduce corruption. Equally important here is the communities buy-in necessary for the success of state and donor development programs and the contribution of beneficiaries towards the costs of development. For more liberal and radical communitarians, on the other hand, only a fully participatory process or oppositional social movements hold the promise of empowering currently marginalized groups and altering existing power relations. It is these articulations, reflected in institutional reforms towards direct-democratic arrangements for local governance in places like Brazil and India,⁹⁵ which constitute a counter-hegemonic discourse to the neoliberal agenda. The inclusion of all citizens, particularly the poor and marginalized, is the key instrumentality in this process, the pivotal condition; the defining vision is of full participation, deliberation and direct-democratic decision-making in community assemblies. Therefore, though the organizational reforms proposed by communitarians all belong to the democratization category, (see Table 1.5), they differ not only in the degree of powers which are transferred and the kinds of recipient organizations, but also in the organizational structures and processes of

⁹⁴ Some authors, however, draw explicit attention to the differences between developed and developing locations and the dangers of applying neoliberal prescriptions. See, for example, Bardhan (2002).

⁹⁵ Participatory budgeting in municipalities in Brazil that emerged from the social movements that led to democratic changes in the polity (see Abers 1998, Santos 1998, Heller 2001), and the People’s Planning process in Kerala that owes its origins to both Gandhian notions of ‘village republics’ and decades of political mobilization around the ideological stances of the Left in the State (Heller 2001, Isaac and Franke 2000).

local governance that are envisaged.

Mohan and Stokke (2000) critique the tendency to essentialize and romanticize the 'local' that characterizes both kinds of communitarian thinking. They also point to the false construction of the community as homogenous and innocent of political tensions, and the local as isolated from national and international economic and political processes. Others point out that the contextual assumptions implicit in communitarian propositions are not often found in developing situations. Citizens do not always have local information to the extent and in the complexity required, or the capacity to self-govern as assumed (Herring 2002). Nor do conditions always exist for democratic functioning at the local level, particularly in locations in the global South where extreme disparities of income and position together with multiplex dependency relationships within communities preempt democratic transactions (Beteille 2002; Leftwich 2005). The acute disparities of class, caste and income stemming from these same political economic circumstances also prevent the expected transparency and accountability, and pose the danger of elite capture of devolved public resources (Bardhan 1996, 2002). Critics of communitarian thinking do not, however, point to the other problems of localization, such as increasing inter-regional disparities, that have been articulated by some authors of the neoliberal discourse.

Ideas of local self-governance also have indigenous roots in developing countries, which often pre-date the international development discourses. The origins are diverse – philosophical and political arguments such as Gandhian ideals of self-help and community-owned development, historical movements for local self-government under colonial rule, and social activism against the effects of rapid modernization in developing countries. These domestic articulations were not always homogenous nor

rooted in similar understandings of the context and visions of change⁹⁶, but they have often foreshadowed and shaped post-colonial development interventions by national governments, and informed arguments for community participation in donor-funded development programs and projects by development practitioners and policy makers since the 70s. The groundswell of demands for autonomy and control over local resources by sub-national and local groups on the basis of region, ethnicity or cultural difference and the communitarian turn in natural resource management strategies following extensive degradation under state management have also added weight to communitarian arguments for democratization and devolution.⁹⁷

Though there is some discussion (and instances) of service improvements through citizen participation in local governance in developed countries, the major strands of communitarian discourse relate primarily to the global South⁹⁸. They are oriented to concerns of extensive poverty and marginalization of groups, inaccessible and ineffective service provision, poor impact and sustainability of development interventions, and extensive degradation of natural resources that characterize developing countries. What is significant, however, that indigenous discussions on decentralized governance have been overlaid by the contemporary neoliberal and 'revised neoliberal' discourses that center on the community, which have also

⁹⁶ The Gandhian vision, for example, was heavily critiqued by B.R.Ambedkar for its elision of oppressive power structures in Indian villages, among other issues, much like the radical critique of current neoliberal formulations. Beteille (2002) explains this divergent understanding of Indian villages among national leaders as emerging from their (lack of) experience of village life, which sociologists observe to more accurately match Dr. Ambedkar's understanding.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Manor (1999); Bardhan (1996); Diamond and Tsalik (1999); Ribot (2002); Richards (1997); Blair (1996); Carney and Farrington (1998).

⁹⁸ The proposition that citizens should be more involved in governance has also been made in the context of developed countries. These ideas have also been applied by local governments and public agencies in various locations in developed countries, for example in the street policing and school systems that Fung (2001, 2004) calls 'street-level democracy'. However, this discourse has primarily been oriented to the situation in developing countries, perhaps because democratization itself has remained partial or uneven and its extension and 'deepening' is a project by itself (Leftwich 2005).

shadowed the more progressive and radical communitarian discourses internationally. This has resulted in a seemingly homogeneous discourse on decentralization for ‘good governance’ and sustainable development in the global South, despite the significant internal divergences and conflicting institutional propositions. I discuss the dynamics and implications of this below.

3.3. POLICY TRANSFER AND ‘GOOD GOVERNANCE’ IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Clearly, the neoliberal and communitarian discourses differ in very fundamental ways: they rest on distinctly different normative positions, theoretical propositions and contextual assumptions, and emerge from two different visions of political and economic organization of societies. The two therefore articulate distinctly different cross-sectoral, societal paradigms for ‘meta-governance’, in Kooiman’s (2003) and Jessop’s (1998) terms. They also generate two different ‘families’ of institutional reform – ‘market’ and ‘democratic’ reforms. Further, this difference is reflected as much *within* the communitarian discourse as between the neoliberal and the communitarian, in the different *kinds* of democratic reforms proposed – those that transfer power to local governments, private businesses and interest-groups in the former and those that devolve power to citizen assemblies, elected local governments or area-based associations, in the latter. Fig 1.1 illustrates this difference in the organizational shifts.

The two discourses also discernibly emerge from and are pertinent to different geographical and economic contexts. The neoliberal arguments are primarily articulated by authors located in and referring to governance arrangements in the global North, though it is explicitly identified as such by only a few such as Ahmed

(2002), Litvack et al (1998) and Turner and Hulme (1997). In this context, local governments have been significant actors in the governance ensemble, and their functioning institutionalized over some decades. Markets extend to most locations and to a wider range of goods and services than in less developed countries. The central concern in this context is increased *efficiency* of service provision⁹⁹.

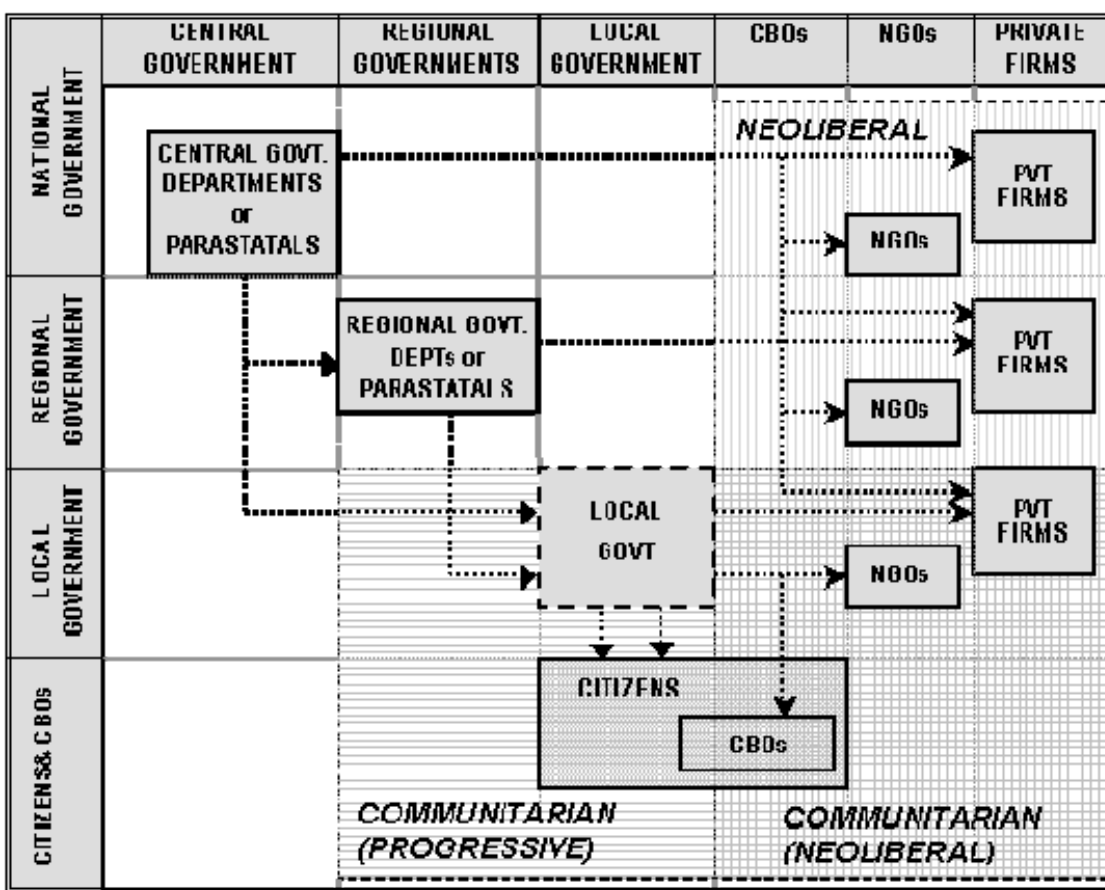


Figure 1.1: Organizational shifts suggested in neoliberal and communitarian discourses.

⁹⁹ Ofcourse, these discussions also focus on the democratizing effects of further devolution, and the implications of the increasing transfer of responsibilities for service provision to local governments, but again, in the context of the global North (for example, see Warner 1999)

In contrast, communitarian discourses focus on improving the *effectiveness* of service provision, even more on effectively extending basic services to currently unserved citizens in the global South, where local governments hardly existed or if they did, functioned weakly. An equal concern is with accelerating development, which includes a host of concerns from poverty reduction to local economic development, and not least, the better management of centralized development programs. Though many authors anchoring the communitarian discourse are located in the advanced economies, their writings address questions of uneven global development and specifically, with changing conditions in the global South.¹⁰⁰

Despite this locational specificity, discussions on governance reform in developing countries reveal the interweaving of both discourses. Neoliberal prescriptions have been carried to developing countries by the conditionalities attached to international development aid, emerging from the Washington Consensus, and global epistemic networks (Crawford 1997, McCourt and Minogue 2001, Common 1998, Zafarullah and Haque 2006), and have overlaid and intersected with indigenous discourses on decentralized governance. From the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) initiated in debt-laden Latin American and African countries by international lenders such as the World Bank and IMF (Beneria 1999), to prescriptions for ‘good governance’ articulated by the World Bank (1992,1994), neoliberal frameworks have been particularly influential, and shaped policies and programs in developing countries in the last two decades (Sheahan 1997, Robinson 1996) Even where neoliberal policy prescriptions have not been tied to aid – for example in India (Manor 1999) and Uganda (Saito 2002) – policy prescriptions have been transferred through epistemic

¹⁰⁰ As discussed before; authors like Escobar (1995), Peet and Watts (1996), Bardhan (1996), Manor (1999).

communities and influenced reform.

While SAPs embody an unmitigated neoliberalism, the ‘good governance’ discourse brings together propositions for marketization as well democratization. Political decentralization, the rule of law, competitive elections & political processes, a politically active civil society and transparent governance are prescribed alongside the suggestions for marketization in the economic sphere (World Bank 1994, 2002).

Democratization (in a liberal-democratic model) is argued as necessary to successful functioning of (neoliberal) economic arrangements that spur development (equated to economic growth), as it provides the necessary institutional context (World Bank 1992; Williams and Young 1994; Leftwich 1996, 2005; Blair 1998; Rodrik 2000)¹⁰¹.

The key difference between these propositions and the more radical communitarian discourse, and one that makes the former the political counterpart of economic neoliberalism is again, the underlying ‘market’ concept of politics.¹⁰² A pluralist, liberal-democratic model of appropriate governance around interest-organization and competition is naturalized, unlike the communitarian or republican models of governance, with direct-democratic (or at least more widely participatory) arrangements, as discussed before.

The play of both neoliberal and communitarian discourses in relation to decentralization in developing countries has led to an elision of their inherent

¹⁰¹ Leftwich writes explicitly “...Democratic polities on the liberal model are inextricably linked with capitalist or mixed economies, and thus the pursuit of democratization needs also to be seen as part and parcel of the wider economic dynamic which has driven globalization. (2005:687)

¹⁰² Rhodes (2000:57) points this out clearly, on the basis of the World Bank’s prescriptions to encourage ‘good governance’, noted by Williams and Young (1994:87) “...encourage competition and markets; privatize public enterprise; reform the civil service by reducing over-staffing; introduce budgetary discipline; decentralize administration and make greater use of non-governmental organizations.....In short, ‘good governance’ marries the new public management to the advocacy of *liberal* democracy.’ (emphasis mine)

differences, and concurrent application of a variety of reforms premised on very different theoretical frameworks. India is a prime example (Jairath 2003, Roychoudhury 2002), as is Bolivia (Kohl 2002). In the former, local self governance and community-based decision-making have been part of the nation's political discourse for almost a century, with the Gandhian ideal of 'village republics' as units of governance underlying Constitutional and development debates in the country since Independence (Gandhi 1962; Gupta 1966; Mathew 2000) The groundswell for institution of strong local governments had also found expression intermittently in legislation and experiments in some Indian States over the years. Since 1991, however, neoliberal reforms have also been progressively introduced in many sectors. In Bolivia, the radical and progressive political visions of many social movements found expression in the Workers Party and experiments in direct democracy, alongside neoliberal reforms such as the Law of Capitalization. (Santos 1998, Kohl 2002). Though some authors, such as Roychoudhury (2002) and Jairath (2003) in India and Kohl (2002) for Bolivia, have drawn attention to the incompatibilities between different types of reform that have been simultaneously introduced in the same sectors, there is no visible fault-line between the two discourses in the policy literature of these countries.

This simultaneous application of different types of decentralization reform in respect of specific state functions raises an important question – *which type of reform is more effective in such locations (for any specific function)?* Since institutional efficacies are closely tied to the environments in which they are embedded, this encompasses the issue of context-appropriateness of reformed arrangements, particularly in large and heterogeneous countries with significant regional variations in political, economic and

socio-cultural characteristics.¹⁰³ No comparative assessment of the *relative* suitability of neoliberal and communitarian reforms is, however, visible in the normative and theoretical literature. Whether and in what ways such questions have been asked in the empirical writings that examine the outcomes of these diverse reforms across countries, I investigate in the next section.

4. GOVERNANCE REFORMS: THE EMPIRICAL EXPERIENCE

Despite the uncertainties about the actual outcomes of the theoretical propositions, for “we do not know enough empirically to make definitive recommendations about which types of decentralization are best for which services in which institutional settings” (Ahmed 1998), the ‘decentralization movement’ that has swept across countries Manor (1999) has resulted in a variety of reforms. Governance has been both ‘marketized’ (liberalized, de-regulated and privatized) and ‘democratized’ (devolved to local governments and delegated to interest groups and community-based organizations), often in parallel¹⁰⁴. The sizeable literature on the effect and outcomes in different countries, provide a mixed picture of success and failure, and attribute the mixed outcomes to a range of policy and contextual conditions. I summarize these below, with particular attention to the experiences in developing countries, in respect

¹⁰³ A question can be posed, about the need to assess the relative efficacy of the two types of reform in a situation where one – the neoliberal – has clearly been shown to be transferred from a different socio-economic context and should therefore be expected to be unworkable in the developing contexts under consideration. However, the need to compare the efficacies of both kinds of reform arises because there are sharp dissimilarities between developing countries, and across sub-national regions within them, in the levels and kinds of socio-economic and political development. That is, developing regions do embody the assumptions underlying both genres of reform in various degrees and combinations, though very imperfectly in relation to the theoretical assumptions. The actual performances of different kinds of reform are therefore not predictable on the basis of their origins or underlying theoretical premises.

¹⁰⁴ As, for example, in the US (Warner 2006), Bolivia (Kohl 2002) and India (Joseph, 2007), for example.

of their pressing development issues such as poverty and lack of access to basic services.

4.1. MARKETIZATION: LIBERALIZATION, DE-REGULATION AND PRIVATIZATION

With the rise of the neoliberal orthodoxy in development, economic activities which were previously controlled strictly by the state, such as trade, finance and infrastructure development, have been liberalized and deregulated. Programs for privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have also expanded functionally across sectors and geographically across industrialized and developing countries (Meggison and Netter 2001, Kikeri and Nellis 2002, 2004). Liberalization and privatization programs are not explicitly aimed at social concerns like poverty and equity, but by reducing inflation, increasing competition and stimulating investments and innovation are expected to increase growth, which in turn is expected to reduce poverty in the long run (Sheahan 1997, Berg and Taylor 2000; Birdsall and Nellis 2002).

The literature on the outcomes of liberalization and privatization in the developing and transitional economies, however, mostly belies these suppositions. First, the effects of trade, financial and other kinds of liberalization on growth, unemployment, and wages have been mixed at best, with a larger proportion of neutral and negative outcomes. The problematic assumption of a positive correlation between growth and reduction in poverty has been observed to be almost wholly unfounded; even when GDP has increased, the poor have mostly not benefited, and inequality between the top and bottom quartiles of the population have increased. Neither has privatization yielded better or cheaper services in most instances, though some successes have been

reported.

Assessing the post-liberalization changes in GDP in 32 countries in South Asia (4), Africa (12), Latin America (8) and East Asia (7) that liberalized to different extents after 1985, Greenaway et al (1997) report an overall deterioration of growth, both in statistical before-after analysis and from panel data. Examining the economic and social consequences of liberalization in nine developing and transitional economies¹⁰⁵, Berg and Taylor (2000) found that growth was positive only in Argentina and Mexico (after 1995), and either neutral or negative in the other seven; social impacts were neutral or unfavorable in all; income-inequality increased in most countries; and wage differentials between skilled and unskilled workers widened. Unemployment among the economically active increased as well. Tussie and Aggio (undated), in their study of eight countries¹⁰⁶ that reformed at various times, find that economic performance has been ‘unsatisfactory’ in Malawi and Zimbabwe, and accompanied by a deterioration of social and education indicators. In Bulgaria, Bangladesh, Jamaica and the Philippines, economic performance was somewhat positive, though in the former it resulted in high unemployment and persistent poverty.

There are, however, positive outcomes as well. In the above study, Tussie and Aggio (undated) estimated that in Bangladesh, poverty had decreased by 1% per annum. In the Philippines too social indicators – life expectancy, literacy and access to infrastructure and technologies – improved and the proportion of urban poor declined. In Jamaica, unemployment and poverty fell in the 80s. Growth rates in Brazil were

¹⁰⁵ Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, India, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Turkey and Zimbabwe. Detailed analysis of the experiences in each country – provided in the paper - is used to arrive at the overall conclusions reported here.

¹⁰⁶ They study the countries in pairs: Malawi and Zimbabwe, Bulgaria and Bangladesh, Jamaica and Philippines, and Brazil and India. In the first two, infant mortality rates, adult illiteracy, malnutrition and poverty remained as high.

better than the world average in the decades after liberalization, though they have fallen since and unemployment increased. India has had an impressive growth post-liberalization, but regional inequalities have worsened and employment in manufacturing stagnated. Brazil and India were also among the more moderate and slow liberalizers, and in the latter, authors have pointed out that the growth cannot be attributed substantially to liberalization (Patnaik 2001).

Tussie and Aggio also point out how specific factors such as the level of industrialization, preferred access to markets and world demand for specific commodities substantially affected growth in the eight cases they studied. Sheahan (1997), examining the cases of Chile, Mexico and Peru – often cited as paradigmatic liberalizers, but which implemented reforms with different combinations of social programs – finds that the “purest version, the standard model (of liberalization) is adverse to reducing poverty and inequality” but alternatives with social programs in Chile progressively reduced poverty and inequality (Sheahan 1997:31)

Different methodologies of variable strength¹⁰⁷, and the fact that effects cannot fully be attributed to specific reforms since in most cases they are implemented as part of a wider set of economic and political reforms, mean that the results of these studies cannot be taken to be conclusive. Nevertheless, a degree of consensus exists on the overall dismal picture of outcomes, with very few exceptions. One is the 1991 study by Papageorgiou et al. of liberalization in 19 countries, where he found that overall, it resulted in rapid growth without serious employment or macro-economic problems; the findings have however, been sharply challenged by Greenaway (1993) and Collier

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Tussie and Aggio (undated) and Greenaway et al. (1997) for limitations and weaknesses of some methodologies used in these studies.

(1993). In a review of books on liberalization by Geddes (1995), observes that internationalizing financial activities spurs improvements in domestic systems and thereby helps economic development.

Most countries have undertaken privatization of SOEs since the early eighties, despite the fact that “privatization in the early years was [only] a leap of faith” (Kikeri and Nellis 2004:92). Reviews of studies that assessed outcomes of privatization across countries (Vickers and Yarrow 1991, Birdsall and Nellis 2002, Kikeri and Nellis 2002, 2004; Meggison and Netter 2001), indicate that while firm performance (profitability) often increased, consumers faced cost increases, and employees loss of jobs, and when markets fell, wage cuts. All authors, however, point to the limitations of most privatization studies – data constraints, problems of comparing like-with-like in private and public organizations and inadequate counterfactuals, among others.

Vickers and Yarrow (1991) classify privatization into (1) transfer of State owned enterprises (SOEs) in competitive product markets generally free from market failures, (2) transfer of SOEs with substantial market power such as infrastructure networks in telecommunications or electricity, and (3) contracting out of publicly financed services previously performed by the public sector. Examining cases in Britain, Chile and Poland, they conclude that the results depend mostly on the market and regulatory frameworks within which they exist, and results vary substantially. Efficiencies and profitability increased most often in the transfer of SOEs in competitive product markets, while political and distributional gains were less certain.

In their review of “the increasing (but still uneven) literature” on privatization, Birdsall and Nellis (2002) conclude that,

“On the whole, privatization has proven its economic worth. The shift to private ownership generally improves a firm’s performance. There are some exceptions, but this finding holds up in most countries, including some that are very poor, and many of the formerly socialist economies in the transition region. Post-privatization, profitability has generally increased, often substantially, as have output dividends and investment....[but] Privatization’s economy-wide effects on the government budget, and on growth, employment and investment are less established.” (Birdsall and Nellis, 2002:12).

The authors go on to considering the distributional effects of privatization, and finally sum up thus -

“...most privatization programs appear to have *worsened the distribution of assets and income*, at least in the short run. This is more evident in transition economies than in Latin America, and less clear for *utilities such as electricity and telecommunications, where the poor have tended to benefit from much greater access*, than for banks, oil companies, and other natural resource producers.”(Birdsall and Nellis, 2002: abstract, italics mine)

These conclusions are echoed in other reviews of privatization cases (for example, Kikeri and Nellis 2002, 2004; Rao and Rao 2004; Meggison and Netter 2001) but the observations on positive outcomes must be moderated by the fact that these reviews emanate mostly from authors located within the World Bank system. Revenue gains to the government accrue mostly from the initial sale, and little thereafter; it is often accompanied by falling employment. Negative political fallouts of privatization range from moderate to severe, with the process being unpopular among stakeholders almost everywhere.

The outcomes of privatizing services are also mixed; though efficiency increases, so does the cost of services (see for example, Berne and Pogorel 2004, Rossi 2001, Howe 2000). As Kohl (2002) describes, privatization initiatives in Bolivia led to efficiency increases in service provision, but the substantial increases in the cost of basic services and energy – upto 100% in the case of water – led to massive protests and riots that

ultimately forced some reversals¹⁰⁸. The economic restructuring that was to improve the resource position of the state and spur growth in reality led to increases in unemployment, decline in government revenues and continuing economic crisis. In the US, Warner (2006) reports that privatization of services by local governments does not reduce costs or increase efficiencies, for competition is poor if not completely absent, and there is therefore an increasing reversal of privatization.

Kikeri and Nellis (2002) identify the conditions for successful privatization, referring mostly to competitive product markets:

“...strong political commitment combined with wider public understanding and support for the process; creation of competitive markets—removal of entry and exit barriers, financial sector reforms that create commercially oriented banking systems, effective regulatory framework—to reinforce the benefits of private ownership; transparency in the privatization process; and measures to mitigate the social and environmental impact.” (Kikeri and Nellis, 2002:1)

Rao and Rao (2004) add four other considerations: tailoring to country contexts, clear political backing, operational improvements to SOEs before privatizing and explicit consideration of existing and future employment in the enterprise. However, creation of such conditions are not easy, particularly for monopoly public goods subject to market failure like infrastructure and basic services like electricity and water, even in a country like the US. For the monopoly nature of the service or good pre-empts private players and the number of suppliers is often limited resulting in a monopsonistic situation. Privatization of services in rural areas is particularly problematic because of the latter, compounded by the limited managerial capacity of rural local governments (see, for example, Warner 2006).

¹⁰⁸ For example, in the privatization of water supply in Cochabamba (see Forero 2005)

4.2. DEMOCRATIZATION: DEVOLUTION, DELEGATION AND DIVESTMENTS

Communitarian discourses that advocate decentralizing governance to localities have resulted in widespread devolution of service-provision and developmental responsibilities to local governments and various kinds of community organizations (see Work 2002). Three broad kinds of shifts are evident. Neoliberal ‘partnership’ and ‘participatory’ approaches have included decentralization to local governments with mandates to partner with private, non-governmental and community organizations on one hand, and the institution of community participation in programs and projects of state departments, parastatals and international donor agencies on the other¹⁰⁹. More progressive reforms have devolved responsibilities and resources to local governments structured for direct-democratic decision-making in assemblies and through referenda (Bucek and Smith 2000; Baiocchi 2001; Abers 1998; Isaac and Franke 2000). The extent and patterns of devolution in all cases vary across countries and sectors (see, for example, Shah and Thompson 2004, Work 2002).

The experience of the three different kinds of decentralization to localities can be assessed in three ways, with respect to common objectives articulated by proponents. These expectations include improvements (in efficiency, effectiveness, quality and/or accessibility) in service provision, and outcomes of development programs (again, in efficiency, implementation, better targeting), reduction of disparities between different groups of citizens and across localities, and increased participation of citizens in decision-making.

¹⁰⁹ The literature on such participatory arrangements is extensive. See for example, Fung and Wright (2001) and other articles in the same issue of *Politics and Society* (2001: 29, 1), Goldfrank 2002, Work (2002), Fergusson and Mulwafu (2004), King and Yue Ma (2000), Helmsing (2002), among others cited in this section.

Service provision by local governments, in various kinds of partnership and participatory arrangements has had mixed outcomes. Generally, gains are reported in efficiency, access and occasionally, quality of services, but significantly, equity and participation has been problematic across countries and continents (Robinson 2003). For example, in Work's (2002) evaluation of devolved health and education services in nine countries, improvements in efficiency and access were observed, including increased access by the poor. Similar other success stories are reported by donor agencies (see examples at <http://magnet.undp.org>). Devolution also improved efficiencies and levels of provision in city services in Montevideo (Goldfrank, 2002), and increased service coverage, attention to rural areas and the poor, cost consciousness and resource-raising efforts, and citizen satisfaction in Chile (Fiszbein 1997). Mahal et al (2000) also found a positive correlation between devolution of health care and education services and improvements in child mortality and school enrollment in India.

On the other hand, successive decentralization efforts failed to improve services in Bangladesh, and in Haiti, provision actually worsened (Burki et al 1999). Motoya-Aguilar and Vaughan (1990) also find no extension in coverage or improvements in quality of health care after the decentralization of primary care clinics in Chile. In the Phillipines and Uganda, Azfar et al (2001) report that local governments are not always responsive to local preferences, though they are aware of them; this, despite greater local political mobilization and policy initiative. Revenue needs of local governments that lead to imposition of local cesses and taxes may actually exacerbate poverty and endanger livelihoods in poorer areas, as Ellis et al (2003) report in the case of Malawi. This acquires even greater significance in light of the poor fiscal devolution, not commensurate with devolved responsibilities, that is seen in many

cases (for example, see Livingstone and Charlton 2001, Robinson 2003, Azfar et al 2001). In the same vein, Larsen (2002) finds that local governments display a commercial orientation to natural resource management when such responsibilities are devolved to them, more than one of resource regeneration and sustainability. In health and education services, in a review of findings in a number of cases in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia by various authors, Robinson (2003) concludes that neither quality nor access has increased nor have costs fallen; disparities in quality between private and public provision have actually widened. Pearce-Oroz (2003) also reports little difference between centralized and decentralized provision of water and sanitation services in Honduras, in access, efficiency or sustainability.

Equity outcomes have been equally problematic. Robinson concludes from his review of experiences that “equity outcomes have generally not been realized for poor and socially marginalized people.... The gap in quality between wealthier and poorer areas has often increased under decentralization” (Robinson 2003:7). The positive correlation between decentralization and pro-poor policies or decentralization and poverty alleviation assumed by the proponents of decentralization has also not been observed, as Johnson (2001) notes from the studies of various authors.

Though Fiszbein found a positive correlation between inclusion and outcomes in his study of decentralization in Chile (Fiszbein 1997), civic engagement does not improve in most cases (Goldfrank 2002). The main issue was the power differences that existed in communities and were reflected in the participatory mechanisms – such as citizen boards and user groups – that were used. In almost all instances where participation is discussed, the pattern that repeatedly surfaces is that of the wealthy and better-informed capturing such avenues, though such capture is not always malevolent

(Mansuri and Rao 2004). This issue has attracted even more attention in the case of community participation in state and donor funded programs, through mechanisms such as forest management committees (Sundar 2001), water users associations (Wilder and Lankao 2006) and similar organizations. Two extensive reviews of participation in such programs (Pozzoni and Kumar 2005; Mansuri and Rao 2004) finally conclude that

“...the literature points to a ‘double exclusion’ of weaker groups from decision-making fora created by community participation initiatives. Not only do these groups face considerable difficulties in entering such spaces, but even when they succeed in attaining formal inclusion, they find it difficult to voice their views and have them taken into account by better-off participants...evidence on the inclusion of poor and marginalized citizens in innovative institutions of participatory points to a greater level of formal inclusion, but similar low levels of substantive inclusion. While legislative provisions have contributed to attaining greater formal inclusion of hitherto marginalized groups, decision-making processes in the majority of these spaces continue to be dominated by the more powerful actors.” (Pozzoni and Kumar, 2005:8)

Unfair resource-sharing between state agencies and community partners, low commitment of bureaucracies, poor design, inadequate understandings of complex concepts like participation and empowerment among project implementers and unsuitable timelines are among the programmatic reasons for the situation, in addition to contextual conditions. Even more important is the unfair distribution of costs and benefits of participation among the better-off and the poor, and men and women. These patterns, among other problems, make Sundar (2001) question if such devolution is democratization at all.

Direct-democratic forms of participation, as have been tried in Kerala, India and Porto Alegre, Brazil however, lead to more extensive participation from all sections of the local population and also yield distinctly pro-poor outcomes. Though participation in local planning was more uneven in Kerala (Isaac and Franke 2000) than in the public

budgeting in Porto Alegre (Abers 1998; Baiocchi 2001, Santos 1998), in both instances it led to an alignment of service levels and provision to local priorities, particularly of the poor. Local government investments through ‘participatory budgeting’ exercises in citizen assemblies in Porto Alegre has been observed to be redistributive to an extent that some analysts name it ‘redistributive democracy’ (Santos 1998; Marquetti 2001, cited in Pozzoni and Kumar 2005). In addition to extensive participation and progressive outcomes, direct-democratic processes have also led to the development of local organizations and increased ‘social capital’¹¹⁰. The connection with increased participation of the poor leading to socially desirable outcomes is also observed by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), who find that the inclusion of a marginalized group (women) through reservation of seats in local governments leads to improved delivery of local public goods to marginalized populations.

Authors examining decentralization experiences also explore the reasons for these outcomes. Weak commitment to decentralization appears to lead to absence of participation, elite capture of resources, and ineffective outcomes (Robinson 2003). Inappropriate channels for participation constrain civic engagement (Goldfrank 2002) and inattention to the weak institutional capacities of local governments reduced their authority in comparison with other local organizations (Way 2002). Simultaneous privatization and fiscal constraints led to the negative outcomes of the transfer of primary health care in Chile (Montoya-Aguilar and Vaughan 1990). In the US, Warner (1999, 2006) shows that devolution undermines the possibilities for redistribution,

¹¹⁰ For discussions on Porto Alegre, see Abers (1998), Santos (1998); for Kerala, see Heller (2001), Isaac and Franke (2000, 2002).

increases regional disparities between rural areas because local governments have low managerial and fiscal capacity, and their tax efforts are sensitive to State policy.

Conditions under which successful outcomes emerged included presence of substantial State direction (Mahal 2000), political commitment of individual municipalities (Heller 2001) and a combination of added responsibility, more resources and policy reform (Fiszbein 1997). The role of central governments appears to be crucial, and not only in implementing *adequate* devolution. Successful pro-poor devolution appears to depend on governing parties commitment to the empowerment of local governments and the success of decentralization reforms (Robinson 2003, Heller 2001). Johnson (2001) posits that successful devolution requires a careful balancing between autonomy and accountability, a strong role for counter-elites like external NGOs or higher echelons of government, strong civil society organizations and adequate information about the new roles being taken on by the local actors. In sum, it emerges that central states have a strong and continuing role in ensuring pro-poor discharge of devolved responsibilities.

An issue that frequently surfaces is that devolution of any kind does not happen easily, with initiators facing political obstacles from various quarters, but most often from policy segments close to or within government itself (Manor 1999, Eaton 2001). Devolution of the administrative, fiscal and other powers necessary for discharging devolved responsibilities is therefore uneven and often inadequate, making local government capacity very weak in many cases (Livingstone and Charlton 2001, Pal 2004, WB 2001). On the other side, civil society or private organizations are not always present thickly enough in the locality for local governments to partner with or to develop the competitive markets for services that are envisaged.

5. THE QUESTION OF CONTEXT-APPROPRIATE REFORM

The studies of reform experiences reviewed above present a mixed picture of successes and failures, of both marketization and communitarian reforms, especially in relation to service provision and poverty alleviation in the global South. This counters any simplistic assumptions of geographical relevance or greater symmetry in the ordering principles of either governance paradigm with the conditions in developing countries, and leaves the question of context-appropriate reform open. This is not surprising, since developing countries are at different points in multidimensional trajectories of modernity and post-modernity, and their integration with the world economy. Geo-historical, economic, political and socio-cultural characteristics of various nations or sub-national regions therefore embody the environmental assumptions of both decentralization discourses to different degrees, and in different ways, countering dualities of developed/undeveloped, industrialized/agrarian or pre-modern/modern. The question of context-appropriateness must therefore necessarily be seen as *relative and multidimensional*.

Yet the case for decentralization in developing countries is not negated, as the instances of improved outcomes suggest decentralization is both necessary and can be successful under suitable conditions. Taken together with the intrinsic democratic merit of decentralized over centralized governance, this warrants efforts to identify the context-appropriate institutional-organizational configurations for effective decentralized governance. The key question therefore, and the one that this study engages with is – *what are these?*

5.1. THE KEY QUESTION AND THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

Two kinds of (related) issues are identified as necessary to the success of reformed arrangements. The first is the design question. One aspect of this relates to the distribution of tasks between actors in and levels of governance, and another, perhaps more significant, to adequate devolution of the resources and authority concomitant with the devolved responsibilities. Both of these refer to the *extent of decentralization*, which is most often identified as the main reason for failure. A third aspect is the necessity of ‘bundling’ of various kinds of reform. For example, privatization must be accompanied by other allied reforms to develop competitive markets, as explained by Kikeri and Nellis (2002, see quote above). In sum, the details of the organizational arrangements are critical.

A second issue is the ‘fit’ between the design of the decentralized arrangements and variables in its context, which is crucial to the success of any decentralized governance arrangement. Context here is plural: the sector, the pre-decentralization institutional pattern, and most important, the political, economic and socio-cultural characteristics of the locality. The latter can vary on many parameters, of which a large number are relevant to effective functioning of governance structures, as Turner and Hulme (1997) point out.¹¹¹ Not only do these differ between developed and developing countries, but also among developing countries, and the kind of reform

¹¹¹ Turner and Hulme (1997: chapter 2) list country-level environmental elements that they find pertinent and significantly different between developing and developed countries – economic factors such as gross national product, structure of production, the human resources profile, domestic capital, foreign aid and debt, foreign exchange reserves, infrastructure, technology, poverty and inequality and the informal sector. Cultural factors include ethnicity, family and kinship structures, values and norms, gender relations and history. Important demographic factors are population growth rates, age structure, urbanization and migration patterns, and the health profile of the population. Political factors include social class structure, legitimacy of governing regimes, policy scope and capacity, the strength of the state and neo-patrimonial patterns of rule.

must therefore be adequately tailored to the local context.

Authors take two approaches to the question of environmental fit. Some focus on the *creation of conditions* for success of particular kinds of decentralization – for example, Kikeri and Nellis (2002), evident in the quote above – without questioning the desirability of instituting the reform when conditions for success do not exist. This approach embodies the naturalization of a particular governance paradigm – neoliberal in this case – and constructs the need to reshape the context. Others, such as Burki et al (1999), Work (2002), Litvack (1998), point to the need to *tailor reforms to the existing conditions*, perceiving success or failure as residing in the institutional design more than in the characteristics of the local socio-economic, political and cultural context. In either approach, knowledge of the relationship between particular reforms and environmental conditions for its success is essential, but the latter is clearly less presumptive of the inherent merits of any particular governance paradigm, and thereby, (relatively) innocent of ideological imposition. Moreover, as Turner and Hulme (1997) also point out, the design of organizations and processes within them can be directly influenced, or in this case, reshaped, but many environmental factors are outside the control of policy-makers and cannot be directly influenced, particularly in the short or medium term. Therefore the question to ask is not ‘which conditions are necessary for the success of various reforms’, but ‘*what is the relative suitability of different types of reform to the variety of developing contexts*’.

Answers to this question are completely missing in the literature, for the almost-universal approach has been to study the performance of reformed arrangements relative to the previous (more centralized) ones. Studies reviewed above reveal successes and failures of specific institutional configurations in specific locations, but

fail to consider if – and what type of – alternatives would have worked better. In other words, outcomes and effects of decentralization are almost always examined in relation to previous arrangements (before-after studies)¹¹²; but there are no studies that compare the effects of *alternative* institutional designs in or across similar contexts. This is certainly possible, for different types of decentralized arrangements, configured according to the prescriptions of neoliberal and more progressive discourses respectively, have been instituted in many countries for the same functions, in the same locations, for example in forest management and water provision in India (Sundar 2001, Jairath 2003) and water provision in Uganda (Saito 2002). Yet few such comparisons have been undertaken, and the question remains unanswered.

5.2. A FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH

Discursive differences between various kinds of reform indicate that they belong to two generic types or categories, ‘market’ and ‘democratic’, as discussed before. Not only do the different reforms within each type share basic premises, there also appears to be a ‘bundling’ in terms of the necessity to institute a number of them in tandem.¹¹³ The question of context-appropriate reform therefore is, at the first level, essentially a question of the relative suitability of marketization and democratization to specific types of contexts. Also, since contextual fit is key to successful functioning and desired outcomes, the *relative efficacy or success* of the two types would be a good measure of their relative suitability to the context. Therefore, to answer the question of context-appropriate design of decentralized arrangements, a comparative assessment

¹¹² Glenn Pearce-Oroz (2003) compares concurrently operating centralized and decentralized systems for water provision in Honduras.

¹¹³ For example, as Kikeri and Nellis (2002) point out in the passage cited in section 4.1 in this Chapter, privatization has to be necessarily accompanied by ‘removal of entry and exit barriers’, i.e., liberalization, and deregulation.

of the operation and outcomes of the two types of reform in the same locality would be appropriate. A corresponding comparison of the same type of reform in different localities would also add to the understanding of context-appropriateness of the two types.

Sectoral location also makes a difference, and the research was therefore located in a sectoral context where both types of decentralization have been instituted for the performance of the same tasks or functions. The issue of domestic water supply was found appropriate – it is a priority in developing countries, which centralized governance arrangements have failed to address, and decentralization has been undertaken over the last decade. Discursive differences mirroring the larger discussions on decentralization have led to the simultaneous introduction of a variety of reforms, of both marketization and democratization types – liberalization and privatization, devolution to local governments and delegation to user groups, other community groups or NGOs – witness the policies in Uganda (Saito 2002), India (Jairath 2003, GoI 2002a, 2002b, Sundar 2000) and Britain (Howe 2000).

In the next chapter I locate the general research question identified above in the context of decentralization of domestic water provision in India, define the specific research questions, explain the methodological approach and the research design, the selection of cases and the methods used for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH CONTEXT, METHODOLOGY, LOCATION AND DESIGN

The general question of the relative suitability of marketized and democratized local governance is fruitfully explored in this research in the specific context of domestic water provision¹¹⁴ in the global South. This is not only because the lack of access has attained critical proportions but also because the solutions advanced for effective reform accurately mirror the discursive patterns in the wider discussions discussed in the last chapter. Also, both types of governance reforms have been concurrently implemented in some countries, such as in India, providing the opportunity for empirical investigation of their relative effectiveness.

India provided an excellent geographical and policy setting for this research, for the variation in socio-political, economic and cultural characteristics of different sub-national regions. The federal structure of the polity provides a systematic variation in economic, political and administrative terms between its constituent States, though there are cultural and socio-economic variations within States. Most important to this research, reforms in state water provision have included both devolution and liberalization, as described later, and both kinds of reforms are nationally applied. Comparative study of reform efficacy was therefore possible, for the two kinds of reformed arrangements could be compared across diverse locations.

¹¹⁴ In the literature, the reference to drinking water and domestic water are often conflated, with most often, the term ‘drinking water’ being used to indicate ‘domestic’ water, which is generally meant to include water required by households for drinking, cooking and basic ablutions, though sometimes that required for activities like cleaning of clothes or for domestic animals is also included. In this study, the term domestic water is used to denote the water used in the house, minimally for drinking, cooking and basic ablutions, but which could include some other uses.

Below, I discuss the dimensions of the water provision problem, the discursive differences in reform prescriptions and the reform experience across countries, which still leaves the question of context-appropriateness open. I then explain the methodological approach taken in this study to look for answers, and how the location of the study in India provided appropriate cases for examination. By locating the question in the specificities of the water sector, identifying an appropriate methodology for research and exploring the relevant empirics of the country context (sections 1-3), the specific research questions for this study, set out in section 4, could be developed.

A comparative case study approach, which assessed the relative performance of marketized and democratized arrangements in a common location was found most appropriate to investigate the research question, which focused on the relative efficacy, effectiveness and inclusiveness of the two types of reform. Further, assessing the performance of the same type of reform across distinctly different locations provided additional understanding of its appropriateness in different contexts. Three Indian States – Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh – were selected as the contexts for comparative study, as they differed systematically in their political, economic and socio-cultural attributes. The bases for case selection, the characteristics of selected locations, the research design, and the methods used for data collection and analyses are presented in that sequence in sections 4 to 7.

1. THE SECTORAL CONTEXT: DOMESTIC WATER PROVISION, DISCURSIVE REFORMS AND INDICATORS OF IMPROVED GOVERNANCE

Though estimates vary,¹¹⁵ globally at least a billion people still remain without reasonably convenient, safe and dependable supplies of water to meet basic requirements. This includes water required for drinking, cooking and ablutions, which is estimated to be 50 liters per capita per day.¹¹⁶ Lack or scarcity of adequate freshwater is only one of the reasons; lack of safe, regular, dependable and convenient supply systems is more often the prime cause of this deprivation. As climatic variations, competition over water for other uses and contamination from geological, industrial or agricultural sources increase, even people with reliable sources become water-poor.

There is little disagreement on the seriousness and the dimensions of this problem – the real decrease in water availability and increasing difficulties and cost of access. The (natural) human right to the amount of water required for basic needs, at affordable cost, has also been internationally endorsed at least since 1977¹¹⁷, and underpinned diverse efforts by countries and international development communities

¹¹⁵ Estimates of people without adequate and appropriate drinking water and sanitation vary. For example, Gleick (1993: Part 2:C) estimates that nearly 1300 million were without drinking water in 1990, the end of the International Water and Sanitation decade; according to ADB (1999), one-fifth of the people in the world are without access to safe and adequate drinking water; the World Water Forum (2000) notes 1.1 billion without drinking water; the WHO-UNICEF estimated the population without improved water supply as 1.1 billion in 2004.

¹¹⁶ Recommendations based on fundamental health considerations and technological choices typical for moderate levels of economic development put the minimum human requirement for a person each day is to be around 5 liters for drinking and 55 liters for other needs such as cooking, bathing, sanitation. A daily water supply of 300 liters per person, which is about the level of use achieved in many developed countries, is considered an appropriate design standard for modern urban water supply schemes (ADB 1999). Gleick (1996, 1998) suggests a basic water requirement (BWR) of 50 liters per person per day.

¹¹⁷ All international deliberations since the 1977 Mar del Plata United Nations Conference on Water articulate this; and the Dublin Principles include that arrangements for water provision must recognize this right.

to ensure universal access. Huge investments in large-scale production and distribution infrastructure, and management by state bureaucracies with substantial technical expertise since the seventies has not improved the situation, and developing effective strategies has become a priority.¹¹⁸

Most of the people without improved sources¹¹⁹ live in the global south, which is predominantly low-income, but not necessarily water-scarce. About two-thirds are in Asia, and close to half – i.e., half a billion people – are in China and India¹²⁰, where high population densities accentuate the negative health consequences of inadequate or unsafe water for drinking, cooking and ablutions¹²¹, and such basic deprivations obstruct much-needed economic development¹²².

The extent and urgency of the problem has spurred extensive debate on the nature and causes of scarcity and effective reform of water supply systems in developing countries, which mirror the discursive patterns in the larger discourses on decentralization. Among the essential services, domestic water supply in particular has apparently been host to the fundamental flaws of centralized governance and a notable casualty of state provision¹²³. Therefore the issue has have been subject to the same

¹¹⁸ Though water deprivation is more extensive and acute in the South, particularly the lack of access to even the basic minimum required for life, water scarcity is increasingly being felt in regions within countries in the North, for example, in the US, Spain and Italy. Issues of water scarcity and appropriate governance have therefore attracted attention globally.

¹¹⁹ Improved drinking water sources include 'household connection, public standpipe, borehole, protected dug well, protected spring, [and] rainwater collection'. 'Unprotected well, unprotected spring, rivers or ponds, vendor-provided water, tanker or truck water' are considered unimproved sources. 'Bottled water is not considered improved due to limitations in the potential quantity, not quality, of the water' (WHO-UNICEF 2004:4)

¹²⁰ According to a mid-term survey of achievement of the Millenium Development Goals (WHO-UNICEF 2004).

¹²¹ See, for example Stillwaggon (1998), Falkenmark and Lindh (1993), Gleick (1998).

¹²² The developmental issues related to this lack are discussed in FAO (1996), ADB (1999), Mollinga (2000).

¹²³ The problems in State provision include inadequate information on local needs and preferences, unsuitability of cookie-cutter solutions to the diverse contexts and preferences, lack of local identification with and ownership of centrally decided and administered programs and projects, and not

variety of reform prescriptions for decentralized governance as are recommended for improving provision of public services and governance in general, as shown below.

1.1. WATER SCARCITY : DIVERGENT ANALYSES, DIFFERENT PROPOSITIONS

While there is reasonable agreement on the dimensions of the drinking water problem, authors are sharply divided on its nature and causes, the arguments coalescing around two paradigmatic positions. The hegemonic neoliberal view, articulated most persistently by international institutions and authors associated with them, is that treating water as a ‘free’ public good is at the heart of the current problems. Water, being a critical biological need and increasingly scarce resource, has significant economic value. Though geographical variations in water availability and increasing competition over available resources lead to scarcity in some locations, authors in this discourse contend that the supply-demand gaps are equally the result of inadequate incentives for efficient conservation and use. The problem is therefore perceived to be rooted in both natural and institutional circumstances, with the persistence of state-centered approaches, policies and institutional frameworks of the erstwhile ‘surplus’ era being the central issue. In traditional models, it is argued, water was treated as a ‘free’ public good, the state was perceived to be responsible for provision and centralized, bureaucratic allocation and management systems were developed. Such an approach has not only failed in creating universal coverage, but state systems have accumulated huge losses and lack resources to develop further supplies and distribution systems: a problem that also stems from the absence of appropriate pricing

least, the dissipation of or sheer inadequacy of central resources as they are transferred through administrative layers. Decentralized governance that enables involvement of local citizens in decision-making is expected to counter these deficiencies and therefore yield more effective outcomes. See Saleth and Dinar (1999) and Bakker 2003 for a detailed exposition of the issues, and the counter-constructions.

of water and recovery of costs from users.¹²⁴

Articulators of this neoliberal discourse prescribe decentralizing water provision to private entities to enable allocation through market transactions, with a system of tradable water rights and appropriate charges for water use – in essence, treating water as a priced, private commodity instead of a free public good. State responsibilities should be limited to regulation and monitoring, infrastructure development and management must be shifted to the private sector (alone or in partnership arrangements), decision-making professionalized and decentralized to the operating agencies, and stakeholders included in corporate governance processes. Also, in recognition of the interconnected nature of water resources within river basins, ‘integrated water resource management’ (IWRM) approaches must be used to map and manage flows and uses within watersheds and river basins.

The revised neoliberal version of this is communitarian, advocating participation of local governments, private enterprises, users and local civil society organizations in water management systems. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are the privileged governance model, and seen as key to effective provision and sustainable use. The involvement of women is particularly emphasized, as they are in almost all locations responsible for collection and use of domestic water, and therefore have the most detailed understanding of local sources and use patterns. Since they most acutely experience the hardships of inadequate, unreliable and inconvenient access, they are also most likely to look after sources and installed supply systems, and ensure their sustainability.¹²⁵ The involvement of community groups, or marginalized sections

¹²⁴ Among others, Saleth and Dinar (1998, 1999, 2000), Pitman (2002), ADB (1999), FAO (1996), IUCN (2000), WWC (2003), Rosegrant and Biswanger (1994), Briscoe (1997) and Cosgrove and Rijsberman (2000); but see also Bakker (2000).

¹²⁵ See Zwarteveen (1997), Cleaver (1998b), Jackson (1998), WWC (1999), among others.

such as women, is however, fully instrumental, for there is little mention of transferring ownership or property rights to local populations. Ostrom (2000:34) points out that this ill-guided strategy of devolution to user groups lacks theoretical and empirical foundation.

It is one thing to self-organize to create your own property and slowly develop the rules of association that enable a group to benefit from the long-term management of the resource. It is quite something else to have a government tell you that now you have to manage something that the government can no longer handle itself. Especially after you have been told that it is the government's responsibility to do this for you"(Ostrom 2000:34).

In contrast, the more progressive communitarian discourse, articulated by political ecologists and activists, rejects the singular, utilitarian approach to water evident in neoliberal formulations, and questions the tenability of viewing water primarily as an economic good.¹²⁶ For authors in this discourse, its multifaceted existence and importance – ecological, social, political, economic and cultural – and the diverse values it carries in addition to use-values, including symbolic, aesthetic, religious and ethical, invalidates a reductionist conception of water as a primarily economic resource. The very ethicality of the neoliberal, singular conceptualization is questioned by many analysts, as it devalues and/or elides other understandings of water that are central to human existence in many cultures and the construction of different social-cultural identities. In this opposing discourse, water is more than a basic need; it is a common global heritage to which all life – human, plant, animal – has a natural right not only to quantities and kinds that are required biologically or economically, but more pervasively, to water in all its various forms, natural and social. Its commoditization is therefore strongly opposed, as it privileges economic use, buying

¹²⁶ For example, Petrella (2001); Bakker (2003); Barlow and Clarke (2002); Shiva (2002); also illustrated in the cases contained in Donahue and Johnston (1998).

power and ‘technical’ knowledge, and supports ownership and control by those with financial/economic power and techno-managerial expertise. Such control is perceived to reproduce and aggravate social, economic and political disparities and the ecological and environmental devastations that are emblematic of industrialized production. Some (Jairath 2003; Regmi 2003) even object to the very language and concepts used in the dominant formulations, which they observe to be perpetuating the problem of unavailability and distributional inequities.

Authors in this contesting discourse explain the problem of scarcity and lack of access differently. First, scarcity is demonstrated to be a function of socio-economic position, incident more on the poor and marginalized, rather than a natural phenomenon. Second, the roots of the ‘water crisis’ faced by these groups are not seen as primarily natural, material and hydrological, but to lie in the large-scale appropriation of water by the state, its primary allocation to industrialized production, and the extensive environmental alteration in the course of modernization¹²⁷. Scarcity is therefore seen to be socio-historically and discursively constructed within modern social and political relations of production, with the state as primary interlocutor of elite interests. The erosion of customary community control over local resources and lack of ‘voice’ of the socially and politically marginalized in modern governance processes is perceived to be a major part of the problem (Mehta 2001, 2003, 2007; Petrella 2001, Bakker 2003).

Progressive communitarians also suggest decentralization to communities, premised on a locally-differentiated, ecologically situated approach that values universal rights,

¹²⁷ These critics also question the state-centered paradigm of water management, observing it to be equally implicated in the capitalist modernization processes that have degraded the environment.

collective ownership and sustainable use¹²⁸. They propose that resource relationships be reordered for decentralized management based on local knowledge and community needs and practices, with fully participatory and democratic decision-making processes and multi-level networking across watersheds. Authors within this discourse are ambivalent on the role of the state, though some see it as the site for political contestation and progressive change because of its differentiated nature. For others, the local state is as susceptible to capture by local elites, and only governance by universal membership-based user associations can work. Further democratization through measures that enable greater voice and participation by currently marginalized groups are central to this position. Despite these differences, the suggestion in essence is to decentralize political authority, decision-making and control over water to local communities, for management by those directly dependant on local sources and ecologies would lead to conservation and stewardship. This would also resolve the issue of scarcity, which they argue is a product of over-exploitation of water in capitalist modes of production.

Both the dominant and the opposing formulations rest on undeniable realities – the inability of state-run systems to provide universal access; inefficiencies, waste and high costs of such arrangements; large financial losses accumulated by state-run systems of water provision; and lack of resources to expand coverage or maintain/upgrade existing systems. On the other hand, it is equally evident that it is the poor and marginalized in the global south that constitute an overwhelming proportion of those lacking adequate and safe water, and who are generally not

¹²⁸ For example, Petrella (2001) and Shiva (2002), but see also Bakker (2003). There is little advocacy for a state-centered paradigm among these authors – the state is seen as the interlocutor of elite and capital interests and equally implicated in the historical construction of scarcity and ecological degradation. Mostly, attitudes to public/state management are rather ambivalent, though individual positions vary.

connected to public systems (WHO-UNICEF 2004; Gleick 1993, 1998). Proposals for reform fully resonate with those in the larger discourses on decentralizing governance. Though an extensive literature critically re-examines the propositions noted above, to extend, refine or suggest suitable operationalization¹²⁹, the relative merit of different kinds of institutional re-arrangements in specific locations has not been considered. Comparative investigation of the performance of different kinds of reform arrangements for domestic water provision therefore provides an excellent lens to investigate answers to the question of reform efficacy.

Despite the uncertain success of any kind of decentralization, as in other sectors, reforms spanning the gamut of normative institutional propositions have been instituted in many countries, including divestment of public utilities, privatization to national or multinational corporations, devolution to communities, user-groups and/or local governments, and delegation to NGOs or local enterprises. I discuss the empirical literature on these experiences below, to develop a picture of the successes and failures, and the reasons for or conditions under which these emerged.

¹²⁹ Without challenging the theoretical and conceptual framework, Savenije (2001) discusses why water cannot easily be treated as an economic good and Perry et al (1997) raise the difficulty of relegating its allocation to competitive market pricing, in the face of its many roles such as basic human and environmental need, merit good, social and economic resource. Other characteristics such as its fugitive nature, indivisibility, bulkiness, non-substitutability and complex flow patterns cause externalities and high transaction costs that lead to market failures (see Bauer 1997). Arguing the difficulty of establishing well-functioning markets in particular geographical contexts with pre-existing communal arrangements, Trawick (2003) suggests a context-specific composite system incorporating elements of both. Critiquing the effectiveness of urban privatized water supply, Hukka and Katko (2003) argue for partnership arrangements where core operations are retained in the public sector. Identifying problems of equity in reformed arrangements, van Koppen (1998) suggests institutional design changes in devolving water allocation to irrigators, and Meinzen-Dick (1997) and Zwarteveen (1997) argue for extending water rights to women.

1.2. EXPERIENCE OF WATER REFORMS

The nature of water – its flow characteristics, bulky properties and fugitive nature – makes its provision the ideal “natural monopoly” of economic texts. The required infrastructure is costly and specialized, and duplication by potential competitors would be prohibitive. Thus one cannot count on competition of the usual sort to maintain reasonable prices and levels of service. Despite this, in Europe, Kallis and de Groot (2003) report that

“[there has been]...a general trend towards State retreat from the regulation and provision of water, the liberalization and privatization of water services and, more generally, increased emphasis upon market-assigned values (e.g. prices or cost-benefit evaluations) as opposed to political activity in the allocation and management of water and its services.....Economic efficiency is prioritized in private or public utilities and the pricing mechanism is freed from public control, increasingly aiming to recover the full—capital and operational—cost of the service. An increasingly large part of the activities in the urban hydrocycle is subcontracted or financed by private enterprise (e.g. hydraulic infrastructure in Spain). Water utilities are privatized (London), are in the process of being privatized (Athens), or increasingly use market principles in their operation as publicly owned organizations (Amsterdam). There are also plans for the introduction of water-trading markets (Spain and England). (Kallis and de Groot 2003:224-225)

Marketization, particularly through privatization, has also been undertaken across Latin America, in Chile (Bauer 1997), Bolivia (Finnegan 2002, Assies 2003), Columbia, Costa Rica and El Salvador (Haglund and Gomez 2006), Peru (Trawick 2003) and in Guinea in Africa (Clarke et al 2002). Privatization of water services has also been widely applied in the US (see Bel and Warner 2008), and is being initiated in India (Sharma 2005, Urs and Whittell 2009)

Devolution or delegation of responsibility for water supply and management has also been undertaken in countries across Africa – in Honduras (Pierce-Oroz 2003), South

Africa (Wester et al 2003, Wijesekara and Sansom 2003), Malawi (Ferguson and Miulwafe 2004). In Latin America, though privatization is more extensive, devolution has been initiated in some countries, for example in Mexico (Tortajada 2006, Wester et al 2003) and Brazil (Tortajada 2006). Water provision has also been devolved to local governments in India.

The outcomes of privatization of water provision have been almost uniformly discouraging, either in terms of conservation, extending coverage or reducing costs. This is not surprising, for as Kallis and de Groot point out, “given the supremacy of marketization, ‘rational’ in practice translates to ‘cost-beneficial’, and conservation is pursued as far as it produces benefit.” (Kallis and de Groot 2003). Kallis and Coscossis (2001) report increased water use in Athens and Barcelona despite a policy to control demand, for there is an inbuilt incentive for the water utility to expand the system.¹³⁰ Castro et al. (2003) and Bakker (2000), analyzing the cases of privatization in London and Yorkshire respectively, find that it is not an instrument to deal with water scarcity, but a political ideological project *producing* scarcity, as is been contended by those who oppose neoliberal prescriptions. They also show that under the new regulatory regime of London’s privatized water suppliers, both environmental standards and/or social fairness in terms of the affordability of water service for the poor have been sacrificed in the pursuance of profits.

The issues of redistribution, the rising cost of water and externalities of environmental policies such as price-based demand management are major ones that have plagued

¹³⁰ For, as the authors note, water use is an outcome of the way water supply is managed and the incentives available to the private provider. The cost-benefit calculus of reducing wastage is affected by the regulatory regime, subsidies and the profit-focus of the operator. Central to this process is the fact that the market is not a ‘friction-free’ ideal but an institution that is modulated by prevalent regimes of rights and duties, which allows Athens to externalize the cost of increasing water use to the environment and peripheral areas.

privatization, and generated extensive social conflicts in various countries and cities.¹³¹ Howe (2000) reports that in Chile, the agricultural sector and cities had to pay exorbitant prices for added water supplies, when the sudden privatization of water resources led to greater monopolization of water supply by the national hydroelectric generating companies. He also reports that in the UK, there has been 100 percent to 200 percent increase in water charges, and the number of service shutoffs has increased dramatically, raising great concern. Owners and shareholders, however, have been able to appropriate profits: company directors' salaries are much higher than in other utilities, as are their returns from the large numbers of company shares they hold.

Very few instances of success surface in the literature on privatization, but Clarke et al (2002) show that in Guinea, private sector participation benefited all constituents, in spite of a difficult institutional environment. Bauer (1997) finds that in Chile, the privatization of water rights reduced state administration, but attempts to stimulate a free market in water rights have had mixed and uneven results, indicating that setting up water markets is harder and more complicated than it may seem. While such reform has had little positive impact except for private companies, transferring governance models from industrialized to developing countries is even more problematic, as Haglund and Gomez (2006) show in their study of Costa Rica, Columbia and El

¹³¹ In the city of Barcelona, in the so-called water tax revolt, some 80,000 families in the poorer neighbourhoods of the city refused to pay the part of their increased water charges corresponding to a tax for wastewater treatment. The privatization of water supply in Cochabamba, Bolivia, to the multinational Bechtel elicited massive protests and riots till the arrangement was reversed (Finnegan 2002, Assies 2003). The World Bank promotion of privatization in Peru as a solution to the problems commonly afflicting irrigation and water management has led to strong protest among peasant farmers throughout the Andes (Trawick 2003). Howe (2000) reports that in the UK, there has been strong public discontent with the private companies. Fears of enormous tariff increases resulting from privatization of the Delhi water supply, and reduced water unavailability for the poor and marginalized has generated concern and protest in India (Sharma 2005, Urs and Whittel 2009). Bennett (1995, 1998) reports protests in Mexico.

Salvador. There they find that success depends on “pre-existing state structures and social relations in determinate ways” (abstract). Even within the same country, Bakker (2001) points out that the economies of scale required to attract private sector investment only occurs in urban areas, where the vast majority of private sector participation contracts in water and sewerage currently operate, and replicating similar approaches in rural areas involves different technical and institutional challenges. Bakker (2003a) also points out that in both rural and urban areas, privatization redraws the hydro-social landscape.

Devolution of water provision and management to communities and groups, in line to neoliberal prescriptions, does not seem to have delivered better results, though the issues are different. In Honduras Pierce-Oroz (2003) compares the performance of water supply systems that were transferred to municipalities with others that are still centralized. He finds that extent of coverage and rationing was the same, but water treatment was not even across the devolved cases in contrast to the centralized systems. There was also no metering of production, but tariff collections stood at 90% on average. Tariffs were also as regressive as before devolution, and where subsidies existed, they benefited the high-income households most. In South Africa, where water provision has been devolved to local governments and contracting to private or community-based organizations has been permitted, the experience appears to be equally mixed (Wijesekara and Sansom, 2003). Local governments have little capacity, slim resources and inadequate authority, therefore provision suffers on many counts.

Sustainability of installed systems has not improved either. For example, in the Malawi rural piped scheme program studied by Kleeimer (2000), which exemplified

the participatory approach to rural drinking water supply, only the smallest and newest schemes are performing well, but about half the schemes perform poorly, and a third of these are functioning abysmally. Fergusson and Mulwafe (2004) also point out that users were aware that the call for construction and maintenance of infrastructure and other ownership responsibilities to be handed over to villages, user groups, associations and scheme participants, though couched in terms of empowering users, actually represented the government's effort to reduce its responsibilities and expenditures. In their study areas in Malawi, almost all the infrastructure devolved was in a state of near total collapse.

The extent and nature of participation by local actors is mixed, with more situations being less than satisfactory. Wester et al (2003) assessed emerging forums for river basin management in Mexico and South Africa, and concluded that the pace of democratization in both places is slow. In Mexico, the issue is continued government dominance and attempts to include already organized stakeholders in decision-making, while substantive stakeholder representation is lacking. The emphasis on social mobilization and transformation in South Africa is leading to a slower implementation process and struggles over the redistribution of resources. Ferguson and Mulwafe (2004) found that in Malawi, local participation is constrained by the proliferation of participatory bodies set up by different Ministries. They also find that there are limits to the local, for the most acute problems faced by their study communities were not local in origin and therefore not amenable to local solutions. These included pollution of river water and degradation of the watershed, and the floods caused by upstream deforestation.

The same authors (Ferguson and Mulwafe 2004) also point out that despite their

central involvement in water provision in households everywhere, women are not accorded any special role in decision making, but elided in the 'homogenized' perception of the community. In their study cases, where gender was taken into account, women's interests were assumed to be restricted to the domestic sphere, and they were not involved in new decision-making bodies like the proposed Catchment Management Authorities. Even in cases where women are included on committees, their roles are circumscribed.

Tortajada (2006), comparing the devolution in Mexico with that in Turkey and Brazil, observes more encouraging results. Decentralization has resulted in new opportunities for local parties to participate and express their views in all types of activities. But decentralization in the water sector has mostly been in the form of deconcentration, which has led to little change in the problems that plagued central provision. The limited capacity of the municipal governments to handle the responsibilities and ambiguities in laws and regulations is a factor. The transfer of irrigation districts implemented both in Mexico and Turkey are somewhat more successful, with support from the highest political levels, the necessary organizational and financial arrangements, and the will of the formal and informal institutions involved.

Tortajada also sets out the factors required for devolution to succeed as in the irrigation districts – overall support by the central institutions, transparent financial arrangements, appropriate incentives to the farmers and provision of agricultural extension services, technical assistance, attention to legal aspects and training programs. Kleemeier (2000) points out that in Malawi, increasing the stakes of the users through cash contributions and construction of smaller schemes – neither of which was done – would have improved performance.

There are few studies of water projects developed or managed by entire communities in a fully participatory or plebiscitary mode, as progressive communitarians would have. Nevertheless, in the People's Planning processes in Kerala, India, Isaac and Franke (2000) report that water projects have been among the most extensively selected projects, and allocated a major share of the budget. Where women are included in the decision-making and participate substantially, the same pattern was observed, as in four States in India studied by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004)

1.3. SUCCESS, FAILURE AND THE QUESTION OF CONTEXT-APPROPRIATE REFORM

Privatizing water supply has clearly not yielded positive outcomes, in terms of extending coverage and reducing waste or costs in either industrialized or developing contexts, or in extending control of sources and systems to women in the latter.

Liberalized communitarian approaches that involve communities in different kinds of arrangements, however, have had some success. Where participation is more extensive, as in the Kerala case, or where women are substantially involved, greater and more sustained attention to water provision is also observed (Isaac and Franke 2000, Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). This indicates the possibility of improved provision through communitarian approaches, liberalized or more progressive, if the institutional design is appropriate.

The need for appropriate institutional design is also indicated by the observations in the empirical literature about the reasons for failure – inadequate decentralization, particularly in transfer of powers and resources, and lack of adequate attention to participation. Successes have emerged where users are closely involved, there is greater devolution and adequate resources are provided to the local actors. The extent

and nature of participation is not only a function of appropriate design, but also the meshing of reformed arrangements with local practices and preferences. *The question of context-appropriate institutional reform therefore emerges again as the critical issue.*

As in the larger empirical literature on decentralization, there is little attention to appropriate design (see below) and none to the issue of *context-appropriate reform design* in the literature on water provision. Except the comparison of centralized and decentralized systems by Pearce-Oroz (2003), studies have examined outcomes and effects of specific reforms, in ‘before-after’ designs. *The relative effectiveness of different types of decentralized arrangements for water provision has not been investigated as yet*, despite their simultaneous introduction in some locations. By addressing this question, this study can make a beginning towards finding answers.

2. STUDY FRAMEWORK, METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Of the different kinds of reform that comprise the marketization and democratization categories, privatization and partnership approaches for water provision are more extensively implemented and studied¹³². Provision through more progressive kinds of devolution such as to local governments that function in a direct-democratic mode are not common, though water projects are among those that have been implemented through such arrangements. Since privatization has been found to be less than successful, to the extent of being reversed in some instances, (for example in

¹³² See for example, Rossi (2001), Bakker (2003a), Wilder and Lankao (2006), Assies (2003), Wasserman (2001).

Cochabamba, Bolivia)¹³³ it is more useful to focus on the various kinds of communitarian arrangements where some success has been reported. The latter are broadly of two types as discussed before – the neoliberal, which prescribes (less) participatory and partnership arrangements, and the more progressive (even radical), which advocates direct-democratic and deliberative arrangements. Both apparently focus on community involvement, but the respective premises and institutional prescriptions, among other aspects, are substantially different. Assessing the relative performance of these two types – liberalized and devolved systems respectively – yields insights into their context-appropriateness.

The question of which type of reform is most appropriate – and therefore can be expected to best deliver desired outcomes – in any location, in its very formulation, necessitated a comparative approach. A clear understanding of the relative suitability of the two types of reform is obtained by assessing and comparing the functioning of liberalized and devolved arrangements where these have been concurrently implemented, in locations which share the same (or have similar) attributes. Further, investigating the relative performance of each type across locations with different attributes provides additional insight into the question of context-appropriateness.

In this study, I undertake both these kinds of comparisons. The methodological approach, the parameters for comparison and indicators used are discussed in sequence below.

¹³³ See Assies 2003, Sadiq 2002 and Forero 2005, for the experience of water privatization in Bolivia.

2.1. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Considering one type of reformed arrangements for water provision in a locality as a case, a *comparative case study approach* emerged as the most suitable for this research, on a number of considerations set out by Yin (2003). First, and most important, because of the nature of the question, that required an exploration of *how* the reformed arrangements worked and *why* they worked as they did. As Yin explains, *how* and *why* questions are not well answered by survey or archival methods, though the latter readily provide answers to questions of who, what, where, how many and/or how much. Second, the study focused on contemporary events and processes that could not be manipulated as in an experiment. Third, the question focused on the relationships between the functioning of the reformed arrangements and characteristics of its real-life context, and the boundary between the phenomenon and context was unclear. In fact, it was *the intersection of the phenomenon and the context that was a prime focus*. This meant there could be expected to be many variables of interest, only some of which can be expected or listed prior to the research; one aspect of such a study is the expectation of uncovering other variables that affect performance of governance systems. Both for their number and this partially exploratory nature of the research, a survey would have been unsuitable.

A case study approach also enabled the triangulation of evidence by enabling data collection through a variety of methods, including document review, interviews with individuals, focus group discussions, participatory mapping and direct observation; this was the fourth reason for the methodological choice. A fifth was that the research intention was ‘analytical generalization’ i.e., to extend and generalize the findings to theory, and not ‘statistical generalization’ to enumerate frequencies or find how

reforms performed across all locations ('the population'). There is sufficient prior development of theoretical propositions, as discussed before (see section 1.1) to guide data collection and analysis towards the intended 'analytical generalization'. The cases were studied not for their representative nature, but for their distinctive characteristics, to discern the pattern of outcomes in diverse contexts and investigate how they were related to the design of the governance arrangements on one hand, and relevant variables in the context on the other.

An intra-national comparison, particularly in a large country with a federal polity (such as India), where the functioning of the same (or similar) reforms could be studied in different kinds of locations was found most appropriate. Jenkins (2004) identifies a number of reasons that make intra-country comparative study particularly suitable to understanding the effects of context on economic policy and politics, of which the most important is the common political and economic framework that provides "control variables [which] represent a major boon to students of comparative politics who seek to understand and explain the divergent patterns and outcomes that the practice of democracy can produce" (p.3).

2.2. PARAMETERS FOR COMPARISON AND INDICATORS

The two types of reform being studied were compared along three parameters – efficacy, effectiveness and inclusiveness. *Efficacy* refers to the capacity or potential to produce a desired effect under ideal or optimal conditions. In the context of this research, efficacy relates to the capacity of the reformed institutional configuration to achieve the two objectives of effective water supply and inclusive functioning, which are the two other parameters used for comparison. *Effectiveness* refers to the extent to

which a desired outcome is actually produced, under the existing conditions. In practical terms, the distinction between efficacy and effectiveness lies in the difference between how well the reformed institutional architecture is *designed* in relation to the objectives and how well it *performs* under the actual the contextual conditions within which it functions. *Inclusiveness* refers to the extent to which spaces created for marginalized groups in the reformed arrangements are actually used, that is, the extent to which they actually participate. The latter is a product of both context variables as well as the extent to which the reformed organizational arrangements are supportive.

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Efficiency, particularly in terms of cost, often taken to be a key aspect was not included as a parameter for three reasons. The first is a conviction that in developing contexts (such as India), where unacceptable proportions of the population remain without access to the minimum quantity of (safe) water required for survival, efficiency of water systems (in costs, energy consumption or any other dimension) is less of a priority than their effectiveness¹³⁵, although both are important. Secondly, when options are limited or absent as they frequently are in such contexts, arrangements for provision of minimum, life-sustaining quantities of water cannot be subject to considerations of cost or systemic efficiency. A third reason is that

¹³⁴ Though decentralization discourses differ in many ways - in their geographical origins, theoretical underpinnings, objectives, institutional (and organizational) prescriptions for reform, and not least, in the fundamental conception of human nature and her construction as a consumer or citizen – the two objectives of improving water provision and making the governance processes more inclusive are common. The two are valued and constructed differently; in the neoliberal communitarian discourse, participation is valued as an essential instrumentality to improve provision, while in the more progressive discourse, fully-participatory governance constitutes an end in itself, which would in turn produce improvements in public services and local development. Nevertheless, both effectiveness and inclusion are among the prime objectives that are commonly claimed as the *raison d’etre* for decentralization in both discourses and can therefore fruitfully be used for comparing the performance of the two.

¹³⁵ This is because the minimum quantity of water must be ensured for all citizens under any circumstances (universal access), even if under some technological or geographical circumstances the costs of provision are disproportionate to the outputs such as amounts of water being delivered.

assessments of efficiency are confounded by the incomparability of costs of large, centralized bureaucratic systems intended to cover large regions and those of small, local systems that are expected when provision is decentralized to communities¹³⁶. How effective the arrangements are in providing reliable and sustained access is the more pertinent and important question, and therefore, the *effectiveness* of reformed institutional arrangements is an appropriate parameter to assess efficacy of water reforms in developing contexts¹³⁷.

2.2.1. EFFICACY: IMPORTANCE AND INDICATORS

Inadequate decentralization, of either administrative, fiscal or other powers has been found to be one of the most frequent reasons for failure of reformed systems, particularly when the decentralization is to communities, for it compromises the possibilities of any functional gain from decentralization at the outset.¹³⁸ In other words, the extent of decentralization determines *its capacity to achieve desired outcomes*; that is, its *efficacy*. The design of reforms, including the extent to which governance processes are actually decentralized, depends on political-economic factors of the state context which are likely to favor some types and degrees of reform.

¹³⁶ For example, the costs of multipurpose dams from which drinking water is often supplied to cities or large rural regions, would need to be allocated across the many uses and users of the water (such as irrigation, power generation and domestic supply), an exercise which cannot be done with any reasonable accuracy.

¹³⁷ *Effectiveness* of service provision has also arguably been a prime concern in the discussions on service provision in developing contexts, specifically in water and sanitation which are very basic to a humane existence (WHO-UNICEF 2004, Gleick 1996), though issues of cost-recovery and conservation are also highlighted. This is unlike the concern with increasing *efficiency* that is central to the marketization discourses pertaining to developed countries.

¹³⁸ This is clear in the empirical literature summarized in section 1.2. In the case of privatization, there is less scope for 'inadequate' transfers, though the elements of a water provisioning system may be privatized in various combinations (see Bakker 2003). This may also be due to the fact that governments realize substantial monies from 'selling off' state-owned enterprises or utilities to private investors (see Kikeri and Nellis 2002, 2004) whereas they – or sections within them – face reduction of powers and resources in decentralizing to localities.

Three indicators were used to assess the extent of decentralization: which and how many elements of the water provisioning system are decentralized, and to whom the tasks are transferred. It is not assumed that the water supply system would be a piped network, for in developing countries other technologies are also used, as are many agencies at various levels of jurisdiction. Therefore, the list of tasks involved and the relative importance of each in the whole process was necessarily developed during the case studies, with the help of key resource persons, as is explained later in section 5.

In Chapter 1, classifications were developed for the various kinds of agencies/ actors that could be involved in the reformed organizational configurations (Table 1.3) and the degrees of transfer of functions that could be involved (Table 1.4), from a critical review of the conceptual literature. These could be used directly for analyzing the extent of decentralization, by placing the horizontal and vertical distribution of tasks across groups (government, para-statal, local government, community-based, non-governmental and private-commercial) and levels of jurisdiction (locality, district, and State) in a matrix that is also scaled to the degree of transfer (de-concentrated, delegated or devolved). The distance from the central or national government, either vertically or horizontally, represents the extent of decentralization.

2.2.2. EFFECTIVENESS AND ITS INDICATORS

A number of dimensions have been used in the literature to assess water supply systems, including quantity, quality, ease of access, reliability or dependability of the source, and not least, its sustainability. However, other aspects such as the disparities in the availability of water to different groups, who owns or controls the source, whether it is private (household) or shared, and frequency and duration of supply are

also important. From among these, five indicators have been selected for this study, in the light of three important considerations – quantity, equity and access. These are listed below. Quality of water supplied is not included, despite its importance, because of the uncertainties of actual laboratory testing in the field situations. However, whether the users (or other actors) test the water supplied for quality as a part of the operational arrangements, and the perception of changes in potability, are questions explored.

It must be reiterated here that in the literature, the reference to drinking water and domestic water are often conflated, with most often, the term ‘drinking water’ being used to indicate ‘domestic’ water. The former is generally meant to include water required by households for drinking, cooking and basic ablutions, though sometimes that required for activities like cleaning of clothes or for domestic animals is also included, therefore the term ‘domestic water’ is more accurate. *In this study, the term domestic water is used to denote the water used in the house, minimally for drinking, cooking and basic ablutions, but which could include some other uses.* Also, in this study, it is not the performance of the post-reform installed *system of water supply* that is in focus, but the performance of the *reformed governance arrangements* through which they are created and managed.

■ **Change in the per capita availability of water (in liters per capita per day)**

Increase in the quantity of water available from safe sources is a clear indicator, specially at the margins where many remain without assured access to even the minimum required for a dignified existence. Therefore, *the change in the average per capita quantity of water available to households* is taken as the first and most telling indicator. Internationally, the minimum quantity estimated to be necessary for human

existence is 50 liters per person per day, for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene; including other activities or changing the technology of supply raises this minimum substantially (WHO-UNICEF 2004). The WHO standards are however, not binding, and countries can and do fix their own levels.

■ **Change in extent of disparity (also in liters per capita per day or lpcd)**

Averages conceal as much as they reveal, and in a context where every liter of water is important, *equitable* distribution of water from systems developed with public funds is desirable. Also, neoliberal reforms have widely been critiqued for their propensity to increase disparities, and whether such an effect is produced by the reformed arrangements needs to be ascertained. In developing areas, the difference between those with private sources and those fetching water from elsewhere – public standposts, handpumps or wells, ponds rivers and not least, irrigation wells – can be substantial. To assess the extent of change in disparity, the difference of the averages for the two groups is taken, that is, the difference between

- a. Change in per capita availability for those with household connections or sources
- b. Change in per capita availability for those dependant on public or shared sources.

■ **Increase in the number of households with private connections/sources (as a percentage of total households in the local jurisdiction)**

For maximum convenience, it is certainly desirable that all households have independent sources, preferably in the house, but this is not common in most developing locations. It is, however, an important and valid aim; therefore the *percentage increase in the number of household connections in the village after*

reforms is taken as a third indicator of its effectiveness.¹³⁹

■ **Decrease in the number of households outside a convenient radius from a protected public source (as a percentage of total households in the local jurisdiction)**

For those without household connections, the reduction of the distance to their source(s) from the house is an important consideration. For as the literature highlights, fetching water is women's work in most developing countries, and the long distances they have to walk to do so is a major concern. Besides the hardship, the opportunity costs of the time consumed – frequently, hours – is important, and to be judged effective, water supply systems must reduce that. To estimate this, *the change in the percentage of households within an acceptable radius* was taken as another indicator. The maximum radius used for this was fixed in light of the prevailing conditions, norms developed as a part of the governance arrangements, and the local settlement structure.

■ **Decrease in the proportion of households dependant on unprotected sources (as a percentage of total households in the local jurisdiction)**

The proportion of people in the village that still remain without access to safe ('protected') sources, despite the installation of new systems, must be ascertained, for it serves as an indicator of 'coverage'. This is also a measure of inclusion of all households in public provision, an important consideration in relation to the concern about resource capture by the local elite in the decentralization literature.

¹³⁹ This was also a pertinent indicator in the Indian context, for the liberalized system (Sector Reform-Swajaldhara) is designed for the provision of piped supply.

2.2.3. INDICATORS OF INCLUSION

The objective of increasing citizen participation in local governance, in practice translates into enabling the inclusion of groups marginalized by the pre-reform arrangements. For others already figure in some way in the existing set-up, formally or informally, legitimately or otherwise, or have access to it. It is segments of the population that remain systemically excluded, such as the poor, the ethnically different and women, and in India, the lower castes, whose presence and participation in governance is an issue. The extent and nature of inclusion of such groups can therefore be used to assess the inclusiveness of reformed arrangements.

Among such groups, women are arguably the largest and also systemically excluded from governance structures and processes (Phillips 1991,1995). Moreover, gender overlies all other identities that vivify societies such as class, caste, income, ethnicity and race, and makes the task of women's inclusion particularly challenging, since multiple identifiers must be taken into account. Therefore, assessing the extent to which their inclusion is enabled by the reformed arrangement is a clear measure of their inclusiveness and a good indicator of the efficacy of the reformed systems. Also, women's participation in the processes of water provision – as in other development projects - has been an objective since the early eighties, and subsequently, their inclusion in larger governance structures have also been in focus.

The understandings of women's marginalization and approaches for its rectification have, however changed over the years, though all views continue to variously

influence and structure development policy and action.¹⁴⁰ In section 2.3 below, I review these positions and discuss how they are mirrored in the ‘women and water’ literature, before identifying the indicators used to assess women’s inclusion in decentralized arrangements for water provision.

2.3. WOMEN’S INCLUSION IN GOVERNANCE

The focus on women’s inclusion in governance structures has emerged from three directions, articulating different understandings of women’s place in society and in development. Within development discourses and practice, there are both instrumental and substantive constructions, which see women’s participation as necessary for the success of development interventions on one hand, and for its intrinsic democratic merit and as a definitional characteristic of development itself on the other. These have been variously influenced by more academic feminist thought, and transformed from ‘women-in-development’ (WID) to ‘gender and development’ (GAD) and empowerment approaches¹⁴¹. The work of feminist political theorists who provide more scholarly analyses of women and governance issues is a third focus.¹⁴² This work provides a deeper understanding of the barriers to women’s inclusion and specific institutional features that have been found supportive of their involvement.

All these inform constructions of women’s roles in reformed arrangements for water

¹⁴⁰ Assessing their inclusion in reformed governance structures is therefore also an assessment of the validity of these approaches.

¹⁴¹ See Beneria (2001) for a succinct review of the shifts. Writings that discuss specific formulations in more detail are reviewed below, and many are also contained in Beneria and Bisnath (2001), who provide a collection of the seminal writings that have structured and described the theoretical, empirical and practical approaches in respect of women, gender and development.

¹⁴² Political theorists include Anne Phillips, Iris Marion Young, Nancy Fraser and Marie Dietz, among others who focus specifically on the inclusion of women in formal political and policy structures (see Phillips 1998 for a collection of writings by these and other authors). Development theorists who focus specifically on emerging governance arrangements are Anne Marie Goetz and Cecile Jackson, among others.

provision, and a review suggests appropriate indicators of inclusiveness for the study.

2.3.1. WID, WAD, GAD AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The trajectory of concerns about women's marginalization in development theory and practice is succinctly traced in Beneria (2001), and other authors offer more extensive discussion.¹⁴³ The issue was initially recognized in terms of their exclusion from the benefits of development interventions, and attention directed towards addressing this, in a 'women-in-development' (WID) approach. This focused on including them in 'beneficiary groups', developing special programs to support economic activity, and directing attention to their needs in other programs as well. Along with this attention in the prevalent 'basic needs approach' to development, their inclusion (or its lack) was also promoted by the emerging call for participation of beneficiaries in development programs, to better align them to with local needs (Palmer 1977, see also Tinker 1990). Women's participation was advocated also as they had a direct and primary stake in basic public services like water, primary education, health and welfare programs that addressed food shortages and poverty (because of their domestic responsibilities) and were therefore more apt to have an interest in the success of such programs. With growing concerns about environmental degradation, the impact on access of rural women to fuel and fodder was noticed; their reliance on ecosystems and their privileged connection with nature was also emphasized by eco-feminists and added to the calls for their inclusion in environmental programs.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ For example, Tinker (1990), Rathberger (1990), Baden and Goetz (1998).

¹⁴⁴ See Nightingale (2006) for a review of the ecofeminist positions. Bina Agarwal suggests that women's connection with the environment, in the context of the Third World, lies both in the greater impact of environmental degradation on women as well as their agency in environmental protection arising from their material reliance on their local natural resources (Agarwal 1992, 2000, 2007).

The WID approach was to support and 'mainstream' women, which was criticized for its de-politicised, instrumental approach and neglect of deeper social structures that perpetuated inequities between men and women. The critiques emerged from more radical, but academic perspectives that rejected donor-led notions of development and viewed transformations of the iniquitous power relations in society, including class and gender, as central to meaningful societal change. The 'women and development' (WAD) analyses, along with increased understanding of women's subordinate position in society as a function of the very definition of masculinity and femininity and relations between men and women in society influenced the shift in development thought from WID to a 'gender and development' (GAD) approach. This recognized women's marginalization as embedded in the deep structures that constructed relations between men and women (Beneria 2001, 2003) and their relative entitlements (Sen 1995), agency and bargaining power (Agarwal 1997). Attention was focused on the need for development interventions to address women's 'strategic' needs along with 'practical' ones (Moser 1989). Increasingly sophisticated theoretical understandings of the social constructions of gender and its pervasive structuring of economic, political and social relations have brought other perspectives to development, and animated subsequent 'empowerment' approaches; the notions of gender and empowerment, however, still remain inadequately applied across development thought and practice (Beneria 2001).

The understanding of women's centrality in development has grown dramatically in the decade or so, with the reduction of inequality increasingly being constructed as intrinsic to any progress (Dreze and Sen 1995). Investigations into their contribution and key roles in supporting globalized production processes as well as the disproportional impact of SAPs and globalization on women have drawn focused

attention (for example, Floro and Schaefer 1998, Cagatay and Ozler 1995). Increased understanding of women's participation in both formal and informal economic processes has challenged existing orthodoxies that posit the importance of markets and globalization to development.¹⁴⁵

Scholarly attention has also been directed on the exclusion of women from politics, government and policy-making – that is, from governance – by feminist-democratic theorists who also articulate the importance of their inclusion. In addition to its intrinsic democratic merit, feminist theorizing, like development discourses on the gains from including women in decision processes, also argues that women can bring important concerns and considerations into policy-making. Two reasons, both essentialist in their formulation and instrumental in their logic, are advanced in these literatures – one, that everywhere, women's domestic experiences provide special insights and a relational, inclusive approach in dealing with important public services (such as in health, childcare, or education), and two, in developing locations, their ecological knowledge, understanding and concern produces an orientation to more sustainable choices.¹⁴⁶ The more substantive position is that women's inclusion is just, democratic and necessary for their empowerment and existence as equal members of society (Phillips 1991, 1995, Fraser 2005).

The issue of women's inclusion in water governance reflects both the instrumental and substantive positions. It is particularly valued and now widely advocated as a means to

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, the collection of papers in Kudva and Beneria (eds) 2005 and Sen 1999.

¹⁴⁶ Women's association with sustainable development and their greater ecological sensitivity has been widely discussed both theoretically within eco-feminism and empirically in developmental literature. (see, for eg, Sandilands 1999; Agarwal 1999; Dietrich 1999; Braidotti et al., 1995, Mies and Shiva 1993). Inclusion of issues from the 'private' realm and the possibilities of changing the nature of governance is discussed in the feminist explorations on politics and democracy. (see for example, Phillips 1991, 1995; also 1998 for a collection of key writings)

improve management and sustainability of installed water supply and irrigation systems (van Wijk 1985, 1998; Narayan 1995, Cleaver 1998a, 1998b; Jackson 1998, WWC 1999). Alongside, attention has also been drawn to their claims, as community members, to water rights that also enable their engagement in productive activities (Zwarteveen 1997, van Koppen 1998).

Despite such diverse attention, women's representation in formal governance structures remained near absent across countries and cultures till the nineties. Governance reforms in many countries in the last decade have paid particular attention to this marginalization and included spaces for women, increasing their presence (UNDP 2000, UNRISD 2005, WEDO 2003)¹⁴⁷ though in most instances this remains to be translated into active participation in decision-making. The varying patterns of participation observed across locations, however, underscores the importance of appropriate institutional design and contextual fit, for they are unexplained by differences in individual attributes such as educational and employment status. The explanation is found in institutional variables such as socio-cultural and political differences, and variations in the electoral systems, which appear to have a greater effect on women's representation, particularly at the local level. These and other supportive institutional features have been identified in the political literature, which offers a deeper understanding of the barriers to women's involvement in governance.

¹⁴⁷ The average presence of women in national legislatures remained at about 9% till 1995. A wave of legal and institutional reforms in the nineties to increase the proportion of women in national legislatures and local governments has raised this average to about 16% and 15% respectively. In India, one-third of the elected positions in local government are reserved for women since 1992, but no such provision exists for State and National legislatures. Only 16 countries have 30% or more women in national legislatures, and a similar proportion is observed in local governments only in countries that allocate a quota of local government constituencies for women contestants like India, Uganda, France and Bolivia. (UNRISD 2005, WEDO 2003, UNDP 2000a).

2.3.2. BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT

In the political literature, the reasons for women's exclusion are identified as relating to the gendered separation between the 'public' sphere of economic and political life, and the domestic, 'private' sphere of the household. (Phillips 1991; Okin 1991; Pateman 1989; Mansbridge 1991; Dietz 1987). The gendered distribution of labor almost everywhere assigns reproductive, productive and nurturing responsibilities within the family and the household to women, and economic and political work in the 'public' domain to men.¹⁴⁸ Entrenched in political theory and practice, this assumption is institutionalized even in democratic governance systems that, while purporting to be based on 'universal' ideas of civic equality of right-bearing individuals, are actually structured around a *male* norm, usually males of the majority or dominant groups (Pateman, 1983,1989; Eisenstein 1989, Phillips 1991).¹⁴⁹

In addition, women's traditional relegation to the domestic sphere has socialized them against public politics, encumbered them with domestic responsibilities, prevented public work that leads to political careers, and precluded development of skills required in these domains. This is changing, with sharp increases in women's participation in the labour force and at all levels in industry and public service, though

¹⁴⁸ While the boundaries between public and private have shifted with the emergence of the modern industrial economy and the attendant liberal-democratic political framework, the private-household domain continues to remain excluded by a 'double separation', from both the public-political and the public-social, which encompassed the social and economic activity of consenting men (Pateman 1989, also Arendt 1958, cited in Phillips 1991: 29).

¹⁴⁹ The contemporary idea of citizenship accords all individuals the same status as political peers, but in its interpretation of sameness, it transcends particularity and difference to focus on commonality and uniform application of laws and rules. This idea of a transcendent citizenship and general political will works to exclude those who do not 'fit' the universal (male) norms, such as women; and the strict application of the principle of equal treatment to all in the face of social differences and inequalities has perpetuated their disadvantage (Young, 1989).

their proportion in respect to men in such fields remains very low¹⁵⁰. Active exclusion by male selectorates and others in decision-making positions arising from either competition or gendered socialization continues to be an important barrier to their participation in political structures. The exclusion of issues related to the domestic realm (such as child and elderly care) from public policy concern¹⁵¹ has also handicapped women attempting to breach institutional, material, perceptual and behavioral barriers to their involvement in economic and political arenas outside the home. (Phillips 1991; Rhode 1992; Mohanty 1992; Jain 1996; UNDP 2000a).

While *individual attributes* such as the lack of time, qualifications, experience and connections that result from these larger constructions may explain women's absence from governance to an extent, the persistence of *patriarchal social arrangements and cultural norms* at the local level, which differ across locations in their content and modulate exclusion in context-specific ways emerge as the most significant barrier. This is specially the case in developing countries, where modernization is uneven and traditional norms and practices persist more extensively. This observation not only emerges from all investigations of women's participation¹⁵² but is also self-evident, for it is the underlying social-institutional structures that determine women's access to education, employment and public space, and within which their individual self-efficacies are developed. Measures to counter such barriers have also been explored, and efforts made to increase the involvement of women in formal governance processes. I discuss these propositions and experiences below.

¹⁵⁰ Except in service professions like teaching, nursing, child and senior care and similar fields.

¹⁵¹ Though these exclusions have increasingly been challenged and policy attention pulled to such issues in the advanced economies (see, as one example, discussions on childcare policy in US in Warner (ed., 2006), this is not often the case in developing countries, though specific issues such as dowry-related violence, child-mortality and other issues have attracted policy attention.

¹⁵² All studies relating to women's experience in society contain such accounts, including reviews by the international organizations such as UNDP (2000a) and UNRISD (2005) and academics and researchers (see Kapadia 2002).

2.3.3. WOMEN'S INCLUSION: INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES

Authors such as Phillips, who argues that universal suffrage and representative government are valuable mechanisms for democratic inclusion, particularly where democracy is relatively new, have identified institutional mechanisms that counter various barriers and enable inclusion. Phillips advocacy of representation, for example, must be augmented with measures that ensure the presence and voice of all social groups and fleshed out with direct-democratic decision-making and measures for greater accountability (Phillips 1991). Time and location of public processes, and the reallocation of domestic/caring work become critical variables in making this possible. Affirmative mechanisms such as quotas or proportional representation are also particularly important, though they must be treated as *transitional measures* towards 'a world in which gender should become less relevant and the abstractions of humanity more meaningful...' (Phillips, 1991:7). Young (1989, 2000) suggests that the presence and role of marginalized and oppressed groups must be guaranteed, demonstrable inclusion of their views in decisions must be obligated, and veto power provided over policies that affect them directly¹⁵³, through legal-formal institutional mechanisms. Also, women's self-organization needs to be publicly supported, to make their participation effective in both representative and plenary bodies.

In empirical investigation, institutional differences in the electoral system have proved to be a predictor of differences in women's presence in elected bodies, with various kinds of proportional representation, mandated quotas of women-only constituencies, quotas in party lists and multi-member constituencies being visibly advantageous over single-member constituencies with first-past-the-post systems. The experience of

¹⁵³ This last is problematic for Phillips (1991)

reforms that alter the design of electoral and governance processes, which are specific to countries and localities, present these as significant factors that have sharply affected the presence and involvement of women in governance (WEDO 2003).

The degree of political egalitarianism in the context has also been found to be important, and the effect of socio-economic conditions and dominant religion insignificant (Valance 1979; Norris 1985; and Sapiro 1981 on religion). However, Phillips has convincingly argued that economic equality is instrumental and necessary for meaningful political equality. (Phillips, 1999), and more recently, Fraser (2005) has argued that recognition, redistribution, and representation are all equally important and indivisibly linked. Educational levels and employment rates appear to be unrelated to the pattern of women's participation across countries but local political mobilization and educating women to critically reflect on their situation and act together to overcome barriers are factors that successfully increase women's involvement (Sapiro 1981, Niranjana 2002).

2.3.4. RESEARCHING WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT: APPROACH AND INDICATORS

The theoretical and empirical literature on women's inclusion in governance provided a number of methodological indications for this study. These relate to (a) defining the object of study, (b) delineating case boundaries and identifying the structures and process that need to be studied and (c) the variables that are particularly relevant to women's participation.

The literature indicates that in investigating women's inclusion in structures and processes for the provision of domestic water, as in this study, attention cannot be

restricted to *formal governance arrangements*, but the reasons for the observed patterns must be explored in other organizational and private domains, such as their *participation in civic or community organizations* and their *household responsibilities and roles*. This is because inequalities of men and women in the worlds of politics, work and the household are demonstrably and inextricably related in causal cycles, and therefore cannot be understood or interpreted in isolation. (Sapiro 1981; Okin 1991)¹⁵⁴

Diamond and Hartsock (1981) suggest that *finely dissecting the process of (state) policy-making and implementation through and across the variegated structure* can expose how gender (or class, race, or caste) hierarchies shape each step, and exclude particular groups or interests. For in addition to being closely inter-related and mutually constitutive, none of the three worlds (politics, work and the household) are undifferentiated in their structure or singular in their embodiment of ‘patriarchal’ notions or gendered interests.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, these patterns differ across locations – and sometimes, across communities in the same location (Okin 1991) – and thereby alter mechanisms of women’s exclusion and inclusion in different ways. These differences then become important factors in comparing women’s participation across locations.

¹⁵⁴ However, feminists do not deny the concept or value of privacy in human life nor that *some* distinctions need to be made between public and domestic spheres. But Okin notes, from cross-cultural studies, that what is private and the value of privacy differs from one society to another, though none have been found that do not value privacy of some sort. (Okin 1999: Notes, 1).

¹⁵⁵ For example, the public-political realm, embodied in the state, is diverse, divided, contradictory, and variegated. Contemporary post-modern, Foucauldian understandings of the loci of power, suggest it operates relationally, in a capillary fashion from below; and the ‘state’ is revealed as an overall effect of these relations rather than a coherent agent of particular groups. Attention has shifted from the intentionality of the state to its differentiated techniques and apparatuses of regulation visible in the discourses of ‘governmentality’; to how ‘localized and specific mechanisms and technologies of power ... get annexed and appropriated to more global forms of domination’ (Pringle and Watson 1998: 206). The state is a ‘series of arenas’ or a plurality of discursive forums, which does not necessarily act to preserve patriarchal or capitalist relations, nor can that be assumed to be its ‘purpose’ (Yeatman, 1990). However, this does not reduce its importance as an analytical construct or site/object of struggle, the need is to focus on particular institutions, its specific histories and relationships with other parts of the structure, and acknowledge historical, cultural and locational specificities.

Thus theoretical and empirical literature on the dynamics of women's exclusion from governance reaffirms that investigating women's participation in reformed arrangements is an excellent way to gauge the context-appropriateness of reforms, in addition to being an important question in itself. Also, the adoption of a comparative case study approach appears most suitable, for while Diamond and Hartsock's suggestion for intricate policy analysis can expose gender exclusion, only comparative study (of similar policy structures or processes across dissimilar contexts or different structure and process across similar contexts) can reliably identify enabling and disabling features. In other words, while studying one case can reveal the limitations (or capacities) of a governance structure and process, to understand if alternative arrangements could be more efficacious in the same context requires comparative analysis.

Methodologically, the investigation not only calls for attention to legal institutional configurations of the political-administrative system but also customary and statutory institutional characteristics of the private and civil spheres. Also, to study the appropriateness of reformed institutional structures, tracing the *processes* – policy making and planning, implementation, and administration – that constitute governance, and investigating the organizational frameworks within which they operate (in any location – state, market, civil society or household) is more appropriate than an *a priori* focus on a specific organization, for example, the local government. Such an approach precludes methodological pre-determination of the study.

2.3.5. INDICATORS OF INCLUSIVENESS

From these understandings of the dynamics of women's inclusion, three indicators

were identified to assess the inclusiveness of reformed governance systems, as below.

■ **Extent and type of spaces statutorily provided for women.**

The inclusiveness of the reformed institutional architecture; that is, its efficacy (or potential) to bring women into the process is the first question in relation to women's participation. In operational terms, this translates into assessing to what extent and what kinds of spaces have been created in the organizational structures and procedures for women. This can be determined from the statutory provisions made for them in the reformed design, such as *the proportion of organizational positions earmarked for women*, which therefore becomes the first indicator of reform efficacy. But the more important question, of the *kind* of spaces created – for example, whether and how central they are in the decision-making processes – is less easily transformed into a measurable indicator for use in comparing across reformed systems. A first-level assessment can however, be made by disaggregating such provisions, into those for key decision-making structures (such as executive committees) and for other, more general inclusion, such as in the general body. *The proportion of positions that are earmarked for women in key decision-making structures* is therefore another indicator.

■ **Proportion of these spaces actually occupied**

The second question pertaining to women's involvement is the extent to which women actually occupy the spaces made available. In view of the many hurdles discussed above, that almost universally deter women from participation in public affairs, the full utilization of spaces provided cannot be assumed. *The proportion of spaces actually occupied in relation to that provided* indicates the actual extent to which women are present in the structure. This indicator can be applied to the various kinds of positions. If the earmarked positions are not fully occupied, the reasons could lie in

disabling features of the institutional arrangements or the local circumstances. This can also be researched, but is not useful for quantitative comparison, for in transforming it into a measurable indicator, much of the detail and intricacies of the interaction between the institutional arrangements and the context would be lost.

■ **Proportion of opportunities actually used, from the total available**

The third, and more important question is of the extent to which women actually use the spaces they occupy, by participating at meetings, taking part in the proceedings and discussions and undertaking executive or managerial responsibilities. In a general context of women's customary exclusion, inhibiting social norms and the demands of their domestic responsibilities and income earning imperatives, even attendance at meetings is an issue. The proportion of organizational meetings they even attend must therefore be included as an indicator. For comparison, a consolidated proportion is used – the *proportion of the total opportunities for participation that are used*. The 'total opportunities for participation' is the product of the number of meetings held and the number of women members, and the 'opportunities used' is the product of the total meetings attended by all members and the number of members. This is in the nature of weighted averages, to account for the different number of meetings held in different organizational entities and the differences in the numbers of women members. Again, this indicator can be used to gauge levels of attendance in different kinds of meetings, for example in the executive and general bodies.

One dimension that was particularly important in the analyses was to understand women's patterns of participation *in relation to that of their male cohorts*. This is important in gauging if women's (lack of) participation is gendered, or similar to a wider pattern that shapes the involvement of both men and women in local-level

governance processes in similar fashion. Without this comparison, it would be difficult to state if the reformed institutional design is inhospitable to citizen participation in general, or if they are specifically unsupportive of women's participation. Therefore, to assess the extent to which women's levels of participation are a product of gendered circumstances, the pattern of participation of men is also captured, using the same indicators. Beyond mere presence, their actual involvement in proceedings and responsibilities is not compared quantitatively, but explored qualitatively.

3. THE RESEARCH LOCATION AND SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

India emerged as a most suitable location for the study, for a variety of reasons. One was the researcher's familiarity with the country, but the more important considerations were the federal polity, regional economic, political and socio-cultural diversity, and the variety of reforms that have been undertaken. In the last decade, there has been both devolution and liberalization of domestic water provision, and the functioning of the reformed arrangements could be studied in selected locations that varied systematically in political, economic and socio-cultural characteristics.¹⁵⁶ Intra-country comparisons in India have been particularly useful in uncovering State-wise variations in governance and policy outcomes, such as in poverty-alleviation (Kohli 1987), post-reform economic performance (Ahluwalia 2000), political regimes (Harriss 1999) and economic policy making (Kennedy 2004, Sinha 2004). Jenkins (2004) makes a particularly strong case for the utility of intra-country comparative study in India, arguing that the unified economic framework, sustained democratic

¹⁵⁶ The reforms are equally applicable to urban and rural jurisdictions, but this study focused only on rural areas.

polity and the socio-historical, administrative and cultural variation across States makes it eminently suitable for understanding policy and context intersections.

Governance reforms in India, initiated in 1991, have been driven by both neoliberal and communitarian discourses, and included different kinds of initiatives for marketization and democratization. A substantial move was made towards democratization through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts¹⁵⁷(CAAs), which devolved planning powers and responsibilities for a host of public functions to local governments, and mandated the constitution of citizen assemblies at the municipal and sub-municipal levels for local decision-making (see for example Mathew 2000; UNDP 2000; World Bank 2000). More widely, in a process of liberalization, private firms have been permitted in areas that were exclusively in the state sector, such as banking, insurance and infrastructure construction (for example, Bhagwati 1994; Ahluwalia 2000; Jalan 1996). Service provision in particular has been liberalized extensively, with private sector and community participation in areas such as power supply, telecommunications, roads and notably, water provision. A number of administrative reforms have also been instituted, for inclusion of citizen-groups and civil-society organizations in state functioning, and to enable the ‘third sector’ – including user groups, a variety of community-based organizations, and local and non-local NGOs – to take on a number of functions till recently the responsibility of Central or State governments (Sundar 2000; Sarin 1996; Krishnan 2003; Kumar 2002). The extent to which each kind of reform applies to a particular local jurisdiction, as well as the actual institutional-organizational mechanisms and

¹⁵⁷ These two Amendment Acts, enacted in 1992 and 1993, pertain to the devolution of powers to elected local governments in rural and urban areas respectively, and provided the template for state legislation for local government strengthening and functioning. While specification of the powers and functions of local governments were left to the discretion of the state governments – within specified parameters – many details of its structure and functioning were made mandatory and are therefore uniformly incorporated in the state legislation.

processes that have been set in place, however, differ across States (and sometimes, districts within States), since in the federal polity, a number of these subjects are under State jurisdiction.

Water provision has been reformed as a part of these processes, with devolution to local governments and liberalization of State systems of water provision. Contours of the water reforms in India, regional variations along relevant parameters and selection of cases for study are described in the sections below.

3.1. WATER REFORMS IN INDIA: DEVOLUTION AND LIBERALIZATION

Constitutionally, water provision in India is primarily the responsibility of State governments, though the Central government has increasingly been setting major policy, determining approaches and providing substantial funds for infrastructure development since 1985. After 1992, responsibility was however, transferred to the newly strengthened local governments, and subsequently, also to community and user groups through a Sector Reform Program, piloted in 1999 and in 2002 extended as the ‘Swajaldhara’ program to all States¹⁵⁸. These two reform initiatives both reflect the communitarian discourses on local governance, but as clearly, the former is cast in a progressive-communitarian mould and the latter in distinctly neoliberal structures.

Elected local governments were statutorily mandated and given the ‘right to life’¹⁵⁹ for the first time in India, by the Constitution 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts (CAAs).

Emerging as much from a national history of ideas and efforts to develop local self-

¹⁵⁸GoI 1999, 2003; see also Krishnan 2003.

¹⁵⁹ As expressed by Mr. Sivaramakrishnan, ex-Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, GOI, in personal communication. This means they are legally safeguarded against arbitrary dismissal, dissolution or supersession by state governments, who hold powers to legislate on local governance.

governance and decentralize development initiatives as from the international discourses around decentralization, three-tier, elected local governments were instituted compulsorily in rural and urban areas, across all States and Union Territories (UTs) after 1992. In this legislation, both *Panchayats* (rural locals governments) and municipal governments were mandated ‘to function as units of self-government’ and to be endowed with powers, responsibilities and resources for ‘the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice’ and ‘the implementation of schemes that may be entrusted to them’ by superior levels of government (GoI, 1992). In addition, the *Nagarpalika Act* also mandated the constitution of a District Planning Committee (DPC) in every district¹⁶⁰ of the country, to ‘consolidate the plans prepared by the Panchayats and the Municipalities in the district and to prepare a draft development plan for the district as a whole’ (GoI 1992). In a provision that soon brought more than a million women into local governments, one-third of the electoral constituencies at all levels were statutorily earmarked for women.

While these provisions of the Central Acts apply uniformly throughout the country, and provide a skeletal uniformity, various details of the structure and procedures were left to the discretion of the State legislatures, to be specified in their respective Conforming Acts. This has not only resulted in significant variations in the local government structure and functioning across States, but also in the nature and extent of their authority, responsibilities and resources (see Mathew 2000, Pal 2004, Mishra 2008). Water provision was one of the responsibilities devolved to local governments in most States, though resources and most notably, technical personnel were not always transferred.

¹⁶⁰ Districts are sub-state administrative units, which in turn are further subdivided into smaller revenue jurisdictions variously called talukas, mandals or tehsils in different parts of the country. Development ‘blocks’ were constituted in the sixties and seventies under the community development program (CDP), including one or more talukas, for implementation of development projects and programs.

Beginning in 1991, a spate of neoliberal economic reforms including both liberalization and privatization were also implemented in many sectors of the economy.¹⁶¹ Dovetailing with these were subsequent administrative reforms of government departments and the revision of development programs along more business-like principles. The communitarian strand of the liberalization initiatives were directed to increasing the involvement of citizens in local governance, in very 'neoliberal communitarian' approaches. For example, in the Forest Department's program for Joint Forest Management (JFM), forest-dependant village communities have been allowed to manage demarcated forest areas through JFM Committees, and a similar approach has been taken in the participatory Watershed Management program of the Ministry of Rural Development. Various kinds of user committees have also been formed, for example in education, health and irrigation. The application of these reforms and the specific organizational arrangements at the local level, again, varies regionally across States and sometimes, districts. These reforms for citizen involvement, typically include a quota for women in the beneficiary or user groups that are constituted, usually one-third of membership, emulating the provisions in local governments. The pilot Sector Reform Program (SRP) initiated by the Department of Drinking Water Supply (DDWS), of the Central Government's Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) is one of such reforms, initially introduced in selected districts but in 2002 extended to all as Swajaldhara (SP).

The progressive and neoliberal characteristics of the two reforms respectively are

¹⁶¹ Tariff rates were cut, and legislation and policy was put in place to enable private firms to compete with formerly protected government monopolies in, among others, power, air transport, telecommunications, public services provision, banking, media and infrastructure construction and management. Public sector organizations have been restructured or divested to the private sector (Bhattacharya 1999; Bhagwati 1994). Again, while most of these reforms apply to the whole country, in many sectors, States have been free to implement the reforms in different forms and timelines, resulting in different degrees and kinds of restructuring in the local arrangements for provision and distribution of services.

distinctly evident. Though both neoliberal and progressive discourses intersect in the domestic articulations on devolution to local governments, what distinguishes it as a progressive-communitarian type of reform is the *provision for direct-democratic functioning* at the town, village or habitation level. The assembly of all voters in the jurisdiction was constituted as a decision-making assembly (Gram Sabha) by the CAAs, with the elected local government serving as the executive body.¹⁶² The neoliberal underpinnings of the *partnership approaches to citizen participation* (through user committees and the like) adopted in Central and State departmental reform, are clearly evident in the stated objectives of the SRP as also in the institutional design that is mandated. (GoI 1999, 2002)

With governance reforms of these two types, and the variation in institutional arrangements across States (sometimes even districts) structures for ‘multi-channel government’ emerged at the local level, with competing institutional structures coexisting uneasily. (Manor 1999, World Bank 2000, UNDP 2000). The concurrent operation of reforms premised on different discursive formations has sharply surfaced contradictory and competing processes in local governance (Roychoudhury 2002; Patnaik 2001; Bhattacharya 1999). Conflicts have emerged between the legitimacy, functions and domains of local government and the varied types of organizations that have been constituted at the local level, and also between processes of democratic, locally determined development and expert-centered top-down approaches (Manor 2001). This impacts both effectiveness of and participation in the reformed governance structures, for not only are resources and expertise fragmented and selectively channeled, it sets up variations in the kind of spaces and channels for

¹⁶² This is the vision read in the Constitutional provisions, though the allowances made for States to develop locally suitable arrangements to actualize such functioning enabled substantial variations between the vision and the reality. (Misra and Mishra 2000, 2001)

citizen involvement across locations. The latter is further confounded by the variations in locally institutionalized customs and practices which intersect with uniformly overlaid formal institutional arrangements to modulate the involvement of different groups, and these are particularly relevant in shaping the public participation of women and *dalits* (Buch 2000a, b).

3.2. PRE-REFORM MODALITIES AND DISCURSIVE REFORM PRESCRIPTIONS

Nowhere are the contradictions and issues of competing reforms better highlighted than in the instance of domestic water provision. Drinking water provision is a subject of State jurisdiction¹⁶³ and till the last decade, was the responsibility of (variously) State departments of Public Health Engineering, Rural Development and Urban Development. Central assistance and incentives for attention to ‘problem’ areas has been extended through the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Program (later with an urban counterpart), and as a component of other programs such as the Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns, which also included water supply and sewerage projects. While the programs were variously reformulated and grouped in a ‘mission’ mode by the Central Government (the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission) for the rural areas in 1986, the responsibility for domestic water provision for both rural and non-metropolitan areas remained with the State governments.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Functional responsibility and authority for policy-making and legislation functions on ‘subjects’ of governance attention are Constitutionally distributed between the Central and State governments, with a Concurrent List containing subjects on which both are enabled to legislate. The Central governments, however, can develop policy and legislation in State subjects (as was done in the instance of local government reform) if requested/ permitted by a specified proportion of State governments.

¹⁶⁴ Funds for drinking water projects have been provided in state budgets from since the first Five Year Plan; Public Health Engineering Departments were set up for this purpose in all States. Limited effectiveness of this arrangement, with coverage only to readily ‘accessible’ villages and parts of urban areas, eventually led to introduction of the Accelerated Rural (and later, Urban) Water Supply Program by the Central Government in the 4th Five Year Plan, that provided full grants for ‘problem villages’

Reforms in the earlier governance arrangements for domestic water provision in India were undertaken in the context of increasing uncertainty and difficulty in accessing safe water for drinking and other domestic purposes for a large proportion of the households in both urban and rural areas in India. Though the figures vary across surveys, a regression of the various figures obtained shows that in 1990, only about 55% of the households in rural areas and 85% in the urban had access to safe sources of water. Despite the efforts of the National Drinking Water Mission, by 2000 this had improved to 65% in rural areas and 87% in urban (Planning Commission 2002: 31). A survey by the Joint Management Program of the WHO and UNICEF in 2004 reported that overall, 14% of the households in the country still had no access to safe drinking water. (WHO-UNICEF 2004)

Apart from bureaucratic sluggishness and inefficiency in implementing Central and State programs for universal coverage, other reasons for this situation are the degradation and drying up of traditional sources, excess water withdrawal, contamination of ground and surface water sources by pollution, competing demand from other uses, increased seasonal variability in stocks and flows and inequity of access, rather than population increases. An absolute shortage in terms of overall water availability is not the prime issue in India, though there are significant regional

and urban areas; this continues still but now only matches allocations by States. In the attention focussed on the issue during the International Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade, this program was grouped with a number of others under the National Drinking Water and Sanitation Mission in 1986. Fully funded by the GoI, the other programs involve district-based integrated projects, health information, treatment of special problems, appropriate technology to attain sustainable water supply with close intervention of NGOs and community in implementation, in 55 districts with unique problems. Adjunct sub-missions are oriented to eradication of guinea worm, desalination of water, control of fluorosis, removal of excess iron, water conservation and recharge of aquifers. The program design included cost recovery from users to develop ownership, feeling of partnership and self-confidence, O&M by community including appointment of staff and collection of revenue with minimal help from government (except staff training). Communities were expected to assist the government (implementing department) in situation analysis and need assessment, formulating identification reports, concurring with/ modifying said report, assisting in Final Project Report and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of performance.

and temporal variations (Planning Commission 2002, Saleth 2004). Analysts have located the core of the problem in the relative neglect of domestic provision vis-a-vis other uses (primarily irrigation and power generation), misplaced regional-development choices and the accompanying institutional frameworks that have been put in place over the years (Saleth, 2004).

Unanimously, the solutions are seen in reforming institutional arrangements at various levels; but most urgently at the local level, for in-situ water harvesting and aquifer recharge, repair and maintenance of traditional sources and protecting them from pollution, and equitable and sustainable use. But the proposals for institutional reform acutely reflect the discursive differences embedded in neoliberal and progressive views. Among the former are prescriptions for user financing to ensure sustainability of drinking water projects, particularly in the context of the poor resource position of States, with cross-subsidization to offset adverse effects on economically weaker groups (Pushpangadan and Murugan 1998, Saleth 2004). Propositions of the latter kind include providing resources to local governments while ensuring plebiscitary decision-making in Gram Sabhas (GS) as mandated in the constitution or devolving responsibility to democratic community organizations. As explained before¹⁶⁵, both kinds of reforms have been instituted in the nineties.

With devolution of responsibilities for domestic water provision to local governments after 1992 (Pal 2004, Mishra 2008), they are now required to plan and implement measures for extending access to unserved households. The roles of the local government and the State bureaucracy in the planning, implementation and management of the service has been reconfigured by State legislation, but unlike many

¹⁶⁵ In section 1.2 in this Chapter.

other functions devolved, the transfer of the necessary technical personnel from the State organizations¹⁶⁶ has not been undertaken in most States. Despite this, water supply projects are among the top priorities in local government plans, and allocated substantial proportion of the untied funds devolved to local governments. The participation of women in local government functioning remains uneven, though it has improved with time (Buch 2000a, b; Jayal 2006, 2008; GoI 2008).

The Sector Reform (later Swajaldhara) Program of the DDWS, on the other hand, was initiated with the explicit aim of changing ‘the basic premise that provision of safe drinking water is the responsibility of the Government’, promoting perception of water as a ‘socio-economic good’, attracting more funds for repair and rehabilitation of existing systems from users, ensuring the sustainability of the systems and sources, and preserving quality of water through effective monitoring and surveillance (GoI 1999, 2002, 2003). The AWRSP also continues, but has been revised along the same principles. The involvement of women is emphasized in the revised program, because it was ‘more important to them’, but was to be implemented ‘without antagonizing men’ (GoI 1999) as this could undercut program achievements. The program guidelines mandated attention to their needs; developing women-oriented technology; training and certifying women as maintainers/ mechanics, educating them to create ‘demand’ for better sanitation; setting up exclusively women’s *Pani Panchayats* or Village Water Supply Committees (VWSC) or at least ensuring that 50% of the members in such committees were women. However, in reformed arrangements under *Swajaldhara*, there is no specific stipulation for the proportion of women to be included (GoI 2003).¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Public Health Departments or parastatals. As will be described later in the case studies, these have been the most difficult to restructure, even where most other departments have been, such as in Kerala.

¹⁶⁷ There are other Central and State government programs that also address water provision, as well as donor-supported ones, but in terms of coverage and resources, provision by local governments and

3.3. THE SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Since the distinct characteristics of progressive and neoliberal reforms are embodied in the devolution to local governments and liberalization of State systems respectively, the question of the relative suitability of marketization and democratization reforms to different kinds of developing contexts could suitably be investigated in this setting. By comparing the functioning of the institutional architectures for water provision by local governments and in the Sector Reform Program (SRP) in the same location, their relative suitability to that kind of context could be assessed. Moreover, since the same reforms have been applied across States, which vary in the political, economic and socio-cultural characteristics, the functioning of both types of reformed arrangements could be compared across State contexts, which vary systematically on these dimensions. This provided an answer not only to the question of context-appropriateness of local government and SRP arrangements in a specific kind of location, but also provided a picture of their relative suitability to different kinds of contexts.

It was necessary also to define what constituted the ‘local’ context for a reformed governance configuration. The reformed arrangements stretch from the Central Government, which instituted the reforms and provides substantial funds for water provision, to the local government jurisdictions where water is actually provided to households. There are two significant contexts which affect the functioning of the

through the Swajaldhara program are the most significant and applicable country-wide. Drinking water supply projects assisted by multilateral and bilateral donors continue in various locations across many States, channeled through both Central and State governments and including projects in both rural and urban areas. Many have some elements of participation by beneficiaries, though the extent and nature of such participation differs across projects. Local governments have not been enabled to initiate or directly interact with donors for project funding, except in the case of metropolitan bodies though even they have to seek the assent of State governments.

reforms designed and instituted by the Government of India (GoI) - at the State-level, and in the localities where it is expected to deliver desired results, and both are pertinent to their functioning and performance. The *efficacy* of the reforms in terms of its potential to achieve the desired results is determined to a large extent by the State-level transformations of the institutional designs mandated by the GoI. The realization of the potential of the *de-jure* architecture set in place by the State, that is, its *effectiveness* and *inclusiveness* result from the intersection of the designed arrangements and institutional characteristics of the locality, that is, the *emergent* institutional architecture. Both the State and locality are therefore relevant contexts.

What are the important variables in the context that affect governance institutions?

Turner and Hulme (1997) list a large number that are pertinent, as do authors studying women's inclusion in governance structures (see section 2.3). However, for this study, these can fruitfully be grouped as political, economic and socio-cultural. Extent and design of decentralization has been observed to be politically determined (Manor 1999), therefore at the State level, political factors are expected to be the most pertinent. However, at the local level, all three could be expected to affect functioning of governance structures, though with regard to women's inclusion, socio-cultural features have been found to be most influential.

With these considerations, the specific research question(s) for the study were:

What is the relative efficacy, effectiveness and inclusiveness of devolved (Panchayat) and liberalized (Sector Reform-Swajaldhara) arrangements for water provision,

(a) in the same type of context, and

(b) in the three contexts with different degrees of economic, political and social development?

Answers to these could provide indications for reform choices by policy designers, an important objective of this study. While answers to these questions are theoretically important, for application, policy makers in any location require answers to the question of ‘*which type of reform is most suitable (or appropriate) for this specific context?*’ and this can be derived from the findings.

4. CASE SELECTION , STUDY DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

The most logical way to assess the comparative efficacy of devolution and liberalization in different kinds of contexts was to compare how effective and inclusive the respective reformed systems were in different locations in the country. Given that the efficacy of the reformed arrangements was modulated both by the State-level political-economic and administrative characteristics – that led to a different institutional architectures in the States – as well as the village-level circumstances, *the State was clearly the appropriate unit for comparison*. That is, performance of the reformed arrangements had to be compared across States, that differed distinctly and significantly in their economic, political and socio-cultural characteristics. Then, by exploring how these intersected with elements of the reformed institutional architecture in each case, the relationships between reformed institutional arrangements and contextual characteristics could be inferred. This was important, and ultimately, the larger purpose of this research, for the aim was not to just evaluate how the two kinds of reforms work in different States, but to understand why they do so in order to derive generalizable propositions about how suitable the two generic *types* of reform – marketization and democratization – are to different developing locations.

The *case* here is the multi-tiered institutional-organizational structure and processes for water provision in the rural areas, which extends from the State level, through the district and block (or taluka or mandal) levels to the village level. It was decided to focus on *the rural areas*, as the issue is relatively greater, the reforms had changed governance arrangements substantially and had been implanted for a longer duration.¹⁶⁸ In each State, therefore, two cases had to be examined and their performance compared – the ‘devolved case’, that is, the reformed institutional architecture for water provision by rural local governments (Panchayats), and the ‘liberalized case’, that is the reformed institutional arrangements for State water provision under the Sector Reform Pilot– Swajaldhara Program, (SRP-SP) and how both functioned.

The actual functioning of the (de-jure) reformed arrangements instituted by the State at the village level, and the emergent structure and processes, could be understood by studying the (organizational) structures and process(es) through which new water supply projects were developed in the villages through the local government, i.e., the Panchayat (PR), and the Sector Reform (SR) program. Though projects are located in the village or habitation, the decision-making is not restricted to the village, but is spread over organizational structures at the block (or Taluka) and district levels and therefore, in effect, the district becomes the most cogent unit to map the ‘local-level’ emergent structure. While the district is singular, and usually has characteristic political, economic and administrative qualities¹⁶⁹, villages can differ in their socio-

¹⁶⁸ Rural areas in India were directly under State administration, through District Collectors (DC) and district heads of various State departments, while urban areas had functioning municipal governments. Local government reforms therefore changed rural governance substantially. Also, the Sector Reform Pilot was introduced only for rural areas, as the Swajaldhara initially also was, since these were programs of the Ministry of Rural Development. The urban counterpart of Swajaldhara was introduced later through the Ministry of Urban Development.

¹⁶⁹ For districts have been the most significant administrative units since colonial times, and in recent decades have undergone little change;e latter does not however alter the typical characteristics of the

economic and demographic characteristics. Functioning of the reformed arrangements at the village level may therefore differ, and to decipher a pattern – that constitutes the emergent architecture - project processes had to be mapped in a number of villages, for the two kinds of cases respectively. These were therefore embedded *mini-cases, nested within the larger case*. The selection of the study states, and the mini-cases within one selected district in the respective States is explained in the next section, along with the methods used for data collection.

4.1. CRITERIA FOR CASE SELECTION

To select States that differed in a systematic manner in economic, political and social characteristics, the States with both kinds of reforms (Panchayat and SRP-SW) were first ranked by per-capita State GDP (economic development indicator) and State HDI (social development indicator). A few with low, medium and high performance on each were identified, and additional indicators of social, economic and political development such as sex-ratio, literacy level, percentage of people below the poverty line (BPL)¹⁷⁰, per-capita newspaper consumption, voter turnout and other indicators were used, along with descriptive studies of the context, to identify three that differed significantly in their economic, socio-cultural and political conditions. Table 2.1 below lists the indicators and the dimensions represented by each, and Table 2.2 provides the comparative figures for the States and highlights the final selection.

district, though the new ones formed may have over time diverged in developmental and administrative terms.

¹⁷⁰ The 'poverty line' is the income level necessary for survival, fixed by the Planning Commission of India, on the basis of a basket of basic goods and services that are considered necessary for life.

Table 2.1
Indicators of economic, social and political conditions used to select study states

Per capita State GDP	Economic development indicator
State HDI	Social development indicator
% of Popn Below Poverty Line (BPL)	Extent of poverty
% Literacy	Indicator of social development, awareness levels and capacity to deal with formal governance processes;
Difference between male and female literacy (%)	Relative social development of women
Sex-ratio	Indicator of social development and cultural attitudes towards women
GINI Coefficient	Degree of inequality in resource and income levels
Per capita newspaper consumption	Access to and consumption of information, political and general awareness

4.2. SELECTED CASES AND MINI-CASES

The three States finally selected for study were *Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh*, with relative characteristics as shown in Table 2.3 below. The levels of development as evident from the economic, political and social indicators are not only in relation to each other, but also broadly reflect their position among the States in India compared above. The three States also differ in cultural characteristics and each has a distinctive ‘State character’ (also well reflected in the particular districts selected) that have been documented and described by various authors. Ahluwalia’s (2000) analysis of pre- and post-reform rates of growth across States also provides the same picture of relative economic development between the three study States as the indicators in Table 2.3. Harriss’s (1999) analysis of the political development and relative position of upper, middle and lower caste and income groups in various States adds a qualitative picture of the relative political development, lower-caste mobilization and extent of erosion of

caste differentials in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh.

Gujarat is 'industrially advanced', with industrialization spatially distributed across rural and urban areas; "the urban-rural divide does not map directly onto the industrial-agricultural dichotomy"(Jenkins 2004: 10-11). With a diversified economy and workforce, developed capital and financial markets, large expatriate business

Table 2.2
Economic, social and political development indicators of States with both Panchayat reforms and Sector Reform Program*

States	SDP-2000	State HDI rank	% Literacy		Sex-ratio	BPL % (2006-2007)	Per-capita Newspaper consumption	GINI Coefficient (2000)	Voter turnout (average of last 3 national elections)
			M	F					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Andhra Pradesh	2550	10	70.3	50.4	978	8.49	59	0.310	66
Gujarat	3918	6	79.7	57.8	920	2	134	0.288	46
• <i>Surat district</i>			70.3	56.8	835				
Haryana	4025	5	78.5	55.7	861	2	50	0.285	67
Himanchal Pradesh	2556		85.3	67.4	968	2	51	0.298	60
Karnataka	2866	7	76.1	56.9	965	7.85	79	0.321	63
Kerala	2490	1	94.2	87.7	1058	3.61	293	0.320	71
• <i>Kollam district</i>			83.2	78.7	1069				
Madhya Pradesh	1922	12	76.1	50.3	919	29.52	120	0.312	53
• <i>Sehore district</i>			62.7	38.3	909				
Maharashtra	5092	4	86.0	67.0	922	16.18	121	0.345	NA
Orissa	1066	11	75.3	50.5	972	41.04	125	0.292	59
Rajasthan	2225	9	75.7	43.9	921	12.11	119	0.281	51
Tamil Nadu	3141	3	82.4	64.4	987	6.61	124	0.398	62
Uttar Pradesh	1725	13	68.8	42.2	898	24.67	142	0.327	61
West Bengal	2977	8	77.0	59.6	934	18.3	98	0.328	78

* Excluding the north-eastern (Assam) and newly-formed States (Chattisgarh); Data for columns 1,2,5,8 from Gol (2002c); 3,4 from Gol (2001); 6 from Institute of Applied Manpower Research, Year Book 2003; 7 and 9 from www.indiastat.com

Table 2.3
Relative economic, political and social development in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh (from the indicators in Table 2.2).

Relative 'level of development	Gujarat (Surat)	Kerala (Kollam)	Madhya Pradesh (Sehore)
Economic (Per-capita GDP, per-capita number of private companies, % BPL)	High	Moderate	Low
Political (voter turnout, per-capita consumption of newspapers)	Moderate	High	Low
Social (HDI, sex-ratio, M/F literacy, BPL %)	Moderate	High	Low
Other Descriptors	Business acumen, Entrepreneurial, market orientation, civic philanthropy	State-centered, high political engagement	Feudal, poor, socially backward.

communities who maintain strong ties to their native villages, a predilection for innovation and adoption of new technologies, and an investment-promoting bureaucracy, Gujarat has consistently been among the most economically developed States in India.¹⁷¹ Social and human development, on the other hand, has lagged behind (Hirway 2000), and the though the “lower castes”¹⁷² have won political ground in recent decades, the upper-caste political, economic and social dominance remains, through a politics of accommodation (Harriss 1999). Moreover, Gujarat has been ‘a cauldron of political discontent’ for atleast two decades, with violent caste and communal conflicts and till 2001, “high government turnover” (Jenkins 2004:10-11). Contradictions in the development model have surfaced in the extensive displacement and politicization of large-scale projects (Hirway and Goswami 2008, Mosse and

¹⁷¹ Detailed pictures of Gujarat’s economy, development trajectory and other characteristics mentioned here can be found in Hirway (2000), Unni et al (2001), Steefkerk (2001), Bagchi et al (2005), Dholakia (2000, 2007), Mehta (2001), Shah (2005).

¹⁷² According to Harriss’s (1999) categorization of the numerous castes in India as ‘upper’, ‘middle’ and ‘lower’ castes, based on the economic, political and social position of different caste groups.

Gupta 2005, Sangvai 2002). Persistence of traditional patriarchal norms is evident in the highly adverse sex ratio (see Table 2.2) and domestic violence against women (Visaria 2000, Poonacha and Pandey 2000). A (eroding) Gandhian ethic and the presence of a large number of NGOs, which have played significant roles in the development processes in the State, are other distinctive characteristics (Iyengar 2000).

Kerala has been an outlier among Indian States and among developing regions, and a development puzzle, for the high level of social and human development accompanying moderate economic growth¹⁷³; the latter has been the case both prior to and after economic reforms in India (Ahluwalia 2000). Harriss (1999) places Kerala among the States in which lower castes and classes have gained political power, civil society is strong and political mobilization high. Despite the religious and communal diversity, communal violence has been minimal, even during periods of widespread communal tension and violence in other States such as Gujarat; Varshney (2004) attributes this to strong ‘bridging’ type of social capital and secular civic engagement. A strong presence of left-of-center parties, a “peaceful transition to socialism” since the late sixties, widespread unionization and cadre-based political mobilization has eroded feudal and caste inequities and promoted an egalitarian ethos (Krishnaji 2000, Heller 2001, Lieten 2002). Though patriarchal practices of property ownership and transfer – such as in dowry – persist alongside the more egalitarian gender equations (Kodoth 2004; Kodoth and Eappen 2005), women are relatively free of customary restrictions against education, employment and participation in public life.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Dreze and Sen (1995) highlight, describe and analyze this anomaly to develop Sen’s concept of ‘entitlements’ and their role and importance to development.

¹⁷⁴ Details of Kerala’s economic, political and social development, the characteristic civic and political engagement and the introduction of economic reforms and decentralization are also found in Isaac and Franke (2000), Devika (2007), Jeromi (2005), Chaudhuri (2006), Chakraborty (2005), Kannan (2005), Mohanakumar (2002) and Panda (2003).

Madhya Pradesh is among the least economically and socially developed States in India, though the post-reform rate of growth of state GDP has been close to the Indian average (Ahluwalia 2000). Politically, Harriss (1999) classifies it as one of the States where upper caste and class domination has persisted, the shadow of princely rule persists and the politics of accommodation of lower castes has been sketchy. However, because the Scheduled Tribes comprise 22% of the State population, along with 14% of Scheduled Castes, a politics of SC-ST inclusion has emerged in the last decade (Jaffrelot and Zerini-Brotel 2004), though there are few political movements (Jenkins 2004). Administratively, the historical differences inherited from the 72 Princely States from which Madhya Pradesh was formed are still visible in legal statutes and governance practice, and socially and culturally, patriarchal and feudal practices remain entrenched in most parts of the State.¹⁷⁵

In these three selected States with clearly different economic, political, socio-cultural characteristics as discussed, the functioning of the two types of reformed governance arrangements for water provision were studied as two separate cases. For each case, patterns of functioning were mapped in a number of ‘mini-cases’, that is, water supply projects developed in the villages through the reformed arrangements within five years of this research (conducted between 2004-2006). Projects were selected within a cluster of villages in one district of the three States – *Surat* in Gujarat, *Kollam* in Kerala and *Sehore* in Madhya Pradesh. These districts were selected from among the districts where the SR Pilot program had been implemented before it was renamed as Swajaldhara, were not critically water-scarce, and located close to the political-administrative center (the State capital). The latter two considerations were necessary

¹⁷⁵ Details of Madhya Pradesh’s economic, political and social characteristics and development trajectory can also be found in Srivastava et al (2007), Pani (2007), Shah (2005), Shankar (2005), Ghosh (2005) and Gupta (2005).

to ensure that the effect of reforms on water provision was not masked by absolute water scarcity, or political or geographical marginalization; on the other hand, it was expected that if there were district-wise differences in the degree of implementation of reforms, districts close to the State capital are likely to have the best implementation and therefore provide the best example of the reformed arrangements.

The cases in the three States and the respective mini-cases are listed in Table 2.4. As far as possible, projects (mini-cases) located in villages within a single block/taluka

Table 2.4
List of cases and respective mini-cases

State	Case	Taluka	Panchayats	Villages / Hamlets/ Neighborhoods
GUJARAT SURAT district	Local Government (Panchayat) system -- G-PR	Kamrej	Umbhel (single)	Umbhel
			Ladvi	Ladvi
		Chorasi	Bhatia-Lingad	Bhatia
			Vaktana	Vaktana
	Sector Reform- Swajaldhara system - G-SR	Kamrej	Laskana	Laskanai
			Ladvi	Ladvi
Palsana	Tatizaghada	Tatizaghada Vadadla		
KERALA KOLLAM district.	Local Government (Panchayat) system - K-PR	Pathanapuram	Anchal (single)	Mallavattam
			Yeroor (single)	Kanjavel
	Sector Reform - Swajaldhara system - K-SR	Pathanapuram	Anchal (single)	Nilamootil Ambalakonam
			Yeroor (single)	Mayiladumkunnu Puleri
MADHYA PRADESH SEHORE district	Local Government (Panchayat) system -- MP-PR	Sehore	Kharpa	Kharpa
			Lasudiya Dhakad	Lasudiya Dhakad Lasidiya Khas
				Rola
			Sector Reform - Swajaldhara system - MP-SR	Sehore
	Lasudiya Dhakad	Lasudiya Dhakad Lasudiya Khas		
		Lasudiya Khas		
	Rola	Manpura		

were selected, except where sufficient number of projects could not be found for study or access to information was an issue. In Kerala, because of the unusual settlement patterns, large size of Panchayats and villages within them, and the multiple projects developed in each, only two contiguous villages were selected. In Madhya Pradesh, on the other hand, villages were very small, and the jurisdiction of Village Panchayats (that is, the village government) included a number of small villages. To distinguish between the area of a VP and the actual villages within, I refer to the latter as hamlets or habitations. Though the number of villages selected in each State differed, about the same number of projects (4-5 mini-cases) was studied. Annexure II contains the details of study villages and projects.

4.3. CASE STUDY QUESTIONS AND NORMS FOR INDICATORS

Indicators identified in section 2.2 for the three parameters (efficacy, effectiveness and inclusion) were used, but the minimum norms adopted were those set by the GoI (DDWS) or the States, as listed in Table 2.5.

To understand the extent of change from pre-reform arrangements, and successive modulations of the GoI instituted reforms by State-level and then local-level contextual attributes, data was collected to answer the following questions -

1. What was the organizational configuration for domestic water supply before reforms, at the Central and State levels? How did it function and what were the issues in each State?
2. What was/is the reformed institutional architecture specified by the GoI in the case of local governments and sector reforms (including provisions for women/users/ citizen involvement)?

Table 2.5
Parameters, indicators and norms for water provision used in the study.

Parameters	Indicators	Norms or units used	Description
Efficacy	Extent of decentralization	Quantum of functions transferred horizontally and vertically away from Central and State governments.	Calculated on the basis of the list of functions involved in the process and their relative 'weight' assigned by key resource-persons.'
Effectiveness	Per capita availability	Minimum <u>40 lpcd</u>	Set by GoI (DDWS)
	Disparity in per capita availability	Liters per capita per day (lpcd)	Calculated as the difference between the quantities available from household and public sources.
	% popn with household source	As a proportion of the population in the village / hamlet	
	% popn within convenient distance from protected public source	Proportion of population in vill/ hamlet within <u>50 m from source</u>	GoI norm is 200 m, but the Gujarat government specifies 50m.
	% popn dependant on unprotected source	As a proportion of the population in the village/ hamlet	
Inclusion	% of seats reserved for women	As specified by State governments	GoI specifies 33% of the total membership
	% of seats occupied	As observed	
	% of meetings attended (a) In executive committee (b) In general assembly	As a proportion of the 'total opportunities' available in the previous year.	'Total opportunities' was the product of the number of seats statutorily earmarked and number of meetings

3. What were its stated objectives and how were they reflected in the elements of the prescribed structure?
4. What were the State-specific designs and how did they differ from the received design on one hand, and the pre-reform arrangements on the other?
5. What led to the modulations of the received design to the State-specific one?
6. How did the alterations affect the potential of the reformed arrangements either in terms of its effectiveness or women's inclusion in the processes?
7. Post-reform, how were water supply systems developed at the local level, including the organizations and individuals involved and their respective roles and in the process(es)?
8. How did this emergent structure differ from the de-jure structure, and why?

9. To what extent and in what ways were women involved in these processes (participation)?
10. What were the enabling or inhibiting factors or elements either in the institutional arrangements, or in the locality?
11. What was the extent of change in water availability, its distribution and access in the village/habitation after the new project (effectiveness)?

These questions guided the development of the interview schedule and short questionnaires for user surveys.

4.4. METHODS AND TIMELINE OF DATA COLLECTION

Data to build the cases and mini cases was collected during 2004 –2007, using a variety of methods including document review, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions and non-participant observation. The formal governance structure, inter-organizational relationships and prescribed organizational procedures were understood by reviewing government documents. Key informants were identified through a snowball sampling process and pertinent information collected through unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Key informants included State government officers (both administrative, and technical, such as engineers), known authors/ academics working on drinking water issues in the State and staff of reputed State-level NGOs involved in the drinking water sector. This captured additional details of organizational and systemic functioning, including unwritten norms and practices, historical trajectories in domestic water provision in the State, and undocumented information on the reform process. Annexure III contains the people interviewed and Annexure IV the lists of documents used.

For the mini-cases, records or documents pertaining to the project were sourced where possible, and key informants at the district and village level were interviewed. These included elected VP members (men and women), Secretaries or administrators of VPs, State government officers posted at district levels (administrative and technical personnel), and staff of non-governmental organizations in the study villages listed in Table 2.4. At the village/ hamlet levels, data was additionally collected through non-participant observation of some Panchayat and user-group meetings, focus-group discussion, participatory mapping of water sources by users and a small random survey in each village. The survey was to elicit brief information about the respondents' water collection practices and water sources used before and after the new projects were installed, involvement in the institutional processes through which the new system was developed, and their resource contributions (money, labor or other).

Data was collected for this research between May 2004 and August 2007. Preliminary visits to each State were made in mid-2004, pertinent documents collected and some interviews conducted with State officials and other key informants, to identify locations for research and develop the field research design. Field research was conducted over a number of subsequent fieldwork trips lasting from 2-6 weeks. Collection of relevant information from published articles and government documents, and occasionally from short interactions with key informants¹⁷⁶ was continuous during the process of data analysis and preparation of the report.

¹⁷⁶ The research in India was conducted from a primary base location at the Institute of Rural Management in Anand, Gujarat. The frequent seminars, workshops and other consultative occasions provided numerous opportunities for interaction with important key informants from government, NGOs and the academic firmament of the three study States.

5. FRAMEWORK AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS.

Four methods were used to analyze the data and elicit answers to the case study questions (section 4.3). The first was diagramming and graphical analysis to answer questions of ‘what’ changed and by ‘how much’ after the reforms. The second was content analyses of documents and interviews to find answers to the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions. Third, simple mathematical operations such as averaging, finding percentage changes and comparison of means were applied to the quantitative data obtained for the indicators in the mini-cases, to enable comparative analysis across projects, States and types of reform. Lastly, a simple scoring method was applied at the end, using the mean changes on the indicators for effectiveness and participation respectively to develop an overall score of effectiveness and participation for each case. This enabled comparison of effectiveness and participation for the two types of reformed systems (cases) in each State, and the comparison of cases across the three States.

To assess (and understand) the *efficacy* of the reformed arrangements, the extent of decentralization was graphically represented in organizational diagrams, that represented the ensemble of organizations involved and their relationships in the pre-reform, reformed and observed (emergent) governance system in each case, in a common format.¹⁷⁷ Organizational actors involved were categorized as the Central government, State government, Local government, community based organizations (CBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private entities, and the distribution of functions and activities among them was mapped using a list generated

¹⁷⁷ The organizations involved in any configuration – the GoI prescribed design, and the pre-reform, reformed and emergent (observed) structures – were arrayed horizontally by type and vertically by level (national, State, district, taluka and village), along with their functions/ activities/ roles.

at the preliminary fieldwork stage. This list of functions, the constituent activities (or task-responsibilities) and the relative importance of each¹⁷⁸ (functional score) was developed through an iterative discussion with key resource persons in all three States during the initial visit and is given in Table 2.6 (Devolution Score Sheet). The basic list, of tasks/ steps that is typically involved in water provision, which was used to develop these ‘scores’ is appended in Annexure V.

Table 2.6
Devolution Score Sheet: Relative importance of functions, activities and resources in the development of water supply projects

	KINDS OF RESPONSIBILITY	SPECIFIC TASKS	FUNCTIONAL SCORE
1	Policy Framework	Policy framework, & legislation, rules	3
		Program design	4
		Monitoring and evaluation	3
1A	Organizing Community/ User/ Beneficiary Groups	Community organizing	3
2	Planning	Identifying need, deciding on project: Planning	3
		Design decisions – size, location, coverage, etc	4
		Choice of technology	3
3	Resources	Funds	4
		(Technical) Design expertise	3
		Project Management expertise	3
4	Construction Process	Tendering/ contracting	2
		Procuring materials & equipment	2
		Recruiting and managing labor	2
		Supervising construction, monitoring progress	2
		Managing funds, payments	2
5	System Administration	Fixing/ revising tariffs	3
		Collecting tariffs	3
		Operation and maintenance	4
6	Ownership	Ownership	3

¹⁷⁸ The ‘relative importance’ of functions/ resources combines perceptions (of the key resource persons) about the importance of each item in the process, and the extent of authority and responsibility it endows on the agent who performs the function.

Degrees of decentralization in each case could then be derived as the total score for each category of organizations, both vertically as well as horizontally. The earmarking of a percentage of memberships in decision-making bodies for women is the statutory mechanism used to ensure their participation. Therefore by calculating the total the extent of inclusiveness in the reformed arrangements could be assessed. The shift in the distribution of functions/ activities/ roles is represented diagrammatically in the organizational charts by fading out previous arrangements, and graphically by charting the scores for pre-reform, reformed and emergent configurations in each case. Spaces created for women are also indicated in the organizational diagrams and the total provisions as an overall percentage for the case.

To assess the *effectiveness* of the reformed arrangements in each case, mean values of change in the five indicators in each case were derived from those observed in the respective mini-cases. Extent of change in the indicators, as a percentage of the pre-reform level was first compared across the mini-cases (within-case comparisons) to assess if there was a pattern across water-supply projects, before deriving mean values. The same method was used to derive extent of *inclusion* in each case. However, cross-case comparisons required first an aggregation of the indicators for each parameter, and then aggregation across the two parameters, effectiveness and inclusion. For this aggregation, a scoring method was used which is described below, along with the rationales used.

5.1. EFFECTIVENESS AND INCLUSION: A METHOD FOR AGGREGATED COMPARISON

To answer the research questions, a composite measure for the performance of each kind of reform in different locations was necessary, that could provide a basis for comparison and policy decision. Since policy choices are neither a-contextual nor value-neutral, whatever claims might be made to the contrary, the attempt was not to develop an 'objective' set of measures. Instead, the comparison is made on the basis of universally valued objectives, and logic, and both are made explicit.

In this study, five indicators have been used to assess the effectiveness of water supply, and three indicators to assess extent of women's participation, as below:

A. Effectiveness –

1. Increase in per capita availability in the village,
2. Change in the extent of disparity between households dependant on private and public sources.
3. Increase in the number of households with private sources/
connections,
4. Improvement in access to public sources, and
5. Reduction in the number of households dependant on unsafe sources.

B. Participation –

1. Proportion of earmarked seats occupied
2. Proportion of opportunities for participation in executive meetings that are used, relative to men and

3. Proportion of opportunities for participation in assemblies that are used, relative to men.

The question is first, whether all the indicators are of equal value or importance in a policy context, and second, whether effectiveness and participation should be equally valued. I have argued before that efficiency is less relevant than effectiveness in assessing the performance of the arrangements for water provision, particularly in developing situations where access to even small quantities is an issue.¹⁷⁹ For the same reason, I argue that the propensity of the institutional arrangements to increase disparities cannot be assigned the same weight as their capability to improve water availability or access, though it merits more consideration than the question of efficiency. Also, in the context of a publicly provided, essential service, particularly when the provision levels are very close to the minimum required for survival, a wider distribution of moderate benefits is arguably more valuable than substantially greater benefits distributed across much smaller segments of the population. Finally, in the case of essential supplies of domestic water, effective provision cannot be fully discounted on considerations of (non)participation, though the latter certainly must be accorded some weight for the control it accords to users over a critical resource, in addition to its sheer democratic value¹⁸⁰.

¹⁷⁹ This is because the supply of life-sustaining quantities of a natural resource cannot be weighed down by considerations of cost or effort. Though the question of *who* should bear the costs is important and widely debated.

¹⁸⁰ This valuation becomes easy if we consider that given a choice between getting water through a completely non-participatory process and having a participatory process that is not effectively making water available, the first emerged as the better option and the choice of users in almost all locations. The criticality of the resource particularly under circumstances of severely reduced availability largely outweighs other concerns. At the same time, ceding complete control over the supply mechanisms for such a critical resource to others is also a dangerous proposition.

In relation to effectiveness, other considerations such as improvements in quality of water and reliability of supply are also important. The quality dimension is already included as only water supply from 'safe sources' have been considered¹⁸¹. Similarly, the extent of spaces created in the structure for women, in how many organizational components (eg., in Panchayats, its Committees, VWSCs, Beneficiary Committees), and the type and extent of provisions (such as quorum requirements) are also important measures. However, most of these are measures of efficacy – that is, of the potential of the institutional design – rather than actual participation, and since only the latter is being considered here, they have not been included¹⁸².

In view of these considerations, and since per-capita increase in availability, increase in number of households with private connections, improvements in access (i.e., in bringing shared sources closer to users) and reduction in the proportion of the households dependant on unsafe sources are all important but different measures, they have all been accorded equal value in the composite score.¹⁸³ The disparity between those with household connections and those without must also be considered, and accorded atleast the same importance as any of these four from a policy perspective. Ofcourse, increase in the disparity before and after the new system was installed is negatively valued and any decrease positively. In a composite score for effectiveness, therefore, all five indicators are accorded 20% weightage each.

¹⁸¹ Despite the 'safety' of the new sources, cases of contamination during particular seasons have emerged in the study, such as the SR project in Nilamootil in Kerala. This issue requires separate and further investigation and assessment, which has not been included in this study.

¹⁸² The rationale for not considering efficacy is that in making policy, the effects or outcomes are of more interest than a theoretical consideration of efficacy. Moreover, the performance of institutional arrangements is a function of both the efficacy of its design and its appropriateness to the context.

¹⁸³ Without systematic study to ascertain the importance that users and policy-makers accord to these dimensions, there is no particular basis for privileging any aspect over the other. Moreover, in the policy documents all these are stated objectives, with no emphasis on any one; in practice, however, an overriding concern with achieving minimum per-capita availability – without any measures of disparity in distribution – emerged in the interviews with government officers and in the data that was sourced from them.

Similarly, all three indicators used to assess participation are, arguably, equally important, and a composite indicator of participation that combines the three in equal measure is justifiable. Also, in this study, women's participation is assessed in relation to that of men, with the reasoning that this would eliminate the effect of non-gendered factors (such as class or caste considerations) that handicap both men and women.

For an aggregate measure that combines effectiveness and participation in each case, effectiveness is taken to be at least twice as important as participatory functioning. While this valuation is arbitrary to an extent (why not less, equal, or even more important?), it is based on the conclusion from the months of fieldwork and the conversations with users that faced with a choice between an additional 10 litres of water on a base of 40-60 litres (which is the average in most places), and unconstrained opportunities to participate in the decision-making process, almost all marginalized users would choose the former immediately. This is true both of lower-income users for whom participation carries non-negligible opportunity costs in livelihood terms, and for higher-income (typically, also upper caste) women who would have to contravene social norms and do not expect participation to yield any additional benefits. In light of these considerations, both from the perspective of users and policy makers who have broader concerns of equity and coverage, the indicators which are considered, their relative weights and method for assigning and combining performance scores for each is described in Table 2.7. The derived scores are more notional than statistical, but they also include a measure of the quantitative changes that are produced by the reforms.

Table 2.7
Derivation of composite scores for comparison of devolved and liberalized
governance arrangements

Parameter	Indicator	% Change in state average after new project	Performance score = % change / 10	Relative weight	
EFFECTIVENESS	Per capitawater availability	$A = (\text{avg qty after} - \text{avg qty before}) * 100 / \text{avg qty before}$	$A / 10 = A1$	20%	12.5%
	Households with private connection	$B = \text{avg \% after} - \text{avg \% before}$	$B / 10 = B1$	20%	12.5%
	Households <50m from safe pub source	$C = \text{avg \% after} - \text{avg \% before}$	$C / 10 = C1$	20%	12.5%
	Households dependant on unsafe safe sources	$D = (\text{avg \% before} - \text{avg \% after})$	$D / 10 = D1$	20%	12.5%
	Disparity between Hh with pvt conn and hh without	$E = (\text{avg disparity before} - \text{avg disparity after})$	$E / 10 = E1$	20%	12.5%
	TOTAL SCORE FOR EFFECTIVENESS....			EFF= Sum(A1...E1)	100%
PARTICIPATION	Earmarked seats occupied by women	$X = 100 - (\text{State avg \% reserved} - \text{state avg \% occupied})$	$X / 10 = X1$	33.3%	12.5%
	% of meetings in executive body attended by women	$Y = \text{avg \% att by women} - \text{avg \% att by men}$	$Y / 10 = Y1$	33.3%	12.5%
	% of meetings in general body attended by women	$Z = \text{avg \% att by women} - \text{avg \% att by men}$	$Z / 10 = Z1$	33.3%	12.5%
	TOTAL SCORE FOR PARTICIPATION.....			PART= Sum(X1...Z1)	100%
OVERALL COMPOSITE SCORE.....			(0.67 EFF + 0.33 PART)		100%

The operations on the data shown in Table 2.7 enabled three kinds of comparison:

1. Between devolved arrangements in the three States (cases G-PR, K-PR and MP-PR).
2. Between liberalized arrangements in the three States (the cases G-SR, K-SR and MP-SR).
3. Between devolved and liberalized arrangements in each State (G-PR and G-SR, K-PR and K-SR and MP-PR and MP-SR)

Further, from the detailed understanding of the encounters between the governance arrangements and the context at the State and local levels gleaned in the case studies, two kinds of relationships discussed in the literature could be explored – between extent of decentralization and extents of effectiveness and inclusion, and between extent of participation and effectiveness of outcomes.

CHAPTER III

DEVOLUTION: EFFICACY AND DEMOCRACY IN THREE STATES

Local governments in India had existed in different forms and with varying degrees of authority and responsibilities since before the country's independence, but were not Constitutional entities till 1992-1993. In that year, they were vitalized and given Constitutional status as the third layer of government¹⁸⁴ by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. They were vested with a number of service and developmental functions, and the responsibility of “preparing plans for economic development and social justice” for their jurisdictions. The Government of India effected the Amendments, and the State governments were required to enact conforming legislation within one year, and devolve a specified list of functions along with the resources (funds and functionaries) from among those within their own purview. Water provision was among the first functions to be devolved to the rural local governments¹⁸⁵ (Gram Panchayats)¹⁸⁶ in almost all States, though the specific tasks assigned and resources provided differed across States.

In 1990, by official estimates, 45% of the rural population in India did not have access¹⁸⁷ to the specified minimum of 40 lpcd of safe water¹⁸⁸, despite the investments

¹⁸⁴ After the Central (national) and State governments.

¹⁸⁵ Urban local governments (municipalities) already had some service provision functions entrusted to them, including water provision, though they also depended on the State governments to actually develop the systems.

¹⁸⁶ In this report I adopt the practice of referring to the elected local government as ‘Panchayat’, and to its geographical jurisdiction as ‘panchayat’.

¹⁸⁷ Academics and non-governmental organizations engaged with the issue estimated the proportion to be much higher, as many sources enumerated in government surveys were either frequently out of order, dry for many months in the year or due to over-extraction and pollution, yielded contaminated water – and the government agreed (see for example, Planning Commission 2002)

¹⁸⁸ Specified by the Department of Drinking Water Supply, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

and programs of the Central and State governments since the seventies. Devolution of the task to local governments rested on advocacy by researchers and development practitioners alike, and was expected to change this situation rapidly. The question is, to what extent have the reformed arrangements been successful? And how do the gains from devolution differ across the three study States? In this chapter I look for answers to these questions in the three cases of devolved arrangements that were studied in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh (G-PR, K-PR and MP-PR).

The functioning of local governments in India at this time is governed by State legislation and executive orders and intricately linked to that of the local-level offices of various line departments of the State government¹⁸⁹. The case studies therefore have two parts. One examines the changes in the institutional architecture for water provision that have been instituted in each State after devolution, and the efficacy of the designed configuration. This encompasses an ensemble of organizational structure(s) and procedures, which spans vertically from the State to the district and sub-district levels, and horizontally links with State departments, local governments and civil society organizations such as NGOs, CBOs and private firms. Another part examines the processes of development and functioning of water supply projects (the mini-cases) to identify the *emergent* institutional architecture, and assess how effective and inclusive it actually is.

¹⁸⁹ That is because the constitution and powers of local governments are determined ultimately by State legislation, 'local governance' being a 'State' subject in the Constitution of India, which specifies the policy and legislative jurisdiction of the State and national governments in the Seventh Schedule (Bakshi 2005). In addition to separate 'State' and 'Central' lists, there is also a 'Concurrent' list on which both levels of government can act, through a specified process of concurrence. In the 73rd and 74th Amendments on local government existence, constitution and functioning, a list of 29 subjects which may be devolved to local governments (the 'Panchayat list' was added, in the Eleventh Schedule. By this, however, local governments are not endowed with powers to *legislate* on these subjects, but *can only act to the extent that State legislation empowers them to do so*. Because States have the discretion to effect only partial transfers of functions, and have done so, the concerned State line departments continue to exist and work even at local levels, and local government action is closely tied to the field offices of these departments.

In the next section, I discuss the wider context that has shaped the relationships between State and local governments in India, and the design for local governments specified by the GoI in the 1993 Panchayat Act.¹⁹⁰ The efficacy of the design in terms of actually devolving power and reforming existing patterns of governance is also discussed. The cases of water provision through the reformed organizational arrangements after devolution in the three study States are discussed in sections 2, 3 and 4, including the historical roles of local governments in service provision, the pre-reform modalities and status of domestic water provision, and the reformed local government structure in the State. The State-specific variations in the design mandated by the national Act and the dynamics of the State political, economic and bureaucratic context that were implicated are also discussed. Finally, in each case, the emergent structure as discerned from the study of the mini-cases, and the patterns of effectiveness and inclusion are delineated.

The concluding section of this chapter compares the extent and nature of the post-reform shifts in the three States, exploring the apparent reasons for the inter-state variations and the comparative degree of effectiveness and women's inclusion that resulted. The task here was to assess how the different characteristics and dynamics of the three State contexts - at the State and local levels - had respectively modulated the State-designed structure and thereby mediated its performance.

¹⁹⁰ The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is also called the Panchayat Act.

1. DEVOLUTION IN INDIA AND PANCHAYATI RAJ

Though village local governments, called Gram Panchayats (henceforth, GP) as they existed in different states had been involved in water provision to different degrees, their existence itself had been uncertain and uneven across the country. The primary responsibility for local governance, including provision of basic services rested with the State governments, through various line departments, the office of the District Collector and various autonomous organizations such as the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), which implemented rural development programs funded by the Central government. With the devolution of some functions to the Panchayats mandated by the Panchayat Act, water provision was among the first responsibilities to be transferred.

Devolution to local governments in India is attributed to the cumulative effect of a number of forces – the repeated attempts by the Central government since the 60's to constitute community organizations to anchor local development initiatives, the persistent Gandhian vision of self-governed 'village republics' that intermittently animated national discourses, the recommendations of various Committees on local government chaired by well-known votaries of local self-governance, the experience of local government systems instituted in seven States following the Ashok Mehta Committee recommendations in 1977, the need to decentralize sufficient power to the local level to contain the ambitions of regional and local political elites, and not least, the international discourses on decentralization and democratization in the late eighties and nineties.¹⁹¹ The reforms were instituted alongside the other reforms for

¹⁹¹ Kudva (2003), Mishra (2002), Pedersen (2000), Kohli (2002) among others, provide different accounts and analyses of the reasons for and process of reforms in India.

decentralization and liberalization that was initiated in India after 1991, and therefore modulated by the attendant neoliberal discourses on the economy and polity.

That is not to say that the notion of service provision by local governments, as an important constituent of local self-governance, was not indigenous or that local governments did not exist before in India.¹⁹² Villages in almost all parts of the territory that is now India are understood to have historically been self-governed, though the structures were significantly eroded or transformed in the two centuries of British rule. There is evidence of village councils (Panchayats) of elders who enjoyed respect and authority through a combination of religion and tradition, and assemblies (sabhas) of lay citizens, through these structures varied regionally in their form, composition and functions. These bodies were usually responsible for provision of basic services, village administration, policing and adjudication.¹⁹³ The constitution of formal local government structures for initially, municipal administration and later, regional/district administration by the British undermined the authority of these traditional institutions; but like them, the new structures had responsibility for municipal services, among other functions. By the later part of the Independence movement, the vision of self-governed villages with substantial autonomy for local development were a significant part of the discussions on the political and governance structure of Independent India, but by representative local governments in place of hereditary, customary or nominated Panchayats.

Local governments did not finally find place in the Constitution of India except as a

¹⁹² A detailed account of the history of Panchayats in India is given by ISS (2000), Chiriyankandath (2001) and Mishra (2002), which is briefly sketched here.

¹⁹³ Alongside, there were usually other institutions like caste panchayats which governed the social and economic life of different caste-groups, often across a number of villages, and trade guilds which regulated norms and practices within different trades.

desirable vision¹⁹⁴, because of strong objections by the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Constitution, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. It is notable, and pertinent to this study, that his prime objection was that the extreme inequities and entrenched exclusionary practices endemic in rural India would preclude any democracy at that level, and that constituting local governments would only further concentrate the oft-misused power of local elites by enabling them to capture local state authority and resources. This fear is still articulated by many authors in the more recent decentralization literature, as a prime reason why devolution may not be appropriate in all kinds of developing contexts.¹⁹⁵ Rural India is however now arguably heterogeneous and the variation in social, economic and political conditions across locations calls for a more nuanced examination of the consequences of devolution, which remains a normative democratic ideal.

With such deep roots in the nation's political history and philosophy, to categorize the devolution of 1993 as a part of the ongoing neoliberal reforms and the international prescriptions for 'good governance' would be incorrect. This is even more obvious from the Panchayat structure that was articulated in the reform legislation, which was more progressive than neoliberal, as discussed below.

1.1. REFORMED STRUCTURE OF THE PANCHAYAT SYSTEM AND INTER-STATE VARIATIONS

The Panchayat Act mandated the constitution of three-tier local government structures (Panchayats) in the rural areas across the country, specifying a uniform skeletal

¹⁹⁴ They were mentioned in the Constitution of India as one of the 'Directive Principles' of state policy, which did not have an enforceable legal status, though it did influence policy discourses (see Isaac and Franke 2000:17).

¹⁹⁵ A review of these views is provided in Chapter I.

structure that could be detailed by the States according to local conditions. The Act came into effect on 30th April 1993, and all States were required to enact conforming legislation within a year, by 30th April 1994 (ISS 2000). The haste, and the natural reluctance of State governments to disperse some of their powers resulted in often, poorly formulated legislation, the lack of revision of other conflicting legislation that existed, and a minimal devolution of powers.¹⁹⁶ Even for those functions and powers that were devolved, the executive orders necessary for their effectuation were not issued with any alacrity, and though Panchayats were constituted and elections held in most States in 1995, their functioning differed little from the pre-reform situation.

The basic organizational structure for local governments is specified in Article 273 of the Constitution and is shown in Figure 3.1. Three levels of local government were constituted, at the village (Gram), intermediate (Taluka, Mandal or Block) and district¹⁹⁷ (Zilla) levels, with members directly elected from territorial constituencies delineated for the purpose. In the accompanying legislation for urban areas, a District Planning Committee (henceforth, DPC) representing both rural and urban local governments was specified, to amalgamate plans developed successively by the Gram Panchayat (henceforth, GP) and Intermediate Panchayat (henceforth, IP) and develop a comprehensive plan for the district.

Independent State Election Commissions conduct the elections. In addition to the directly elected representatives, Panchayats at the intermediate and district levels

¹⁹⁶ The 'imposition' of local government reforms by the Central government, though 'local governance' is a subject of State jurisdiction in the federal political system in India, meant that many States were reluctant converts, and conforming Acts were assembled in the last few weeks before the 1994 April deadline.

¹⁹⁷ Districts are sub-state revenue and developmental administrative units, also important at which levels for departmental administration. They include urban and rural settlements, except when the urban area is of metropolitan scale and spans a number of districts.

the functions and powers of the assembly are however not defined, though its envisaged role in planning, monitoring, budgeting and social auditing can be undeniably discerned in the legislation (Misra and Mishra 2000). Overall, therefore, it was a mandate to devolve significant planning, administrative and fiscal/ financial powers to Panchayats, and *institute participatory and direct-democratic governance in the village community*.¹⁹⁸

In their conforming legislation¹⁹⁹ States independently specified those details of structure and procedure which were not compulsorily mandated by the Central legislation. Among these were the procedures for election and reservation of the position of GP Chairpersons or Presidents (called Sarpanches); the inclusion of ex-officio members in IPs and DPs; the powers and functions that were to be devolved to different tiers of the Panchayat system; the constitution, functions and powers of the GS; and the composition, membership procedures and functions of the DPC. Two areas left to the discretion of States are particularly important in understanding variations in the arrangements for water provision in the States. One is the constitution, functions and powers of Committees for various functions or tasks. The other is the legal, administrative and organizational arrangements necessary to effectuate the legislated provisions, as well as attendant reforms in the State line departments necessary for effective functioning of the Panchayats. A third area particularly relevant to the inclusion of marginalized groups such as women and dalits²⁰⁰ was the procedures for election of the Chairpersons of the GP, IP and ZP,

¹⁹⁸ The 74th Amendment (Nagarpalika) Act similarly mandates the constitution and operation of Nagar Panchayats, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations for urban areas according to their size, with the same provisions for reserving elected positions for women and dalits. Citizen assemblies in urban areas are constituted and convened at the ward (electoral district) level (see Bakshi 2005)

¹⁹⁹ Many States had existing legislation which they revised to conform to the GoI legislation.

²⁰⁰ Dalits are people belonging to the Scheduled Castes, that is, the lower castes that have been listed in the Indian Constitution for affirmative action.

which was crucial for disabling casteist and exclusionary maneuvers by members more experienced in realpolitik, and precluding their removal from office with ‘no-confidence’ motions.

1.2. RELATIVE EFFICACIES OF DIFFERENTIAL DEVOLUTION

Twenty-nine subjects of State jurisdiction that may be devolved to Panchayats are specified in the Eleventh Schedule, but the discretion allowed to States resulted in tardy transfer of functions, in almost all States.²⁰¹ The issue was not only the natural reluctance of State political leaders and government staff to give away powers and resources but also that there was little clarity on the actual mechanics of devolution. Despite initiating the process, even the Central government had little idea on the next steps, and it was not till 2001 that some clarity on process and specific steps to be taken emerged in the report of the ‘Task Force on Devolution of Powers and Functions upon Panchayati Raj Institutions’ set up by the Ministry of Rural Development (GoI 2001a). The Task force had the experience of the very substantial devolution in Kerala after its 1996 People’s Plan Campaign that kick-started extensive administrative reform to activate Panchayats, and experiments in some other States. The report contained various blueprints for the “manner of doing devolution”, and possible obstacles and strategies to overcome them, and has been the primary referent for devolution in all States (Mishra and Misra 2008).²⁰²

²⁰¹ Kerala was a notable exception, with the State government actively intervening to kick-start local planning and governance by the Panchayats. This is described in more detail in section 3.

²⁰² A detailed account of the slow process of devolution of powers is provided in Mishra and Misra (2008). Briefly, in 2004, the Central Government bifurcated the responsibilities of the MoRD and set up a Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) to focus on devolution, and by organizing the Round Table of the Ministers of Panchayati Raj of all States in 2004, the MoPR has begun to develop a political consensus on devolution among the States. The pace of devolution has varied widely among States in the last decade, and some of the more practical steps towards systematic administrative and legal reform such as ‘Activity Mapping’ of different functions of State departments to identify specific tasks that are appropriate to different tiers of the Panchayat system are only beginning in most. Though many

The situation of incomplete reforms results in wide variation in the institutional set-up for discharge of functions by local governments, including water provision.²⁰³ While the responsibility has been devolved in all the three study States, the distribution of various functions and tasks among the organizations involved, the administrative changes have made to alter the flow of funds and Panchayat control over State government staff engaged in the process varies. The resulting institutional configuration for water provision after devolution in the three States therefore differs, and raises the issue of their relative efficacies. In the next three sections, I map the differences in the reformed arrangements that have emerged in each of the three study States, to assess the extent and pattern of devolution, and then describe how these are further modulated by the socio-economic realities of the respective local contexts to yield particular patterns of effectiveness and participation.

2. PANCHAYATS AND WATER PROVISION IN GUJARAT

Historically, water provision was almost fully the responsibility of Panchayats in the geographical areas now in Gujarat, where they survived British governance reforms to remain more vibrant than the Panchayats in most other States. In the many Princely States in the region not under the direct control of the British, they continued with fairly undisturbed vigor, supported in most cases in their service provision and developmental activities by the rulers. Legally constituted local government bodies

functions have, over the years, been legally entrusted to Panchayats, the transfer of funds and State departmental personnel, which will actually enable the Panchayats to function as units of local self government, have not been done systematically. The jurisprudence that governs the discharge of specific functions of each State department also needs to be amended to be consistent with devolution, and the necessary executive orders for the effectuation of new processes have to be issued.

²⁰³ Details of the extent, characteristics and variations of devolution in all States as has taken place over the years are contained in ISS (2000), Pal (2004) and Alagh et al (2008).

including a Gram Panchayat, a District Panchayat, Mandal and District Local Board existed in most parts of Gujarat even before it became a separate State in 1960. All public works and development schemes were routed through the Gram Panchayat, which held public properties and was allocated a substantial proportion of the local land revenue²⁰⁴. After 1960, a three-tier, elected panchayat structure was constituted, comprising the Gram Panchayat (GP) at the lowest tier, the Taluka Panchayat (TP) as an intermediate tier and the Zilla Parishad (ZP) at the district level, with substantial powers, responsibilities, and resources including a special cadre of Panchayat personnel. A State Panchayat Council of elected leaders and the Gujarat Panchayat Parishad of Zilla Panchayat Presidents at the State level coordinated and advised lower-level Panchayats.

Panchayats in Gujarat had both revenue and development functions, and all tiers had statutory powers to levy different kinds of taxes within their jurisdiction, enabling them to get almost 50% of their total annual income from their own sources. With 100% of land revenue, varying percentages of other taxes and levies (for example, irrigation cess) and 25 % of State revenue earmarked for budgetary allocations, all tiers of the Panchayat system had sufficient resources for substantial infrastructure development and social development initiatives.²⁰⁵ Matching grants were provided from the District Rural Encouragement Fund, and State departments had budget allocations for various rural development programs. Panchayat personnel were recruited and trained by a State-level Panchayat Service Commission, and the

²⁰⁴ The District Village Panchayat Mandal with the district Collector as Chairperson and selected Sarpanches as members supervised the village Panchayats, and the District Local Boards managed by elected representatives had a wide range of functions (such as primary education) and were supported by sufficient resources to undertake them.

²⁰⁵ The per capita income of Village Panchayats in 1987-1988 was Rs.22.52, the highest in the country and far above the incomes of Panchayats in other states like Madhya Pradesh (Rs 0.59), Orissa (Rs. 1.25) and Uttar Pradesh (Rs 0.78) (Sheth 2000).

relationship between the elected members and the official bureaucracy were largely positive and productive. Affirmative provisions like reservation of seats for dalits and Scheduled Tribes²⁰⁶, constitution of Social Justice Committees with a majority of members from the weaker sections of the population and non-lapsing budgetary allocations were other notable features. In sum, vibrant and active Panchayats existed in Gujarat for most of the decades between Independence and the 1994 reforms, and were primary actors in the provision of basic services such as water, primary and sometimes secondary education, construction of village roads and minor irrigation structures, and arbitration and adjudication.²⁰⁷

Institutionalized as the primary structure of representative local governance, with regular elections, visionary leaders and substantial autonomy from State interference, Gram Panchayats functioned with vigor till the mid-seventies, when many powers of elected representatives were transferred to the Chief Executive Officers at the taluka and district levels. Till then, the Panchayat system was, however, dominated by upper castes and elites, with almost no woman or dalit being elected as Sarpanch or President. Subsequently, dalit dissatisfaction with this state of affairs, and caste-based sectional politics by the political parties operating in the State, who aimed at displacing traditionally dominant rural elites, changed this composition. Previously excluded castes, tribal groups and religious minorities gained political power both at the local and State levels.²⁰⁸ The Panchayat system became the primary channel for

²⁰⁶ Like Scheduled Castes (dalits), Scheduled Tribes (adivasis) are indigenous populations listed for special affirmative action in the Constitution of India.

²⁰⁷ This is perhaps not surprising given that significant votaries of local self-government in India like M.K.Gandhi, Balwantrai Mehta and Ashok Mehta were all natives of Gujarat.

²⁰⁸ This was due to the KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslim) strategy of the national Congress party to counter the steady rise of the Hindu right; it substantially altered the power equations between the existing rural elites and the less powerful sections. The political dynamics of this, the changing caste composition of elected members of local government and the effect on the Panchayats attention to developmental tasks has been well described by Ghosh and Kumar (2003).

induction of lower and middle-class leaders into political parties in the 80's. The attention towards the poor and Dalits, and the independent initiatives for local development however, declined, and in the eighties Panchayat legitimacy was steadily eroded, as a result of many powers of the elected members being transferred to government officials. The Gujarat Panchayat Parishad and State Panchayat Council were also sidelined.

The autonomy of the Panchayats was further compromised by the institution of District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) and the District Planning Board (DPB) in the mid-eighties, run primarily by the District Collector and other State officials, and the introduction of Central government and State government programs undermined their initiative for self-devised and self-financed development projects. Water provision was made the responsibility of the Gujarat Water Supply and Sanitation Board (GWSSB) set up in 1979, to plan and construct water supply systems in rural (and urban) areas, which were then to be transferred to Panchayats (or municipalities) for operation and maintenance. Despite this, the strong tradition of local government and relatively successful functioning of the Panchayat system in Gujarat was remarkable in the context of absent or weak systems in most of the States.

2.1. PRE-REFORM MODALITIES AND STATUS OF WATER PROVISION IN GUJARAT

The predominant mode of water provision in rural Gujarat has been through piped water supply systems, from groundwater extracted through tubewells and stored in overhead reservoirs. Public standposts with taps and handpumps in areas where overhead storage was absent or inaccessible have been the main sources for those without household connections. Since its inception the GWSSB has implemented all

State and Central government programs to install water supply systems in rural areas, of which the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) introduced by the Central government in the early 70s eventually became the largest.

The GWSSB initiated, developed, owned, operated and maintained almost all systems, including regional (multi-panchayat) water supply schemes and single-panchayat ones. However, many Panchayats, particularly in south Gujarat, have developed their own systems, or augmented existing ones from their own resources and the philanthropic contributions of village elites, and sometimes with contributions from users in the community. Single-panchayat schemes were transferred to the Gram Panchayats after construction and were owned, operated and maintained by the Gram Panchayat from of their own resources. In effect, though the GWSSB was one of the main organs of the State government that was charged with the responsibility of ensuring domestic water provision in all villages, in single-panchayat systems their role was primarily restricted to construction and major overhaul of supply systems, though they had a greater role in smaller villages with either less income or capabilities or both. The institutional structure and distribution of functions that existed prior to the 1994 local government reforms is shown in Figure 3.2.

In 1991, only 36% of rural households in Gujarat had access to drinking water.²⁰⁹ Rapid coverage was getting increasingly difficult with not just households but whole villages becoming water-poor due to falling ground-water levels, salinity ingress, fluoride contamination or chemical pollution from industries. Though Gujarat is currently seen as 'drought-prone' it was historically not known to have a problem of drinking water availability; the condition emerged with over-exploitation of

²⁰⁹ 87% of urban households had water, with overall coverage in the State about 52% (GoI 1991).

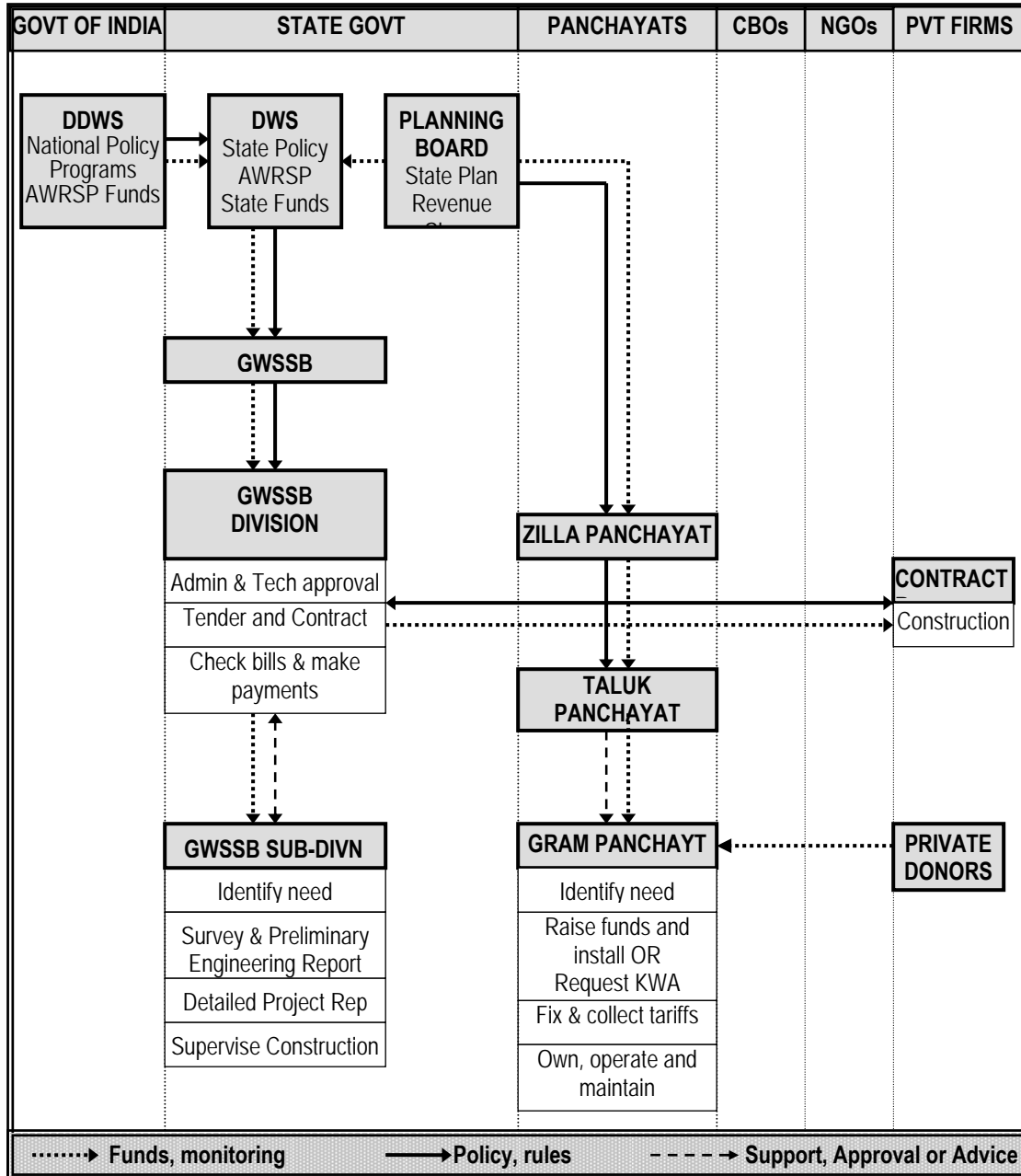


Figure 3.2: Pre-Reform institutional architecture for water provision in Gujarat

groundwater in an already water-deficient State²¹⁰. The State government had undertaken a variety of infrastructure development programs, including a mega-dam

²¹⁰ According to the GWSSB, freshwater availability in Gujarat is only about 1137cu.m, against the all-India average of about 2000 cubic meters, and the distribution is highly uneven with north Gujarat acutely water-deficient.

(the Sardar Sarovar Project) designed to carry river water in open canals from the Narmada river in the south to drought-prone areas in the north. However, say some critics, it is unlikely to actually solve the drinking water crisis in the north, given other issues such as groundwater extraction and the unrealistic arrangements for bulk supply. Yet others have critiqued the content of discourses on water scarcity in the State, as being ‘constructed’ and not a natural situation (Bharwada 2002, Mehta 2001, 2003, 2007). In the early nineties, water provision – both for domestic and agricultural use – had emerged as a volatile and highly politicized issue in the State; it was in these circumstances that the mandate for local government reforms and devolution of functions, including water provision, was introduced by the Central government (Hirway 2005).

2.2. TRAJECTORY OF DEVOLUTION AND (LACK OF) PANCHAYAT REFORMS IN GUJARAT

In 1993-94, Gujarat had a Congress government, as did the country, and the tradition of a strong Panchayat system, therefore the national Panchayat Act created few waves. Since many features mandated by the Act already existed in the Gujarat local government system, the Gujarat Panchayat Act enacted in April 1994 did not introduce many structural changes. The most significant new feature was the reservation of one-third of the seats for women and direct election of members to all three tiers as mandated by the GoI. Seats continued to be reserved for dalits, and an additional 10% reservation for other ‘socially backward castes’ (SEBCs & OBCs)²¹¹ was introduced. But many of the other ramifications of the Central Act such as

²¹¹ SEBC refers to castes categorized as ‘socially and economically backward castes’ and OBC to ‘other backward castes’

devolution of the power and capacities to plan for 'economic development and social justice' were not immediately explored, and in 1996, the Congress party lost the State elections and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed the government²¹².

The BJP government continues till date, under the leadership of a popular Chief Minister who entered office in 2001, the last year of the government's five-year term, and won a resounding victory in the 2002 elections. With a Congress government at the Center and no reason for the BJP to push a reform initiated by it, the efforts towards devolution in Gujarat has been weak at best, though the proffered reason is that Gujarat already has all the features mandated by the national Panchayat Act (Mathew 2001). This was technically correct, but applied only to the structure; the planning function, some of the developmental responsibilities and attendant authority to be invested in Panchayats, envisaged in the Central legislation, were missing.

Despite little devolution, at this time Panchayats have been invested with the responsibilities and powers of fourteen State departments, and others are in process of being devolved. Among the responsibilities transferred early to the GP is drinking water, including development and management of water distribution schemes at the village level. Since Panchayats in Gujarat have historically taken substantial responsibility and initiative in developing drinking water systems either out of their own funds or those from various government programs other than the ones channeled through the GWSSB, this pertained only to the devolution of the responsibilities,

²¹² The rise of the BJP had accompanied a resurgence of 'Hindu nationalism' in Gujarat, as elsewhere in the country, epitomized in the tremendous response to the 1992 'Rath Yatra' of L.K.Advani, a noted BJP leader. That has been followed by a series of events valorizing Hindutva, communal riots, and a pogrom against the Muslim population that has shocked the world. The Chief Minister in power during these events, however, has risen in popularity, as evidenced by a second victory in the 2007 elections; in addition to playing the 'Hindutva card', effective governance and substantial liberalization of the economy has provided mass appeal as well as endorsement by a large section of the intelligentsia (see, for example, the analysis in Shah et al 2008).

authority and resources – human, infrastructural and financial – vested till then in the GWSSB.

Reportedly, little has changed with this statutory devolution, with GWSSB continuing to be the primary institutional structure for water provision (Hirway 2005, CEO, Wasmo) It was with the revision of the AWRSP guidelines by the GoI (DDWS) in 1999 that some changes in perception and practice were triggered (ex-GWSSB Chief Engineer). The new Guidelines required the involvement of Panchayats in “the implementation of schemes, particularly in selecting the location of standpost, spot sources, operation and maintenance, fixing of cess/water tariff, etc.” (GoI 1999, AWRSP Guidelines 2.1.2) The GP began to be more materially involved, as they were required to contribute 10%-25% of the construction cost²¹³, and bear the responsibility and costs of operation and maintenance.

In addition, a Sector Reform Pilot Program (SRP) was introduced as a part of the same revised Guidelines, for 60 selected districts across India. This program emphasized community involvement, beneficiary contribution to capital costs, community ownership of assets, recovery of charges, operation and maintenance (DDWS 1999: Chapter 3). Though Gujarat was not one of the States in which the Pilot Project was first introduced, the fact that this program came as a part of the revised AWRSP guidelines indicated the direction of change and “had an effect on governmental mindsets” (CEO, WASMO). This has resulted in greater demands for new systems by Panchayats and requests to the GWSSB for implementation, some involvement in selecting the location of the source, the households to be covered, monitoring of

²¹³ Depending on the population and number of households without adequate access as per the funding patterns set out in the revised ARWSP Guidelines (GoI 1999).

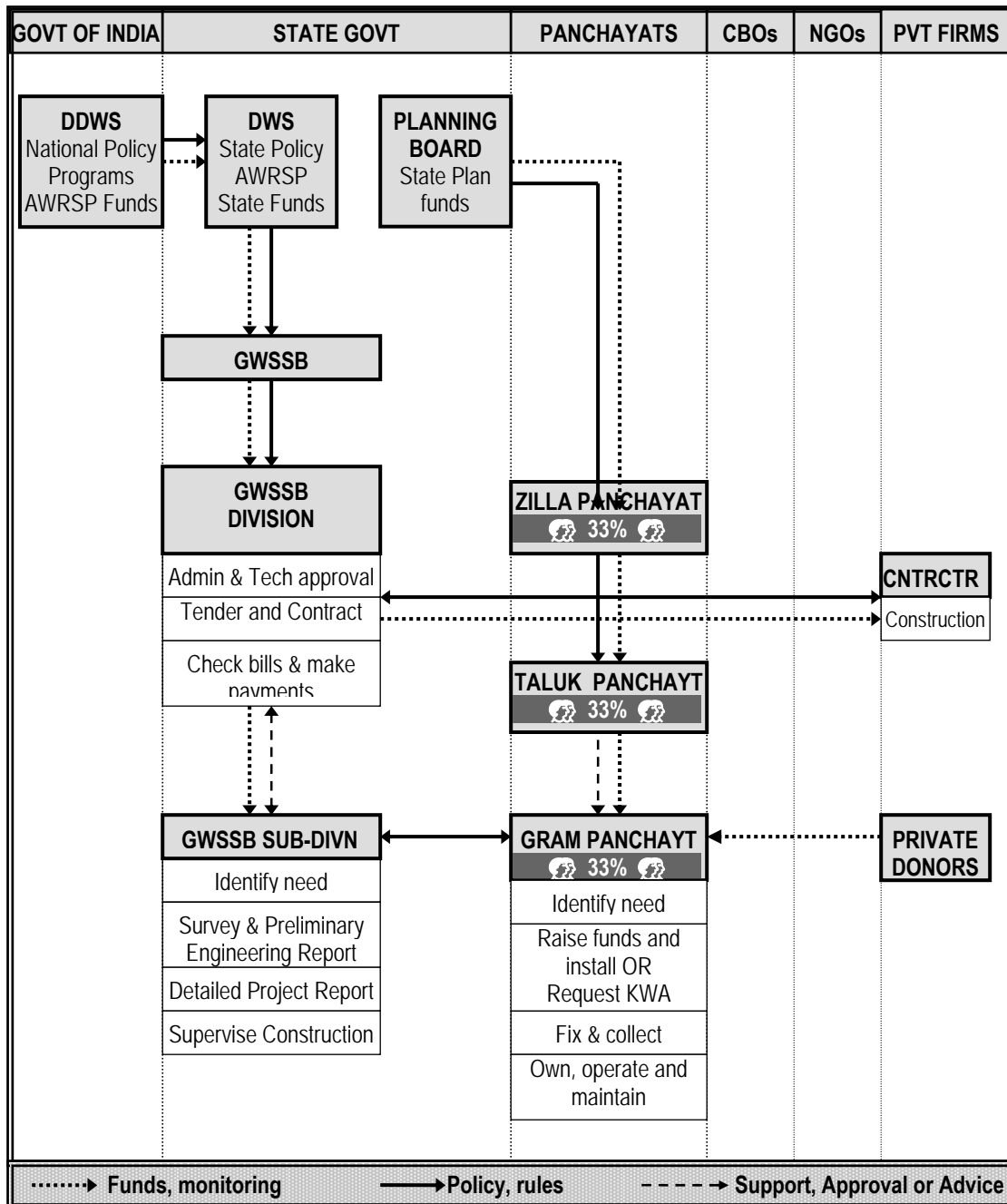


Figure 3.3: Reformed institutional architecture for water provision after devolution in Gujarat

construction and fixing of water cess by the Gram panchayats. Panchayats raise their share of the costs from their own income and voluntary contributions from the richer

households, and occasionally, from the discretionary funds at the disposal of their representatives in the State or national legislatures, commonly referred to as MLA-LAD (Member of Legislative Assembly-Local Area Development) and MP-LAD (Member of Parliament-Local Area Development) funds. (interviews: EE, Surat; Gram Sachiv²¹⁴, Laskana). The cumulative effect of these changes, instituted from a number of directions, on the existing governance structure is shown in Figure 3.3.

The lack of notable reform in the institutional architecture (visible in Figure 3.3) meant that the efficacy of the pre-reform local governance arrangements for water provision changed little after the reforms. However, the pre-reform structure was decentralized to a comparatively greater extent than in most other States (as has been described at the beginning of this section), even though they were less vibrant than in the sixties and early seventies. The potential for women's inclusion, however, increased to the extent that one-third of the elected seats in the GP, IP and DP were earmarked for women as mandated by the Panchayat Act.

2.3. BUSINESS AS USUAL? GWSSB AND THE ROLE OF REFORMED GUJARAT PANCHAYATS

To examine the emergent structure and processes at the Panchayat level, the decision-making process for water provision was studied in three villages in two adjacent panchayats – Umbhel and Ladvi in the Kamrej Taluka, and Bhatia in Choriasi Taluka of Surat district. Village profiles are provided in Annexure III and Table 3.1 provides the situation of water supply in the two Talukas.

²¹⁴ The Gram Sachiv is the Gram Panchayat Secretary.

Panchayats in this part of Gujarat are typically not very small,²¹⁵ but with comparatively better infrastructure than in many parts of Gujarat, and most of India. The four study panchayats are well-connected by metalled access roads and regular bus service to nearby towns, and have piped water supply, electricity, schools, post-office, telephone and TV connection. The main occupation is agriculture, though a segment of the working population commutes to other jobs in the nearby towns. Agriculture is a mix of foodgrain and cash crops, with two or in some instances three crops supported by the network of irrigation canals in the area; landowning families are therefore well-off, while the landless find year-round employment, as farm labor in the agricultural seasons, at higher rates than in most parts of India. The area is flat,

Table 3.1
Percentage distribution of households by source & location of water in study Talukas

Gujarat: Surat District, Kamrej Taluka										
Location of Water Source	Total No. of HH	% of HH	Tap	Hand pump	Tube well	Well	Tank, Pond	River, Canal	Spring	Any Other
Total	29,527	100.0	89.0	6.2	2.4	1.4	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.8
Within Premises	12,269	41.6	40.2	0.5	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Near Premises	14,954	50.6	44.2	4.4	1.1	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.3
Away	2,304	7.8	4.7	1.2	0.7	0.8	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2
Gujarat: Surat District, Chorasi Taluka										
Location of Water Source	Total No. of HH	% of HH	Tap	Hand pump	Tube well	Well	Tank, Pond	River, Canal	Spring	Any Other
Total	40,265	100.0	66.9	9.6	2.1	19.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7
Within Premises	17,480	43.4	40.3	1.5	1.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Near Premises	15,516	38.5	23.3	7.4	0.6	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5
Away	7,269	18.1	3.3	0.6	0.2	12.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1

Source: Census of India, 2001: H-Series, Table H-8

²¹⁵ Umbhel was one of the exceptions, but not unique.

and houses are clustered in different neighborhoods of the ‘*Gamtal*’ or village area. according to caste, with the lower-caste and dalit neighborhoods at a little distance from the other clusters as is typical of villages in India. The pattern of clustering puts about 25 households within a 50m radius around existing public water sources. Details of older and new water sources in the village, and other village statistics relevant for this discussion is provided in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2
Details of old water sources and new projects after Panchayat reforms in the study villages in Gujarat.

Panchayat	Population			Old Elevated Storage Reservoir			Hand pump	Pub. Well	Other sources	New Elevated Storage Reservoir			New hand pump
	Total Popn	No of HH	HH size	Old ESR	Hh conn	Std post				New ESR	Hh. conn	Stand posts	
Umbhel	5117	1102		30,000	350	16	3	3	Pond	100,000	380	6	0
Ladvi	1546	280		10,000	67	5	2	1	Tank	0	33	0	2
Bhatia	882	186	5.5	20,000	100	3	2	0	Tank	0	128	7	0
Vaktana	1140	228		0	0	0	2	2	RO, pond, dam	40,000	66	6	0

Sources: Census of India 2001; for water sources, GWSSB Sub-division files, focus group discussions and transect walks in the village.

All villages except Vaktana had a piped water supply system, from groundwater (depth about 42-45 m on average) raised to an ‘elevated storage reservoir’ (ESR), from which the distribution network begins.²¹⁶ The public standposts connected to the network were almost all in working condition. The ESRs had been constructed in the 70’s and 80’s by the GWSSB and despite some major repairs since them, the tanks in Umbhel and Ladvi were leaking and/or unstable and had to be replaced. Also, with growing populations, existing capacities were not sufficient and augmentation was required. Two villages therefore have had construction of additional or replacement

²¹⁶ No one remembers the exact year, and the records are now either not accessible, and in the one instance that it was located, too old to be reliably deciphered.

ESRs and extension of supply networks by the GWSSB after 2000; the other have had smaller installations like handpumps (Ladvi)²¹⁷ and standposts (Bhatia) The time from project initiation to completion in the four villages ranged from a year (for standposts or handpumps to as much as 5-6 years for an ESR and distribution network.

The emergent institutional architecture that could be discerned in the processes of development of the four water supply systems did not differ from the reformed design shown in Figure 3.3, which in turn differed little from the pre-reform set-up except for the 33% reservation of elected seats for women. In each case Panchayat members and village residents initiated the project, by contacting the Deputy Executive Engineer (DEE) in the Public Health and Sanitation Sub-division of the GWSSB Division office in Surat. In all four villages, many villagers knew the DEE, and in turn he appeared to know the details of the water situation and the new structures in fair detail²¹⁸. The DEE conducted the technical survey of the situation and possible locations for the installation of the bore and ESR, and the hydrologist in the GWSSB Sub-division office assessed the water potential and quality. Consultations with the village social worker, the ‘Talati’ (village revenue officer), the Sarpanch (President of the Gram Panchayat), the schoolteacher (in Bhatia) and a village elder (in Ladvi) were part of this process. The consultations were “necessary” (DEE, PHSS, Surat) to get informal opinions on the nature and extent of the problem, information on the water quality in private bore-wells in the village, determine land availability and secure the agreement of the Panchayat for operation and maintenance of the system after construction. The preliminary engineering report, the hydrologists’ report and a proposal with detailed

²¹⁷ Ladvi also had a new ESR and additional water points and household connections through a Sector Reform Project – this will be discussed when the SR program is considered.

²¹⁸ That is, in our discussion, he was able to recollect the technical details of the new projects such as depth of bore, height and capacity of the ESR and the approximate dates when construction began and was completed. He was also aware of the number of standposts in each village, and that one was malfunctioning in Umbhel, though he was not aware of the one in Bhatia that needed repair.

cost estimates was forwarded from the Sub-division to the Executive Engineer (EE) in the GWSSB Division office in Surat for approval, financial and technical sanction. On approval, tenders were invited and construction initiated by the Division office, and the DEE monitored the actual construction process. Completion reports were furnished by the Subdivision to the Division, and the systems were inaugurated by the EE.²¹⁹

The only change that could be discerned in the emergent institutional architecture observed in the four mini-cases that the DEE from the GWSSB Subdivision now definitely consults with a number of people in the village – but typically, other officers familiar with the village, and the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat. This was not absent earlier but was more informal and not seen to be necessary by the GWSSB officer; now, in the words of the EE, Surat Division,

“...consultation should be done, after all, it is their village and their requirement...we have to find out what they need and what is most suitable. Ofcourse, the technical part they are not able to do, so we have to do all the actual work....” (EE, Surat)

Local NGOs (Uthan), civil society networks (PRAVAH), and experts studying the issue (interview: Dr Indira Hirway), perceive the lack of change in pre-reform patterns of functioning of the GWSSB to be a major reason for inadequate progress in meeting rural domestic water needs. Decentralization of responsibility, authority and resources to communities, and involvement of ‘community organizations’ in the process is identified as necessary for effective and sustainable provision (PRAVAH 2004). It is however, also true that many Gram Panchayats have, and continue to make some arrangements for domestic water needs in their jurisdiction by other means, quite apart from the GWSSB interventions. Vaktana is a case in point where a Reverse Osmosis

²¹⁹ Except in Ladvi, where there was a long gap between the transfer of the EE in place during construction and the new EE assuming office.

plant for purified drinking water had been installed by the Panchayat, from its own and donated resources, despite the village being predominantly tribal and comparatively less prosperous.

2.4. PANCHAYAT PROVISION: EFFICACY, EFFECTIVENESS AND PARTICIPATION.

The lack of any visible institutional change in the existing architecture of local governance in Gujarat after the Panchayat Act (see Figure 3.4) was due to political reasons, as well as a function of the local socio-economic circumstances. The change to a Bharatiya Janata Party (henceforth, BJP) government in Gujarat in 1996 in Opposition to the Congress government in the Center effectively stalled any Congress-initiated agenda as the Panchayat reforms were, and the existence of Panchayats structurally similar to that mandated in the GoI Panchayat Act provided an alibi for inaction. The primary intent of the reform, of enabling Panchayats to plan for social and economic development of their jurisdictions was completely bypassed. Without strong political intent or administrative action, the small changes that were made for the involvement of the GP settled into the existing system and lost steam (CEO, Wasmo; Secretary, GUDC). As the CEO of WASMO – the new parastatal set up to implement the Sector Reform program – observed,

“...reforms require continuous energy to routinize the new approaches and different ways of doing the work, if that is not there, everything falls back into the same pattern.....that is why WASMO had to be set up, otherwise the Sector Reform Program would have just slowly fallen into the regular pattern of GWSSB” (CEO, WASMO).

To the question of why Panchayats in Gujarat, otherwise active and well-established, would not readily take on roles that increased their authority and functions, his

response was the same as that of many others’-

“...they really haven’t been given any more power, just some more work...not like in the Sector Reform Program where the beneficiary group can actually invite bids, hire other contractors and not the ones the GWSSB always gets...sometimes someone in the village itself....so why should they get involved? You know Gujarati people, they always do things that will benefit them, why spend more time on Panchayat work when it makes no difference to their powers or brings more money to the Panchayat.....in any case, its not as if the Surat Division [of GWSSB] isn’t doing its work and people are really desperate for water, as in Saurashtra and Kutch.....”(CEO, WASMO)

In sum, the fact that the GWSSB system functioned well enough, and the few reforms did not bring the Panchayats very much more authority or resources also precluded any political demand from them for more devolution. The local socio-economic context that was characterized by high levels of employment and economic activity of some kind throughout the year, reasonable levels of infrastructure and services, and the characteristic Gujarati entrepreneurship noted by many that made people use extra time for some profitable activity, also supported the existing pattern.

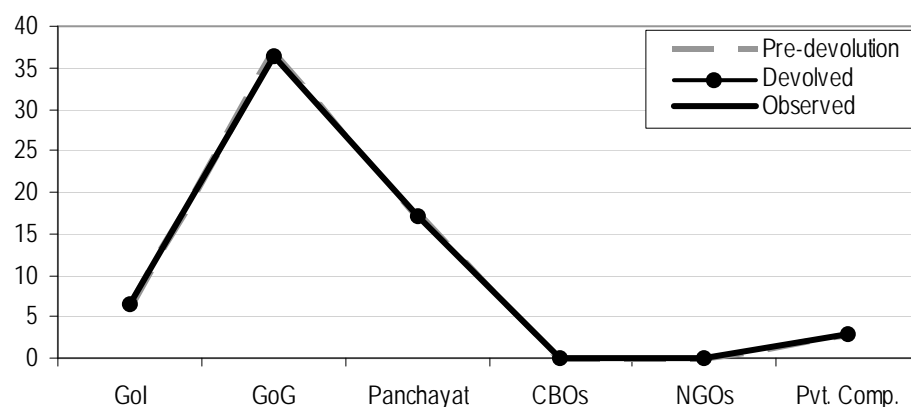


Figure 3.4: Distribution of functions in pre-devolved, devolved and observed governance arrangements in Gujarat, derived using the Devolution Score Sheet (Table 2.6)

Despite the lack of any devolution, the specification of Panchayat involvement did change the effectiveness of water provision, as shown in Table 3.3 and Figure 3.5. There are increases on all indicators that were assessed, but whether it was a function of the addition of one more source of water or a reflection of greater effectiveness is not clear. On one hand, the Panchayats in Gujarat were both well-resourced and entrepreneurial, and developed water supply systems to augment those developed by the State or Central programs, as discussed before, but on the other, without any

Table 3.3

Change in effectiveness of water provision after Panchayat reforms in Gujarat

	Umbhel		Ladvi		Bhatia		Vaktana			
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Per Capita Availability	45.7	61.0	48.9	58.1	56.1	73.1	47.9	78.2	49.6	67.6
Per Capita from HH Source	38.8	77.5	47.0	47.0	39.8	59.4	0.0	102.6	31.4	71.6
Per Capita from Public Source	14.6	29.0	16.3	22.6	32.2	58.0	21.9	22.4	21.2	33.0
Disparity	24.2	48.6	30.8	24.4	7.6	1.4	0.0	80.2	15.6	38.6
% HH with Private Source	34.9	69.4	29.3	29.3	55.9	71.0	2.6	31.6	30.7	50.3
% HH < 50 m from Public Source	60	76	86	100	80.6	100.0	52.6	100.0	69.7	94.1
% HH - Unprotected Sources	5	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	44.7	0.0	49.7	0.0

Calculated from data obtained from Gram Panchayat and office of the Executive Engineer, GWSSB Surat Division

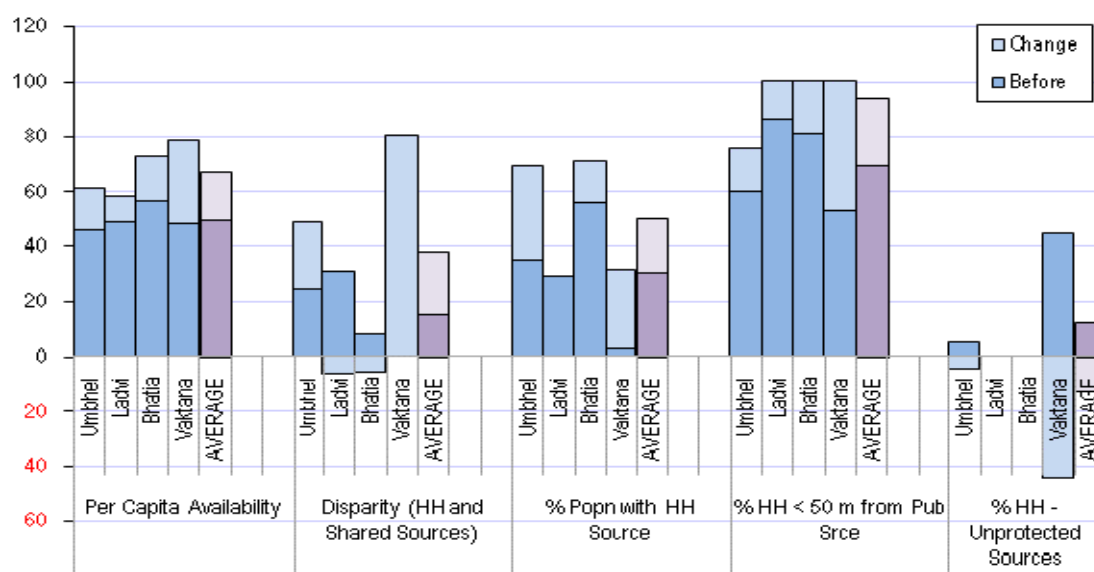


Figure 3.5: Effectiveness of water supply projects after devolution in Gujarat, based on Table 3.3

change in structure (except creation of some space for women) or process, the improvements in availability and access cannot wholly be attributed to any *increase* in efficacy, but more to the efficacy of the pre-reform arrangements.

Could the inclusion of women – the only major change from the pre-reform structure - have contributed to greater effectiveness? This is certainly precluded by the dismal picture of women’s participation that emerged from the study, and is shown in Figure 3.6. Also, apart from the reservation of Panchayat seats, there are few other spaces designated for women in the Gujarat Panchayat structure except in the Standing Committees of the Panchayat, where there is atleast one woman member. On enquiry as to why it was not one-third as had become a norm, the reason given was arithmetic (Sarpanch and Sachiv, Ladvi). With only 5 women in a 15-member Panchayat, and 5 Standing Committees of 6 members in each, having women constitute 33% of the membership meant that all the women Panchayat members would have membership in multiple Committees. It was clearly not very palatable that the women should be

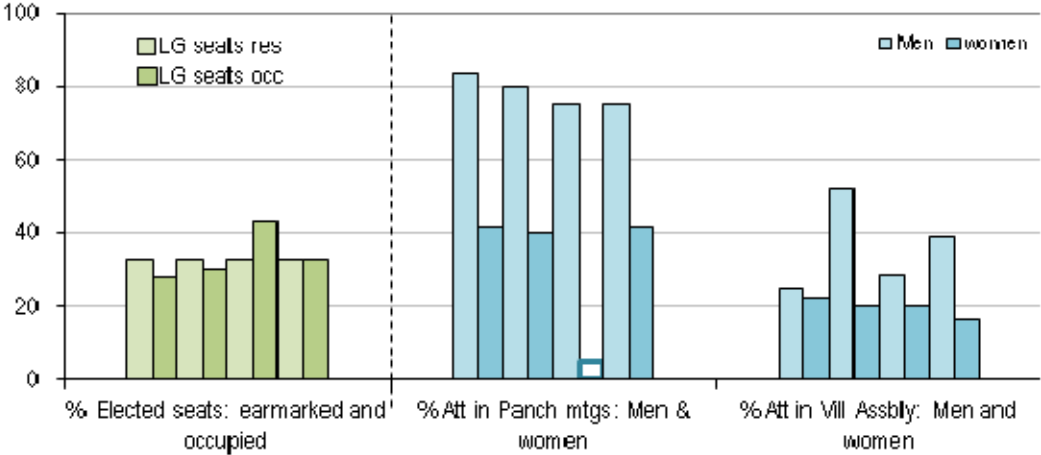


Figure 3.6: Participation in the development of water supply projects after devolution in Gujarat (from interviews and Panchayat records)

accorded so much importance, as evidenced by the opinion that

‘It makes no difference to them...in any case they rarely come to Panchayat meetings...they would not come to the Committee [meetings] and it would be impossible to conduct business because the quorum would never be filled...’(Sarpanch, Ladvi)

Few elected women attended meetings, either of the Gram Panchayat or Gram Sabha, and they irregularly, and only two remembered speaking at any meeting. However, most of them had almost full information of the new water supply projects, and of some other Panchayat activities and decisions; often, they read the minutes and resolutions when those were brought to them for signatures. This last was sometimes not possible because,

‘...they [whoever brought the register] are sometimes in a hurry and I would be busy in housework... when they came in the evening and chatted with the men [of the family] I had time to read it, ofcourse I would have to send water, make tea...I like it when they just leave the register for me to sign, I can look at many pages...I like knowing whats [sic] going on in the village...’ [Woman Panchayat member, Bhatia]

In the Gujarat villages, except the one dalit member, all other elected women interviewed were school educated at least to the pre-secondary level (8th grade)²²⁰. Two had male relatives who were also Panchayat members from a different constituency in the village.

Though the earmarked spaces were occupied as statutorily required, women made scant use of the opportunities that were presented. The primary reason for attendance was ‘curiosity’, and the deterring factor the customary norms in respect of women in public life. The uneven and moderate participation of women is also credibly

²²⁰ The dalit woman Panchayat member had only been in school till the fourth standard (fourth grade)

explained by the fact that despite a high level of economic development, traditional customs and patriarchal attitudes towards women persist strongly, as evidenced by the adverse sex-ratio.

Customary norms of seclusion in upper castes and caste exclusion keep away women from the upper and lower castes respectively; and also, as one dalit elected member explained,

“...why should I bother, I can’t read the papers they pass around.....how many times can I keep asking.....as if anyone will listen to me.....I have water, 20 ft from my house, it has been there for many years....actually, they [the upper-caste, high-income members] think about us, the tap was put in by them only so many years ago.....I was not here, I was not married, but my mother-in-law said she used to go to the pond in that field [about 300 m away], then those people talked to the government and put in this pipe....”(interview, Panchayat member, Umbhel)

It is the women in the middle and low income groups and middle-castes who are most involved, being literate and reasonably informed either through television, newspapers, social interactions or because they do some income-generating work either at home or outside; but it is precisely this economic engagement that makes their attendance irregular. But media access and mobility made all women interviewed well informed about the plans and progress for the new system, though the higher-income women only knew of the augmentation to the piped system, and not about the standposts that were also installed in the less well-off clusters as a part of the same project.

The low participation of women in Gujarat is however, not mirrored among the male elected members. Panchayat meetings and Gram Sabhas are conducted in routine, business-like manner, and most elected members attend on as many occasions as they

can. Being a Panchayat member conferred a status in the village all were conscious of and enjoyed, even lower-caste members, and being aware of village events and processes was a matter of pride, even among the wider male population in the village.²²¹ The most common sentiment expressed was

‘...they [GWSSB officers] will do something, why should we bother with details...as long as they do something for these big problems like water...we know they have annual budgets, and if they don’t have money this year they will do it next year...ofcourse, they listen to the ‘big people’, but that is the norm, we cannot change that much...’(user, in FGD, Bhatia)

In sum, Gujarat throws up a paradoxical situation. Despite little reform, the institutional arrangements are definitely effective in improving the water situation. On the other hand, the only major reform that was introduced – the mandatory inclusion of some women in the structure and processes – has had little effect. The question is, if more extensively reformed arrangements resulted in substantially greater effectiveness and participation, and in the following two sections this is explored, in the cases of Kerala and MP respectively.

3. KERALA: PANCHAYATS AND PEOPLE’S PLANS FOR DRINKING WATER

Historically, the primary sources for domestic water in Kerala were private and community dug-wells, tanks and ponds, and traditional caste-based Panchayats called ‘*kootams*’ undertook substantial responsibility for development of community sources. Rulers of the area provided resources for larger projects or poorer villages. The

²²¹ This sentiment was absent in Madhya Pradesh, except among a few of the youth.

Panchayats were stable units of self-governance with civil and judicial powers, which continued under different rulers till the British converted them to legal entities in 1920, when they lost much of their traditional status and powers. Rulers of areas outside British jurisdiction had emulated the British laws, and when the independent Kerala State came into being in 1956, Panchayats and Municipalities were part of the governance landscape across the State. Panchayats in Kerala were – and continue to be – large, with a population of about 29,000 on average (Ramchandran et al 2000). Even with limited sources of income, they remained viable organizations with a number of important functions, including water provision, for two decades after Independence. Subsequent changes, the current governance structure after the 1994 local government reforms, and the emergent institutional architecture for water provision at the local level as found in this study are explained in the sections below.

3.1. PRE-REFORM MODALITIES AND STATUS OF WATER PROVISION IN KERALA

After independence, water supply for those without private sources remained mostly the responsibility of local governments till the mid seventies, when their functions and powers were progressively eroded with increasing centralization. This was despite strong votaries of decentralized governance presenting detailed suggestions to successive governments in Kerala, who initiated various legislative processes; however, the resulting Kerala District Administration Act of 1979 and the Amendments to it in 1990 did not result in any substantial devolution. The 1990 Amendments did add a provision for 30% of seats to be reserved for women, but little changed in actual practice (Ramachandran et al., 2000). In the wave of centralization across States in the seventies and early eighties, the Kerala Water Authority (KWA) was constituted under the Kerala Water Supply and Waste Water Ordinance 1984.

Water supply systems under local governments were handed over to the new organization and the powers and functions of local governments relating to domestic water provision were extinguished (GoK 2002).

The KWA was responsible for water provision in rural and urban areas – from identifying need, to design, tendering, construction, operations and maintenance. The organization developed and managed a number of large multi-panchayat piped water schemes, smaller local systems, and handpumps and standposts for community use across the State (GoK 2002) The only role Panchayats played in the process was requesting the KWA to include particularly critical projects in their annual budgeting exercises, as shown in Figure 3.7. Panchayats maintained the open community wells or tanks as best they could, and sometimes installed and maintained additional handpumps and/or standposts from their own or special-grant funds (Secretary, SPB)

The funds for KWA installations came from State and Central government programs, of which the AWRSP of the GoI was the largest, but by the early nineties, it was evident that progress was too slow and other strategies were required to address the domestic water situation in Kerala. In 1991, only about 12% of rural households and 39% of urban households (19% combined coverage) had access to safe sources of drinking water, an increase of only about 6% in combined rural and urban coverage since 1981. Falling water tables and increasing pollution from urbanization, open defecation, agricultural run-offs and industrial plants had also begun to affect existing sources, both private and public²²², and increasingly, many of those with assured supplies were becoming water-poor.

²²² In 1991, with epidemics of diarrhoea, municipalities and the KWA had to begin programs for disinfecting wells and educating communities to pre-treat water for drinking and cooking, despite the widespread and traditional domestic water-treatment practices that had rendered water safe till that time (for example, boiling with specific local spices) (SEUF, undated).

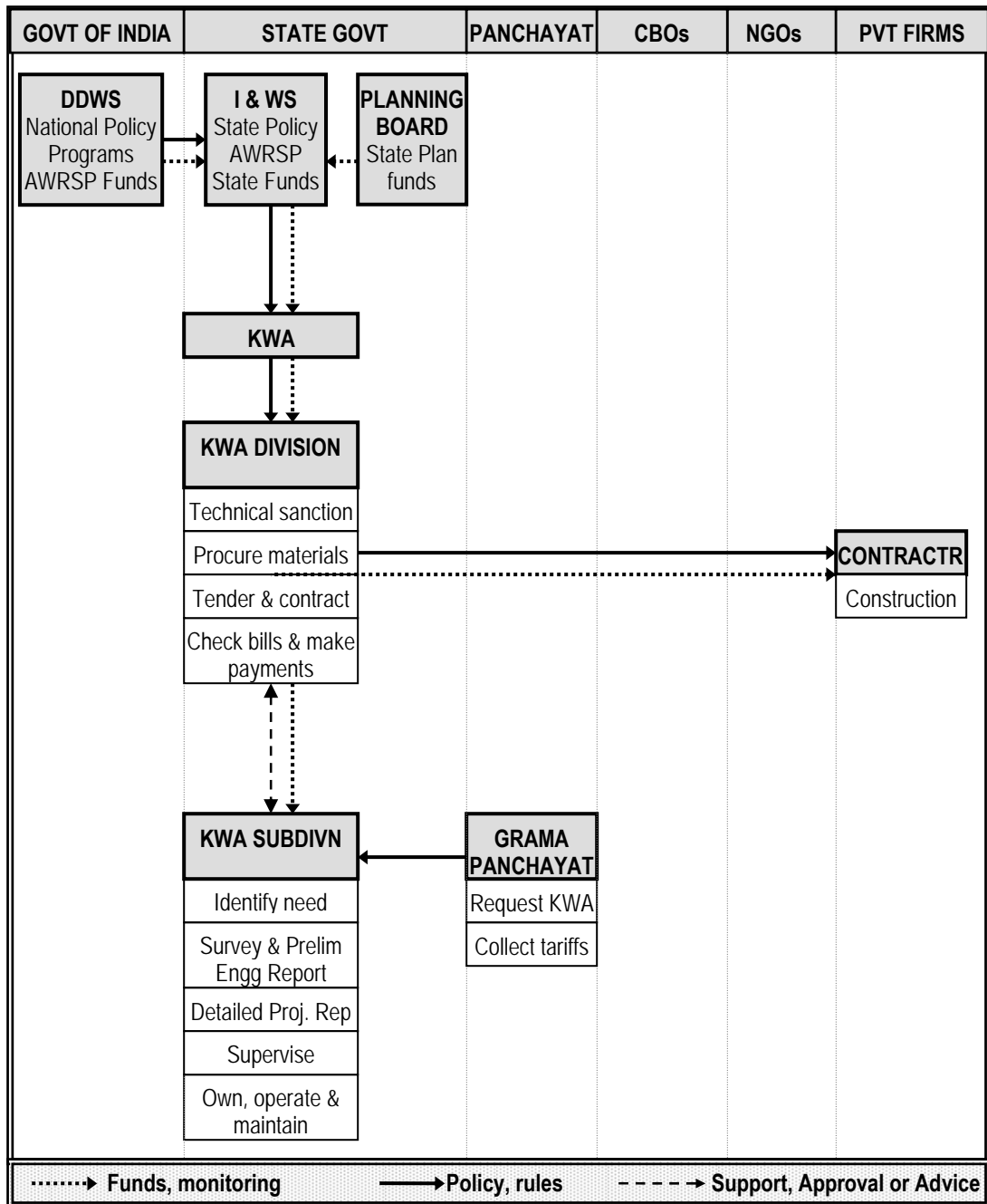


Figure 3.7: Pre-devolution institutional set-up for water provision in Kerala

3.2. PANCHAYAT REFORMS AND THE PEOPLE'S PLANNING CAMPAIGN IN KERALA

The enactment of the Kerala Panchayat Act in 1994, in conformity with the national Panchayat Act, did not immediately change the situation of either local governance or of water provision in Kerala villages. The United Democratic Front (UDF), the Kerala version of the Congress party, was in government at the time, and the conformity Act was enacted without any problem by April 1994, and a comprehensive government order was issued in 1995 transferring various institutions and staff to Panchayats. In the State budget next year, a separate Annexure was introduced which detailed the development programs and grants-in-aid transferred to Panchayats, establishing a legal status to the allocation to local governments. The actual effectuation of devolution however, only happened after the State Government changed in 1996, when the Left Democratic Front (LDF), an affiliate of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) won the elections.

The LDF government initiated a statewide People's Planning Campaign (PPC) in 1996 to kick-start a process of participatory planning by Gram Panchayats. With this, a process of substantial devolution to local governments was set in motion, which has been widely acknowledged to be a landmark in the country and unique internationally (see Heller 2001). The PPC was a revolutionary exercise for participatory, bottom-up planning across the State, with the preparation of development plans of the 991 Gram Panchayats and their successive integration at the level of Intermediate (Block) Panchayats and District Panchayats, to be finally included in the State Plan. In August 1996, the State Planning Board and the Department of Local Administration initiated the Campaign and in collaboration with NGOs and CBOs, mobilized widespread participation. The Kerala Sahitya Shastra Parishad (KSSP), a non-governmental

organization with local branches across the State, whose membership overlapped to a substantial extent with the LDF cadres, was among the most central of these.

The PPC was a ‘historic landmark’ in the development planning scenario in India, and has arguably been the most extensive and significant of exercises in participatory planning not only in India but internationally (Heller 2001). It therefore bears discussion; and Isaac and Franke (2000, 2002) provide a detailed account of the process. The former author was member-in-charge of decentralization in the Kerala State Planning Board during the Campaign period and widely credited to be the ‘architect’ of the PPC.

The PPC was multi-staged with mid-course corrections as issues arose; in the words of Thomas Isaac, it was “a huge action-research project” (Isaac, in interview). Briefly, the process started with Gram Sabhas (village assemblies) organized in every electoral district (Ward) of the villages, to identify local problems and needs. This was followed by formation of smaller Working Groups (WG) on twelve ‘subjects’, for more structured discussions anchored by trained resource persons from the locality. The next step was a participatory resource mapping²²³ and data assembling exercise in each Ward, and the preparation of a comprehensive Development Report (DR) for each village. The latter integrated the reports of the twelve WGs, which were based on the data assembled in the mapping process, as well as from other government sources. Development Seminars were then conducted in every district of Kerala, which included representatives elected by the GS, two representatives from each WG,

²²³ The participatory maps developed in every village were stored in the house of its ‘architect’ (Thomas Isaac) and during the interview with Mr, Isaac he not only showed the stacks, but permitted examination of a few. By then the government had changed, and the plans to “...further develop and use them [as a basis for more meaningful discussion at the Ward level] had to be shelved along with the plans...” said Thomas Isaac (interview).

Panchayat members and invited experts. The DRs were eventually converted to projects and schemes by Task Forces constituted for the purpose, which reports were then vetted by Voluntary Technical Committees at the block and district levels. This ‘shelf-of-projects’ was then successively integrated at block and district levels to prepare an overall District Plan. The projects were funded under various development programs of the State and Central government, utilizing more than 35-40% of the State Plan budget²²⁴, with 10% of the total funds earmarked for women-specific initiatives.

A number of changes were introduced in subsequent years to streamline and institutionalize the process. The experience of the PPC helped identify the changes required in the existing legal framework and administrative processes to enable Panchayats to function effectively, and the financial, human and organizational resources that were necessary. A Committee for Decentralization of Powers had been constituted in 1996, and their recommendations made in the light of the Campaign experience were eventually incorporated into the Kerala Panchayat Act of 1999, and provided the legal basis for transfer of powers and responsibilities to Panchayats. A large number of subjects, and district and lower-level staff of some State departments, and a number of development organizations set up and run by the State departments have been transferred to Panchayats (GoK 2001a, Pal 2004)²²⁵. Drinking water provision was devolved, but as discussed later in this section, the human and organizational resources were not (GoK 2001a: Annexure II).

²²⁴ With the next change in government in 2001, this has dropped to between 15-20% of the State budget

²²⁵ The Third Administrative Reforms Commission of the Government of Kerala, set up in 1997, recommended extensive reforms, including for decentralization (13th Report, 2001). Annexures I and II of the Report on Decentralization (2001) spell out the functions, personnel and organizations to be transferred to various tiers of local government (village, taluk and district). For example ‘Krishi Bhavans’ or farmer’s centers of the Agriculture Department, the Public Health Center of the Health Department, etc.

There have been some alterations in this planning process²²⁶, and reduction in the proportion of State funds allocated to Panchayats, with the defeat of the LDF government in the 2001 elections and the UDF's return to office (Mohanakumar 2001). The essential structure, however, continues till date, and most tasks and resources devolved to Panchayats have remained with them. Not only was it politically infeasible for the State to take back power after the widely participatory and consciousness-raising PPC, but the LDF government had deliberately ensured that most of the legal changes were 'irreversible'; in fact this decision was explicitly communicated to those involved in the process of administrative reform in a Government Resolution (GR) and was used as a touchstone for all changes. (interview: Secretary, State Planning Board)

In all the participatory plans developed, drinking water projects were important items; Isaac and Franke report that 8% of the total expenditure budgeted in the Panchayat plans were for small-scale drinking water projects. This was in addition to those included in planned housing; drinking water had emerged as one of the high-priority areas in the participatory plans, as much as it was a priority in the State plan. The projects proposed in the participatory plans however, were sharply different from the State (KWA) plans for large piped water schemes, and included the restoration of local ponds and wells, excavation of new wells, tube-well installations and small-scale piped water distribution systems. These were mostly designed to be community-managed, with beneficiary contributions in labor, materials and/or finances. Even more startling was that these were often located in areas that had been listed as 'fully

²²⁶ Some interviewees called it a 'roll-back', with many roles shifting back to State departments and officials; others remarked that it had become 'less participatory'. There was undoubtedly a movement towards greater involvement of government officials in the decision-making process; for example, the VTCs were eventually converted into Block Level Expert Committees (BLEC) and District Level Expert Committees (DLEC) by adding technical staff from government departments.

covered' by the KWA, and many locations the KWA listed as priority areas were in reality adequately supplied from traditional sources. (Isaac and Franke 2002:124).

3.3. LOCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT, MOBILIZATION AND PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Three important factors undergirded the success of the PPC and the subsequent extensive transformation of local governance in Kerala. The first was the statewide presence of the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) - literally meaning 'Science Writer's Forum of Kerala' - an activist association of teachers, students, professionals and community leaders, which has been working for the last 45 years to, in its own words,

“...popularize science among the people of Kerala in their mother tongue, i.e., Malayalam...with a membership of about 40,000 drawn from all walks of life and distributed in about 2000 units within the state of Kerala...The KSSP is involved, in broadly three types of activities: educative, agitative and constructive, in areas like environment, health, education, energy, literacy, micro-planning and development in general.” (KSSP, undated:7)²²⁷

²²⁷ From an organization of science writers, KSSP has developed into a movement for the popularization of science and support of development initiatives at the local level. Its origin can be traced to the formation of a Science Literary Forum in 1957 by a group of Marxist activists and science writers concerned at the divide between the elite, English-language discourses in science and its knowledge and application by lay people for development. Established in 1962, by 1968 it had developed ties with scientists from Kerala working all over India, and become a well-defined organisation with a focus on the popular communication of science in Malayalee, the local language. By 1976 it had become a movement for the mass dissemination of science in Kerala with a membership of 2,600, and the following year it began organising All India Workshops for science activities. In 1987, at one of these workshops, the All India People's Science Network was born and People's Science Movements, inspired by KSSP, have now sprung up across the country. The organisation itself has 60,000 members organised in about 2,000 units and is engaged across the whole range of development issues. Its Executive Committee has 65 members and at local levels there are more than 10,000 office bearers. KSSP has received a number of awards including the 1996 "Right Livelihood Award", UNEP's Global 500, the Vriksha Mitra and the King Sejong (UNESCO) award for its work in education, development, environment, small-scale entrepreneurship development and other grassroots efforts. (KSSP, undated)

The KSSP's large network of members, extending to the village level, familiarity with the field realities, long experience in development interventions and the respect and confidence they commanded in most parts of the State²²⁸ helped mobilize extensive participation and enthusiasm. Moreover, they had previously collaborated with the Center for Earth Science Studies (CESS) in the State capital (Thiruvananthapuram) to develop a methodology for participatory resource mapping (PRC) in a pilot project in twenty-five panchayats, and prepare a comprehensive village plan in Kalliasseri Panchayat (in north Kerala) through participatory planning. This experience and methodological understanding helped in the design and conduct of the Campaign. The collaboration between the KSSP and the State was possible as the KSSP is closely tied²²⁹ and ideologically aligned with the Left Democratic Front (LDF), the political party in office which that initiated the Campaign, though it is an independent and autonomous organization which frequently differs with the party on policy and strategy issues.²³⁰

Another major factor was the training, capacity-building, publicity and information dissemination undertaken during the Campaign with the help of a wide range of government and non-government organizations. This extensive effort was supported

²²⁸ The local bases of the two major political parties in Kerala – the UDF and LDF – are chequered across the State, and the KSSP, with its identification with the LDF, does not enjoy as much popularity in the UDF-dominated areas (interviews: CEO CapDeck, Plan Coordinator, Yeroor Panchayat). This was also one reason for the somewhat patchy nature of the PPC's success (Isaac and Franke 2002)

²²⁹ The links are primarily because of the overlap between the KSSP members and the party cadres of the LDF; senior members and ideologues of the party have at various times occupied leadership positions in the KSSP, and the funding the KSSP has received from the left government for its development activities. This relationship is however, not untroubled, for there have often been differences in the development strategies advocated by the organization and those of the party. Therefore while KSSP can perhaps more appropriately be seen as a part of 'political society' than 'civil society' in Ndegwa's (1999) and Chatterjee's (undated) frameworks, it is nevertheless a free-standing organization working for social change through mass education.

²³⁰ Their championship of decentralized planning and governance by KSSP leaders and activists, many of whom were card-holding members of the CPI(M), was particularly at odds with the centralized (state) planning model at the core of the party's ideological position. (interviews: President, KSSP; Secretary, SPB; CEO, CapDeck)

by the Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), which promoted a new organization, CapDeck, to train resource persons in the participatory planning approaches being attempted. CapDeck worked with the KSSP members, the Kerala Institute for Local Administration (KILA) and technical experts to train staff of the State Planning Board, members of the District Planning Committees and elected representatives and others nominated by the panchayats as State-level Key Resource Persons (KRPs), district-level District Resource Persons (DRPs), and village-level Local Resource Persons (LRPs) to anchor the planning process. The Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK government also supported the exercise. Manuals, signage, educational leaflets, formats, questionnaires and other literature to inform and support the process was also developed by the organizations, with the input of the Resource Persons as the process unfolded. Other organizations that were also involved, and continue to provide training are the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Institute of Management in Government (IMG), State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Integrated Rural Technology Center (IRTC), Center for Science and Technology for Rural Development (COSTFORD). The Plan Campaign Cell (C-DIT) and the Information Kerala Mission (IKM) maintain databases and information and provide publicity.²³¹

The third factor was the previous experience of large-scale mobilization and organizing, for example with the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) which preceded the PPC, and the presence of what Isaac and Franke (2000) call ‘a vibrant civil society’ right down to the village level. The experience of the KSSP, and the number of innovative projects undertaken by communities in various localities across the State

²³¹ For a mapping of the various organizations involved in the support of local governance and their activities, see charts 1, 2 and 3 in Sankaran 2006: 69-71.

which served as ‘models’ of participatory projects, were clearly important to the success of the PPC. It is also true that Kerala has a rich variety of local organizations, far more than in other States, that occupy the space between the government and economic institutions, even if we were to exclude those based on caste, kinship, religion or ethnicity²³² (Serra 2001, Mayer 2001, John and Chathukulam 2002). But here it is important to note that a significant proportion of these are trade unions affiliated to the political parties in Kerala – with “just 3.5% of India’s people, Kerala has 7.5% of its trade union members.... (and) a century of struggle for improved education, public health, health care, land reform, worker’s rights and the abolition of caste discrimination” (Isaac and Franke 2002:29-30). It has had a strong Left party - the CPI(M) – with an extensive cadre of card-holding members across the State, and is the only State in the world where a Communist party has been voted to power in a democratic and open election. Even mass organizations like the KSSP are explicitly political in their articulation and organically tied to a political party with many of its leaders also significant leaders and members of the CPI(M). Therefore, it may be important to understand many of these organizations as belonging to what Ndegwa (1999) calls ‘political society’, and analyse the working of democracy at the local level in this context. Differentiating between ‘civil’ and ‘political’ society in this manner does not negate the point made by many authors (Isaac and Franke 2002; Heller 2001) that Kerala has a rich organizational culture, with “more than half of the population belonging to mass and class organizations”.

What is equally important in analyses of the links between the success of the PPC, the establishment of decentralized planning and the local organizational density is the

²³² The definition of civil society is still unresolved, with authors debating the inclusion of affine-based organizations on one hand and ‘for-profit’ organizations on the other. See Zafarulla and Haque (2006) for a review of different definitions and arguments for inclusion or exclusion of various kinds of organizations.

proliferation of a variety of existing and new neighborhood and ward level organizations *as a result* of the PPC. These include Residents Associations (RAs), Community Development Societies (CDSs), Neighborhood Groups (NHGs), Area Development Societies, Beneficiary Groups, Self-Help Groups and more, though all are not uniformly present across localities²³³. NHGs (called ‘Ayalkootams’ in the local language), composed of two voters (a man and a woman) from each of 30-50 households in a neighborhood have specifically emerged as important units for generating greater citizen involvement in local development and planning by linking households to the larger Ward and Grama Sabhas. NHGs are federated at the Ward and Panchayat level into Development Committees. Beneficiary Committees are linked to project implementation, now legally permitted to implement projects by themselves or by contracting out. These organizations are in addition to others like library, sports, theatre, art or other clubs and associations, and NGOs operating at various levels that already populated local society. While authors differ in their analyses of the dynamics and governance implications of this ‘organizational revolution’ (Sankaran 2006, John and Chathukulam 2002, Isaac and Franke 2000), there is no disagreement that they are now an important part of the organizational architecture of local governance.

²³³ Residents Associations are formally registered neighborhood organizations in urban areas, and in the absence wide participation in urban Ward Sabhas as happened in the rural Grama Sabhas, became an important forum to elicit citizen participation. Community Development Societies were small groups of 15-40 poor women organized in all municipalities and 96 panchayats as part of a Central Government funded participatory poverty-alleviation program based on thrift-and-credit. In 1997, they were extended to all parts of the State under the “Kudumbasree” program of the State government’s Kerala Poverty Eradication Mission. 50-70 households in a neighborhood now constitute a Neighborhood Group with a 5-member managing committee, which are federated at the ward level into a Development Committee, which is linked to the ward-level Area Development Societies of Kudumbasree. ADSs are federated at the Panchayat/ Municipal level into a Community Development Societies. Kudumbasree is a women’s program, and both members and officers are usually women. Self-help Groups are small thrift-and-credit groups organized by NHGs, NGOs, some banks and as a part of various State and Central government programs, to facilitate flow of plan funds and bank credit in a transparent and mutual-guarantee basis. All these organizations are now closely linked to Panchayat functioning. Beneficiary Committees are representative groups of the beneficiaries of any project, who implement or contract, monitor and supervise projects. See Sankaran (2006) for types and growth of community organizations in Kerala.

3.4. WATER PROVISION THROUGH POST-PPC STRUCTURE OF PANCHAYATS IN KERALA

The organizational ensemble for water provision in rural areas in Kerala is now a multi-layered structure. It begins at the first level with the NHGs/ ADSs/ BCs, in the form of ‘Drinking Water Committees’ constituted from their membership at the neighborhood level and includes the State and Central government levels, as shown in Figure 3.8. With most local planning and implementation responsibilities devolved to Panchayats, the KWA was required to change to a channel for funding, a source of technical support and implementation of larger schemes for local governments (interviews Secretary SPB, Team Leader, Kollam PSU). However, KWA still retains a substantial role in the process. Of the existing 1050 projects to be handed over to Panchayats, only 116 mini- projects had been handed over by 2005, and its role in development and maintenance of the other installations continues. It remains the nodal agency for implementation of the AWRSP, with program funds routed through it to local governments for various projects; increasingly, funds have also been sourced for larger projects from multi-lateral and bilateral international donors, national-level banks and insurance companies.²³⁴ It also implements the National Human Resources Development Program of the GoI, selecting Panchayat staff for technical training in consultation with the District Collector. KWA officers are members of the BLEC and DLEC, and therefore vet the projects proposed by GPs, IPs and DPs.

Clearly, the organizational structure, the actors and the decision-making process for water provision has changed to a notable extent in Kerala after the 1994 Panchayat reforms, though some of the legally mandated changes are not yet fully implemented.

²³⁴ Such as the State Bank of India and the Life Insurance Corporation (GoK 2002).

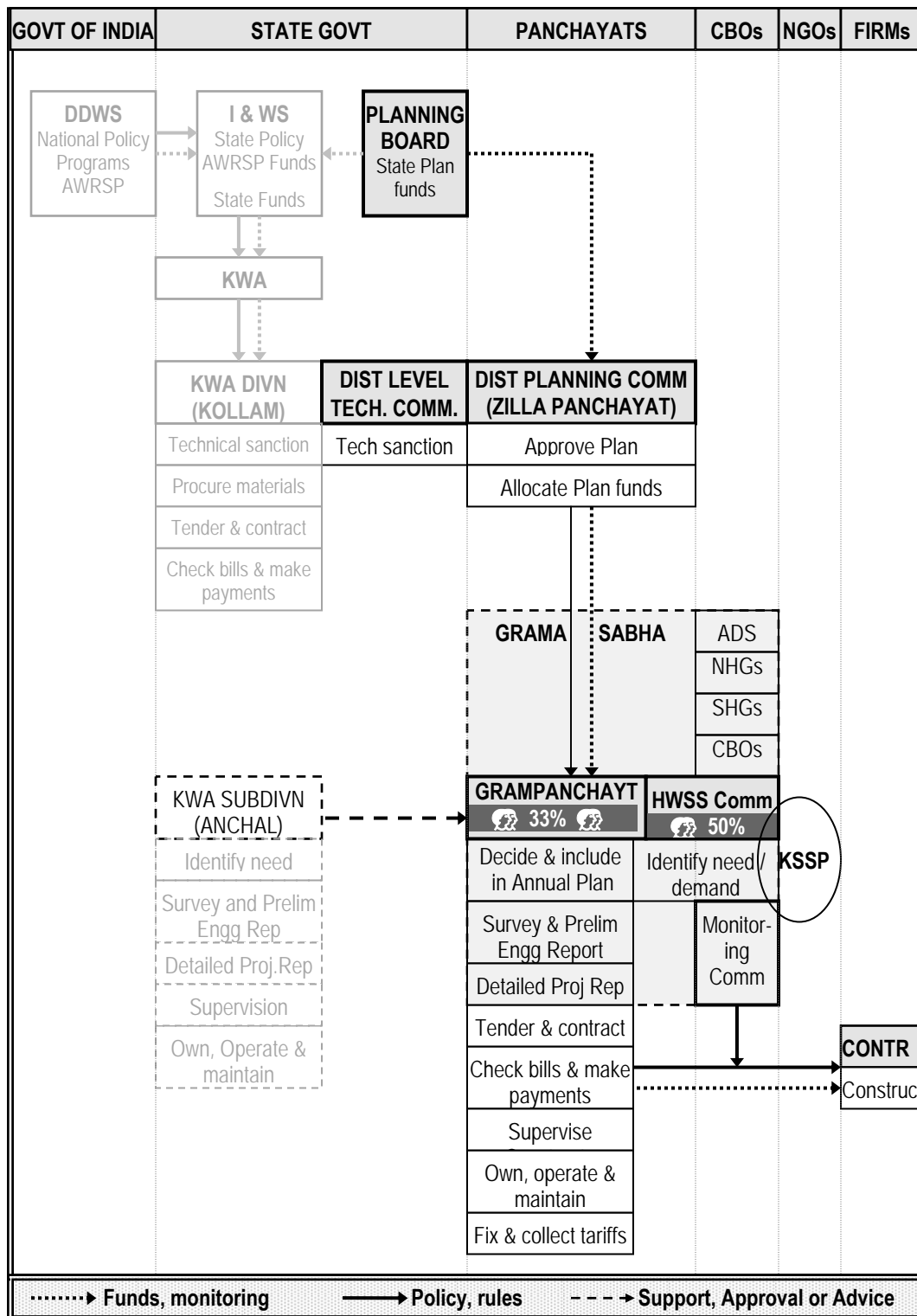


Figure 3.8: Reformed institutional architecture for water provision after devolution in Kerala

What is notable is that the involvement of the Panchayats in the process began even before the revised 1999 guidelines of the ARWSP, with the initiation of the People's Plan Campaign and the subsequent routinization of the participatory planning process.

3.5. DRY WELLS AND PEOPLE'S PLANS: WATER PROVISION BY KERALA PANCHAYATS

To map the trajectory of decision-making for water provision as it functions at the local level, the organizational structure and processes were studied in two panchayats of Anchal Block in the Pathanapuram Taluk of Kollam district. The large size of panchayats in Kerala, the dispersed nature of the habitations within them, and the need to study systems installed within the last five years resulted in the study of one Panchayat-initiated water supply system in each panchayat: the Mallavattam project in Anchal Panchayat and the Kanjavel project in Yeroor Panchayat. The pattern of water availability in the taluka is shown in Table 3.4 and the details of the panchayats and the projects are shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.4
Percentage distribution of households by source of drinking water and its location in Pathanapuram Taluk in Kerala (2001)

Kerala – Kollam district – Pathanapuram taluk										
Location of Water Source	Total No.of HH	% of HH	Tap	Hand pump	Tube well	Well	Tank, Pond, Lake	River, Canal	Spring	Any Other
Total	93,334	100.0	6.8	0.4	0.3	85.5	3.0	0.4	1.1	2.5
Within Premises	75,380	80.8	5.5	0.1	0.3	73.1	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.5
Near Premises	10,467	11.2	1.0	0.1	0.0	7.6	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.9
Away	7,487	8.0	0.3	0.1	0.0	4.8	1.0	0.1	0.6	1.1

Source: Census of India, 2001: H-Series, Table H-8.

As is typical of Kerala, almost three-fourths of the households in the Pathanapuram Taluk depend on private wells as their primary source of water, and another 10% rely on wells at varying distances. Less than 6% of households have piped supply to the house, as is visible in Table 3.4. Though for most people water sources are self-owned or nearby, with only about 8% of households having to travel more than 100m for water, almost all interviewees reported that many wells run dry in the summer and more than half yield very little or muddy water (EE, Kollam; Engineer, Anchal GVRT; users of Mallavattam, Kanjavel projects).

Both Anchal and Yeroor are relatively large panchayats with low population densities, hilly terrain and extensive forest cover, with dispersed homesteads except in the urban area. About 12-15 households are located within a radius of 50m from a point source in the more clustered areas, but 5-6 is common. Homestead lands are covered with rubber plantations, with at least a few trees even when the plot is small; rubber tapping is both a commercial and house-hold activity. Other major economic activities are cashew production and making burnt bricks.

Table 3.5
Details of old water sources and the new projects after Panchayat reforms in Anchal and Yeroor Panchayats**

Panchayat (Project neighborhood)	Popn	Total houses/hh	Hh size	Household taps	Existing sources			New ESR		
					Pub.Standposts & handpumps	Private wells	Other sources	Capacity	Hh conn	Pub stp
Anchal	28,612	6120/ 6218		150	41	-				
Mallavattam	221	53	4.2	0	0	6	Borewell-1	25,000	36	3
Yeroor	32,723	7153/ 7263		0	47	-				
Kanjavel	57	14	4.1		0	1	Pub well-1	1000	0	3

Source –Panchayat Level Statistics Kollam District, Dept. of Economics and Statistics, GoK; Table 1-B: Demographic Particulars –1991 (pg 13); Table 26: Drinking Water Facility as on 31.3.2000 (pg 186); Table 30:Basic details of Panchayats/ Municipalities/ Corporations as on 01-07-2000 (pg 251). ** Refers only to specific projects in study neighborhoods, not to all the projects in the panchayat area.

Grama Panchayats in Kerala stand in stark contrast to those in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh; the explanation could lie in their large size, the fully-literate population, the history of local civic and political engagement or their revitalization through the PPC, participatory planning and devolution. Both Anchal and Yeroor Panchayats had a substantial presence in the towns from which they took their names. Housed in impressive multi-storeyed buildings fully populated throughout the day by visibly busy staff, they were obvious sites of fruitful interaction between constituents requiring services, the staff and elected representatives, who congregated on the premises at least for a few hours every day²³⁵.

Water scarcity is a major problem in both panchayat areas in the summer months, with many of the private wells and the 40-odd public sources running dry from about December to May except in the few low-lying areas. During these months, water is supplied through tankers by the Revenue Department and sometimes by the Panchayat (interview: Anchal Secretary). The dispersed form of the settlements and the hilly topography makes large-scale piped water supply systems expensive and inefficient (interview: Exec Engineer; KRWSSA CEO). Only about 150 households (6%) in Anchal have piped water supply, and none in Yeroor. Both were to be provided with piped supply under two Comprehensive Water Supply Schemes (CWSS) of the KWA²³⁶, but because the projects were not expected to be completed in a few years, the Anchal Water Supply Scheme was initiated in 1999 by the KWA on the request of Anchal Block Panchayat²³⁷. It was designed for 10,700 people, in four adjoining

²³⁵ This is particularly remarkable considering that my longest visits (of over 4 weeks each) were typically about early-April to mid-May, when the financial year and the planning/budgeting process had just been completed (March 31st). To my question if this were always so, the reply was positive, and the explanation for no 'lull' after March 31st was that it was "the best time to catch up with pending routine work" that tended to get less priority between January and March.

²³⁶ A CWSS to Meena and adjoining villages and one to Kalathupuzha and adjoining villages

²³⁷ Proposal and engineering report prepared in August 1999, vide letter no. DB2/156/98 of the KWA of the P.H.Division, Kollam; included parts of

panchayats²³⁸ and was to be later integrated into the larger CWSS schemes when they were completed. However, no household in Yeroor was connected till May 2005 as the last kilometer of pipeline was yet to be laid; a budget provision was made in the 2005-2006 Annual Plan of the Yeroor Panchayat for this line.

The Aanchal ‘mini scheme’, and a number of ‘single panchayat’ schemes have been designed and installed by the KWA on request from the respective Panchayat and their agreement to bear the capital costs out of their own plan funds. The installations were to be handed over to the Gram Panchayats after completion, but the transfer hasn’t been implemented to any extent in Kollam; “the KWA staff do not want to hand over the schemes, but they say the Panchayats don’t want to take over the responsibility” (EE KWA Kollam Division). All installations continue to be maintained by the KWA, from funds provided by the District Panchayat.

Installations for domestic water supply have been listed as a priority in the comprehensive 5-yr plans (2002-2007)²³⁹ prepared by both Aanchal and Yeroor Panchayats, and significant annual allocations made for each year. In the seven years since the PPC and initiation of participatory planning, the two Panchayats have undertaken the construction of about a 100 new wells each as well as 60-70 projects to repair existing wells and handpumps, desilt ponds and provide proper sanitation facilities to check pollution. The funds for this have been taken from various plan schemes, including drinking water provision, poverty alleviation and support for backward communities, and from the Panchayats’ own funds and community contributions. The five year plan (2002-2007) of Yeroor includes the target of putting

²³⁸ Aanchal, Alayamon, Edamulakkal and Yeroor.

²³⁹ Corresponding to the national 10th Five-year Plan

in place systems for sufficient and year-round domestic water for all households by 2007.

The Annual Plans in both panchayats were developed through the sequence of events and processes developed since the PPC: Grama Sabha in each ward and the constitution of Working Groups²⁴⁰ for various subjects, development of proposals by the working groups in consultation with the ADS, NHGs, 'other interested people' and potential beneficiaries, identification of projects and tentative budgets and eventually, presentation of the same to the general body by the Convener of each group. After further revision, the final plans were presented for ratification in a subsequent Gram Sabha.²⁴¹ This was reported by all interviewees²⁴², and matched the Panchayat records²⁴³. The Five-yr Plans were prepared through "Special Grama Sabhas", and in Yeroor one such had been convened in late 2004 for the development of a 20-yr Development Plan with the help of the local Town Planning Office. A 'Plan Coordinator', a local KSSP member, anchored the planning process in Yeroor but no

²⁴⁰ Eight Working Groups were formed for the preparation of the Five-yr Plans as mandated by the Guidelines for the Preparation of Tenth Five Year Plan by Local Governments (GoK, 2002a:11). These were (1) Agriculture and allied sectors including irrigation and agro-processing, (2) Local economic development other than agriculture including local industries, facilitation of private and community investment, (3) Poverty reduction and social security including care of the aged and disabled, (4) Development of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes, (5) Development of women and children, (6) Health, Water Supply and Sanitation, (7) Education, (8) Infrastructure. For the Annual Plans after 2004, two additional groups were included as directed by the modified guidelines for the preparation of Annual Plans (GoK 2004:15). These were (1) Social security including care of the aged and disabled (separated from the Poverty Alleviation heading), and (2) Animal Husbandry and related sectors. Each group had a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Convenor, and 4-10 members. (Aanchal and Yeroor panchayats, undated, List of working groups, 2004-2005)

²⁴¹ Though the steps were followed, most interviewees (President, Aanchal Panchayat, Plan Coordinator, Yeroor Panchayat) reported that participation in the Gram Sabhas was not widespread, though the quorum of 10% of voters was frequently surpassed. But all testified that a predominant proportion of attendees were women, and discussions were involved and often lasted beyond the scheduled 2 hours. Explanations offered included the timing of Sabhas (daytime working hours), the local party politics that made adherents of the party not in office stay away, a perception of the GS as meant for beneficiaries and BPL families only, and lack of understanding of the powers of the assembly (Aanchal President, Yeroor Plan Coordinator, GVRT member).

²⁴² Presidents of Panchayats, Secretary of Aanchal Panchayat, other elected representatives and community members.

²⁴³ Minutes books

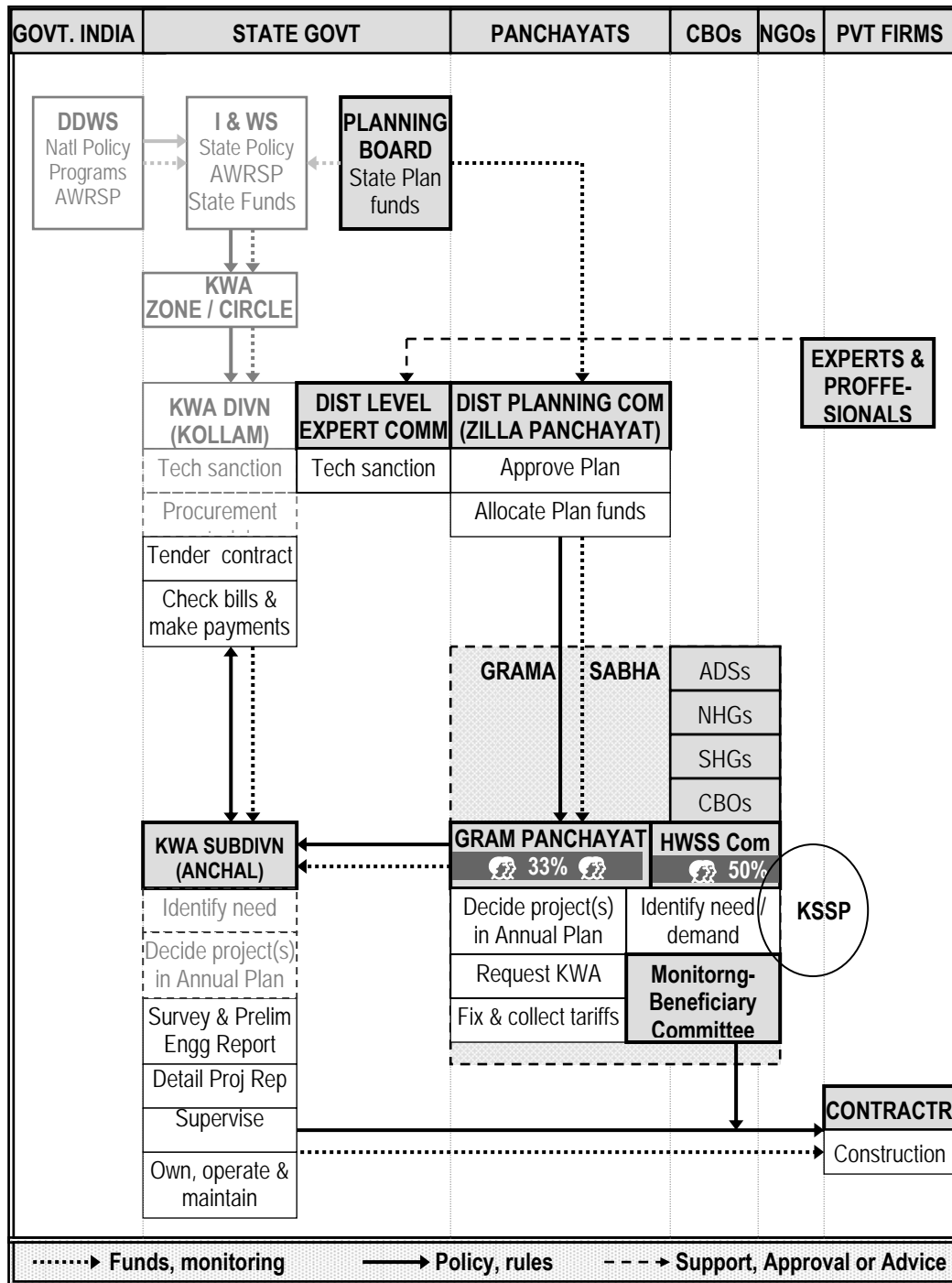


Figure 3.9: Emergent institutional architecture for water provision by reformed local governments in Kerala

person was involved in this capacity in Aanchal. From the discussions in both Panchayats and with the KWA Executive Engineer in the Kollam Division Office, the typical sequence of events and processes for implementation of the planned projects that emerged is shown in Figure 3.9²⁴⁴. The design, tendering and contracting are still carried out by the KWA as before the local government reforms, as is maintenance, and the KWA ‘owns’ the installed system. The project is budgeted for in the Panchayat plan, but since both Central and State government programs for domestic water provision are channeled through the KWA, they have control over the funds.

3.6. POST-DEVOLUTION WATER PROVISION IN KERALA: EFFICACY, EFFECTIVENESS AND PARTICIPATION

Devolution in Kerala was certainly active and substantial, and there was extensive change in the efficacy of the resulting institutional architecture (unlike in Gujarat) in respect of both effective water supply and inclusion of women in local governance. This was due to the transfer of substantial powers and functions to local governments, as was the core of the devolution idea, and spaces and provisions for women’s participation were amply provided. In addition to the seats earmarked for women in the elected Panchayats, similar reservation was applied to Working Groups and Committees, as also in the NHGs at the neighborhood level that were the interface between the Panchayat and the citizens of an area. Further, these enabling institutional elements were energized by the active Campaign spearheaded by the GoK to activate a participatory planning process.

²⁴⁴ As mentioned before, the planned projects – new water sources - were usually construction of wells and tubewells, or very small piped supply schemes (eg, at Mallavatam in Aanchal); projects of this size were handled by the Sub-division office of the KWA, and sanctioned/ cleared by the Division office.

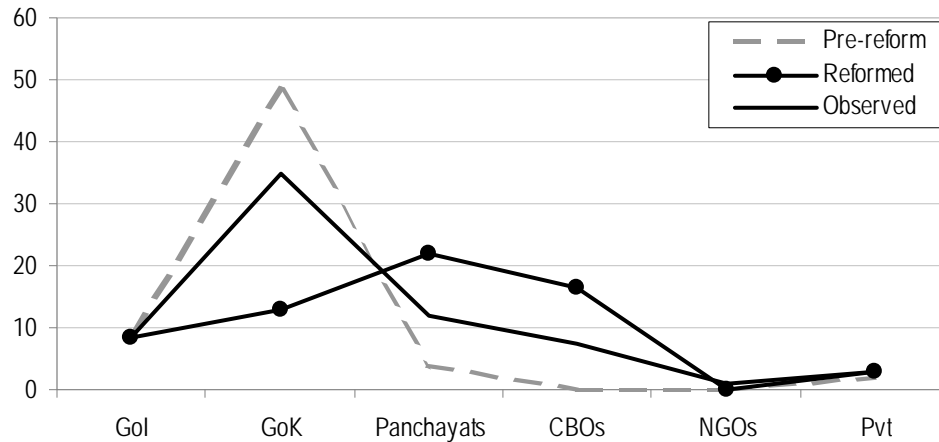


Figure 3.10: Distribution of Functions in Pre-devolved, Devolved and Observed Governance Arrangements in Kerala, derived using the Devolution Score Sheet (Table 2.6)

This active devolution in Kerala that produced an efficacious reform design was clearly a consequence of the political situation, ideological trends in the polity and society, and extensive political and civic involvement of people even at the village level. The UDF (Congress) government in the State in 1993-94 had sufficient interest in the Panchayat Act because the national Congress leader, (late) Rajiv Gandhi had championed it. The conforming Act was therefore readily passed, and some steps were quickly taken, like the transfer of a few staff from the State line departments to Panchayats and introduction of the new Annexure in the State budget for Panchayat schemes. The LDF returned to power in 1996, and in view of their ideology of strengthening ‘people’s rule’ (President, KSSP; CEO Capdeck) and the convictions about the importance of decentralized planning by significant members of the Party, further action was almost inevitable. This fortuitous match between the political ideologies and configurations in Kerala and the intentions of the Panchayat Act resulted in an unusually efficacious reform process and design.

The PPC, however, was an unusually creative and courageous intervention; but with many senior and extremely competent administrators in the State Planning Board and other important departments being Party sympathisers²⁴⁵ it was not only carried through with fair success²⁴⁶, but also, much of the legal and administrative reforms required to institutionalize the process²⁴⁷ were implemented in the five years of LDF term in government. Most astutely, the architects of the PPC and attendant reforms, anticipating the LDF would lose the elections in 2001 – for strong anti-incumbency sentiments leading to alternate terms of the UDF and LDF had been the pattern in Kerala for decades – deliberately ensured that most of these reforms were irreversible. With such efforts, it is no surprise that the reformed design was very effective in improving the water supply situation in the localities, as seen in Table 3.6 and Figure 3.11. Not only did the water availability increase substantially, but almost everyone had a source within 50m of the house. Most important, none of the households had to depend on unsafe sources or obliging neighbors, but 70 % of the households could get a household tap connection in the Mallavattam project, and the seventeen families in the area who did not, had three standposts between them.

This ratio was also similar in the Kanjavel project, with 14 households sharing three public standposts, though no family had a household connection in this project. A

²⁴⁵ The rules governing the Civil Services in India prohibit membership in political parties and involvement in political activities.

²⁴⁶ There are disagreements regarding the extent of success of the PPC, and the fact that it was not equally successful in all districts is generally accepted. But the overwhelming consensus among academic and other observers has been that its success was very substantial, considering the mammoth size and extreme complexity of the project; and its impact and contribution to devolution in Kerala is unquestioned. It has also been pointed out that many detractors – even academic critics – have been affiliated to the UDF and therefore the criticism is not complexly objective (Prof. CDS). In a conference I attended in 1999, the session on decentralization experiences, which had a large number of presentations of the PPC experience by academics from Kerala, were stormy and factional, making the political biases of the presenters very obvious.

²⁴⁷ Learnt from experience of the PPC, and recommended by the Sen Committee which was working alongside and presented its report in 1999

notable feature is that disparity between the households with private sources and those who did not was not increased as in Gujarat, and in Kanjyavel, was actually much reduced. Finally, what was most appreciated by the users was the short gestation period – even a large project like the construction of a 25,000 liter elevated storage reservoir (ESR) and distribution system in Mallavattam, was expected to be completed within a period of nine months.

Table 3.6
Change in effectiveness of water provision after Panchayat reforms in Kerala

Indicators	Mallavattam		Kanjyavel		K-PR	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Per Capita Availability	37.7	91.2	33.0	64.7	35.3	78.0
Per Cap from HH Source	90.1	128.6	92.1	91.5	91.1	110.0
Per Cap from Public Sources	22.8	37.8	10.2	37.5	16.5	37.7
Disparity	67.3	90.8	81.9	53.9	74.6	72.4
% Popn with HH Source	11.3	67.9	7.1	7.1	9.2	37.5
% HH < 50 m from Public Source	0	85	100	100	50.0	92.5
% HH - Unprotected Sources	88.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	44.3	0.0

Calculated from project data obtained from FDGs with users, interview with pump operator

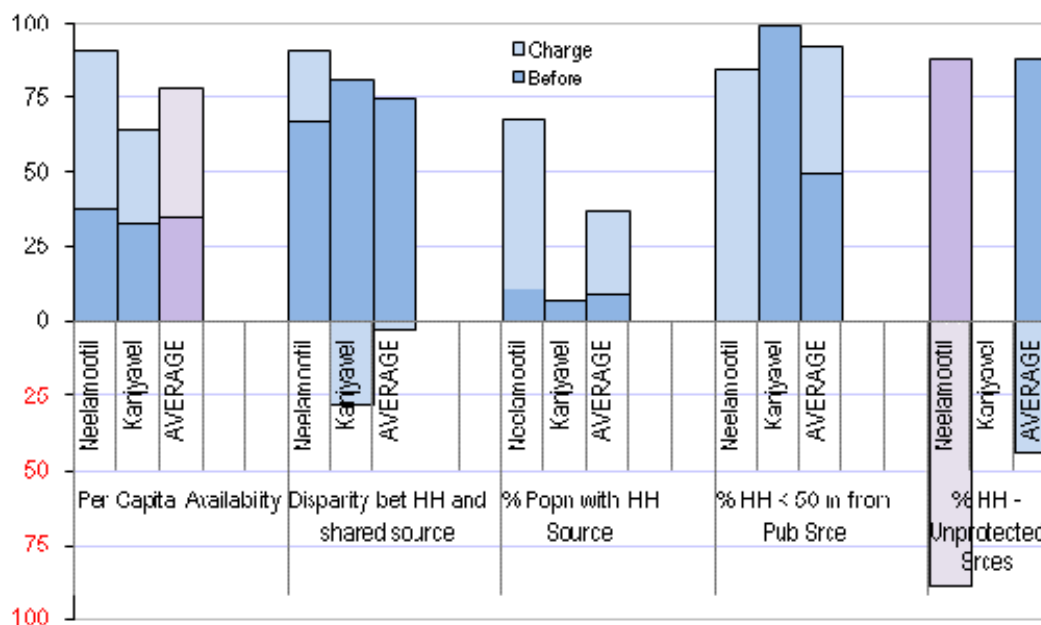


Figure 3.11: Effectiveness of water supply projects in Kerala villages after devolution, from Table 3.6

The promise of inclusion in the reformed institutional architecture was also fairly well realized in the moderate-to-high participation of women in the project processes, as can be seen in Figure. 3.12. Not only were the earmarked positions in the Panchayat occupied, but after two rounds of elections, there are more women than the reserved quota (GoI 2008). This is because, many women stood for re-election from their constituencies and won, even though the ward was no longer designated for women only. The President of Anchal was one such, and mentioned three others from her own Party (CPI-M) who had done the same in other Panchayats. Women – both Panchayat members and others elected by the Gram Sabha – are also members of the various Committees and working groups of the Panchayat and the Gram Sabha. Elected women are fairly regular attendees and active participants at meetings, of the Panchayat, Gram Sabha, Committees and Working Groups.

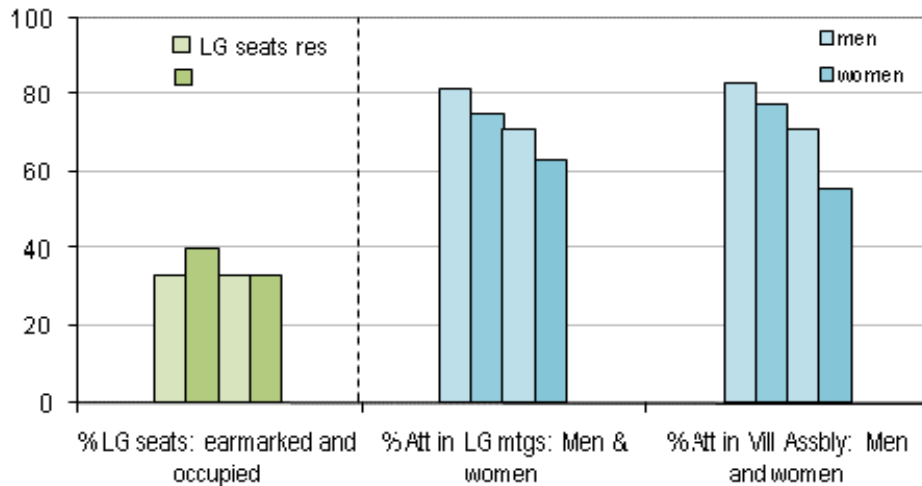


Figure 3.12: Participation in development of water supply projects in Kerala after devolution, derived from interviews and Panchayat data.

Though the women interviewed had not all attended every meeting they were required to, they had made use of almost 70% of the opportunities presented on an average, not

much less than their their male colleagues (interview, register, FDG Yeroor):

‘...oh, all men and women members mostly attend, of course there is sometimes some reason they can’t – like weddings, some family emergency, or illness...two of our members were ill in the last year when we did our Annual Plan...’ (Secretary, Anchal; male)

All the women interviewed were also fully aware of the planning and budgeting processes, had negotiated and discussed the selection of projects and fund allocations. The ex-president of Yeroor Panchayat who had reverted to being a member²⁴⁸, and the current President of Anchal both described many of the projects undertaken in the previous years, in their own Wards and elsewhere in their Panchayat, and helped identify cases for this study. A Working Group member described her complex negotiations with NHGs and with co-members to include specific water supply projects in the Five-year Plan thus:

‘...they [members of an NHG in her own Ward] wanted to put another small tank...but they already had one, ofcourse it was not enough....and these two other colonies [not in her own Ward] had only the handpumps, their wells were also going dry, and I really saw their need and wanted to put two tanks for them.....my people [the NHG in her Ward] were also important, I could not say no to them, so I thought about how to do it....we could include all three if the money we were giving for the overhead tank project [to the KWA] could be budgeted in two years instead of the first year only....I saw those people [the to-be-users of the OHT] already had decent water, four handpumps and most of them had wells too, but that is a prestige thing, some important people wanted that...anyway, in the end all agreed, though I really had to talk so much to all members [of the WG] one by one....’ (interview, Panchayat member)

Women users, in both Mallavatam and Kanjavel, had attended some Gram Sabha meetings, but more frequently, their own NHG meetings. Most had full information of

²⁴⁸ Because neither political party had a clear 2/3 majority in the Panchayat, it had been decided that the President’s position would be filled by a member elected from each party for half the term, i.e., two and half years. This arrangement made it possible for the President to get the required support from members of the opposition during her half-term, and enabled smooth functioning of the Panchayat.

the respective projects, from when and how it was planned to who implemented and how much it cost. In Mallavatam, it was a group of women – now users of the tank supply – who had pushed their Ward member and talked to the Panchayat President to initiate the project. One user of Mallavatam was the President of a beneficiary group in a Sector Reform project in an adjacent area (Nilamootil), because of her experience in initiating the Mallavatam project and observing the process²⁴⁹.

The political ethos and civic-organizational culture was no doubt the primary reason for such enthusiastic participation by both women and men. The unusual density of civil and political society organizations in Kerala, and the links between this characteristic of the context and successful participatory planning has been discussed in section 3.3. This dimension has become even stronger with the institutional structures developed for neighborhood planning and economic development. One was the area-based NHGs in each neighborhood which are the initiation points for participatory planning, federated successively into Ward-level and Panchayat level Development Committees. The other was the all-women Community Development Societies (CDS) organized through the *Kudumbashree* program of the GoK, which not only federate in a Panchayat-level Area Development Society (ADS) but also work with the Development Committees in each Ward. The organic linkages of these community organizations, vertically through their federated structures and horizontally by inclusion of Ward members at both Ward and Panchayat level, makes for an intricate three-dimensional organizational web which provides spaces for both direct and representative participation. More important, the inclusion of the decisions of these groups in the Panchayat Plans has been made statutory; in fact the Panchayat

²⁴⁹ She had joined that group as her house was between the two areas and she needed more water than was available from the Mallavatam tank.

Plan is an integration of the priorities identified and decisions taken at the neighborhood level.

What has made these organizational structures vibrant and active in local governance are the political, social and economic characteristics of their setting. There is a general political ethos of public engagement created by civic and political affiliations of a large proportion of the population as described above. Also, in addition to the high level of social development in terms of housing, education, health, social support for the elderly etc, almost all people in Kerala are literate, and majority are educated to the secondary level (GoI 2001). Engaging in formal governance processes which necessitate at least reading official communications, and often writing minutes of meetings and preparing reports is not daunting. Even in self-help groups (SHGs), records of decisions, and accounts of savings, borrowings and repayments have to be maintained, which is easily done by the literate and usually high-schooled women. The low level of economic development is surprisingly, another contributing factor – with high unemployment levels, individuals from many households have migrated for work elsewhere, and those at home have time, yet are not very poor.²⁵⁰ With high levels of political awareness, social development and education, and high levels of unemployment that allows time, it is not surprising that spaces for participation in the local governance structures and processes are occupied and used.

The design of the organizational structures at the community-local government interface, the NHGs and CDSs, has also been a key element. NHGs were deliberately designed to comprise of members from all households within a locality, and its

²⁵⁰ Kerala has only 3.6.% of the population below the poverty line, compared to 29.5% in MP (see Table 2.2)

functioning is therefore strengthened²⁵¹ by the pre-existing social relationships among members. More, both men and women were statutorily included, not only for parity, but also because most women did not work outside the house, allowing them the time and opportunity to participate in meetings, especially when the meetings are within the locality (interview: Thomas Isaac). Not surprisingly, it is women who are most active in NHGs, and in many localities, it has become an all-women's group. The shared sense of belonging to the area also builds a common interest in development of infrastructure and facilities in their locality, and the subjects included in the discussion, including water supply and sanitation, children's health, and schooling among others, are directly related to their household concerns. CDSs comprise women from economically weaker households, and though they are not from the same area, the monetary benefits of participation and low work participation rates makes them active participants.²⁵²

Why women in Kerala have the most active involvement in local governance as described in section 3.6 is partly explained above; the design of the interface structures, the low work participation rate and the content of the discussions. According to the President of the Aanchal Panchayat, a woman who won the seat from a non-reserved constituency in her second term, the high literacy rates and levels of education among women are other factors, and have particularly helped elected members in the Panchayat structure who have to 'deal' with the State bureaucracy²⁵³. It has also provided the foundation for developing confidence in their new roles, and

²⁵¹ Sometimes vitiated by pre-existing antagonisms, but the need for water, the interest in development of the locality and pressure from other households usually leads to even such households joining the group.

²⁵² This is changing; with the rapid spread of the Kudumbasree units, women have begun working outside the house.

²⁵³ In the course of one of the interviews with the President, the skill with which she kept the male Secretary of the Panchayat, who was also present, from answering questions or taking over the discussion was very apparent.

quick learning on the job. (President, Aanchal Panchayat)

But as two women members of the Yeroor Panchayat pointed out, the most important factor is that the customary restrictions, which have been the greatest obstacle to women's participation in many other States, have been substantially diluted. Women have traditionally enjoyed almost equal or, in communities where matrilineal systems were prevalent, more social privileges than men. Restrictive traditions that were present varied across castes and locations and with modernization and widespread education have eroded to a great extent. Coupled with the political mobilization and active recruitment to political cadres that has been ongoing for decades, many elected women are or have been Party members and organizers, which has provided valuable political experience and information.

The situation observed in Kerala was clearly at the other end of the scale from that in Gujarat and arguably a product of the local social, political and economic conditions. How does the reform fare in Madhya Pradesh, which differs in these aspects from both? In the next section, I examine this, before comparing the patterns that were visible in the three States in the following one.

4. GRAM SWARAJ AND WATER PROVISION IN MADHYA PRADESH

As in many other parts of India, in the area now in Madhya Pradesh water provision had historically been the responsibility of village Panchayats, either traditional caste-based or community-based organizations or those formally constituted by rulers. It is however, one of the largest States in India and includes a number of regions with

significantly different socio-cultural characteristics and political trajectories, and the extent of responsibility, authority and resources of these local bodies varied widely among them. When Madhya Pradesh was formed in 1956, there were three-tier Panchayat systems in the eastern parts which had been under direct colonial rule, but village (Gram) Panchayats existed in some form in all areas²⁵⁴.

Historically, dugwells and tanks were the most common sources of domestic water in rural areas, except in settlements along streams or rivers. These were typically owned and managed by communities, and only very few rich households had private wells. The common sources had developed over time with community contributions, and grants or other assistance from rulers and large landowners. Maintenance was almost invariably by the community, or governing bodies like panchayats, with various systems of rules to regulate access and use.

After 1956, the three tier system of Gram Panchayats, Janpad Panchayats (at Block level) and Zilla Panchayats (at district level) was applied across the State through successive legislation in 1962, 1981 and 1990²⁵⁵. Cumulatively, the provisions had come to include reservation of a proportion of seats for women and dalits, and plebiscitary decision-making by the Gram Sabha (GS, the assembly of voters in a village) with the Gram Panchayat as the executive body of the GS. The actual functioning of the Panchayats was however, repeatedly hindered and eventually, precluded by political and legal disputes.

²⁵⁴ Both in British-ruled areas and the many princely states, the tribal areas, which constitute a large proportion of the present State, had different local governance structures from the non-tribal areas in recognition of their cultural traditions and practices.

²⁵⁵ The 1980 and 1991 (and later, 1993) panchayat legislations of Madhya Pradesh did not make special provisions for tribal areas, recognized as such under Schedule V of the Constitution; it was not till the Central Government extended the 1993 Panchayat Act, with relevant modifications, to Schedule V areas in 1996 that different provisions were enacted in the 1997 amendment to the 1993 Act (Buch 2000)

In the meanwhile the Public Health Engineering Department of the State government had been constituted after the State was formed, and been charged with the responsibility and powers to attend to domestic water provision in the State. In the absence of functioning Panchayats, the PHED was the only institutional structure for water provision in rural areas, except in the few scattered locations where NGOs worked to mobilize communities and restore traditional sources.

4.1. PRE-REFORM MODALITIES AND STATUS OF WATER PROVISION IN MADHYA PRADESH

Installation of handpumps and tubewells was the major thrust of the PHED in the rural areas during its first decades, through its typical departmental structure of Zones, Circles, Divisions and Sub-division offices. The inadequacy of its network in the face of the geographical spread of the State has been pointed out as recently as 2005 (WaterAid 2005), even after its steady expansion since its inception; in the first decades this was obviously even less adequate. Water provision was implemented by the department mainly under the AWRSP program of the GoI initiated in the 70's, as in other States, and efforts were accelerated and intensified in the eighties when the issue of domestic water provision became a development priority nationally under the Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission. The process was typical – survey of the water sources in villages within sub-division jurisdictions, formulation of proposals at that level, scrutiny and sanction by Division and Circle offices according to the size of the project, and eventually, implementation by the Sub-division. Figure 3.13 shows the pre-reform organizational set-up for water provision in Madhya Pradesh.

In 1981, only 8% of rural households had access to protected water sources, against

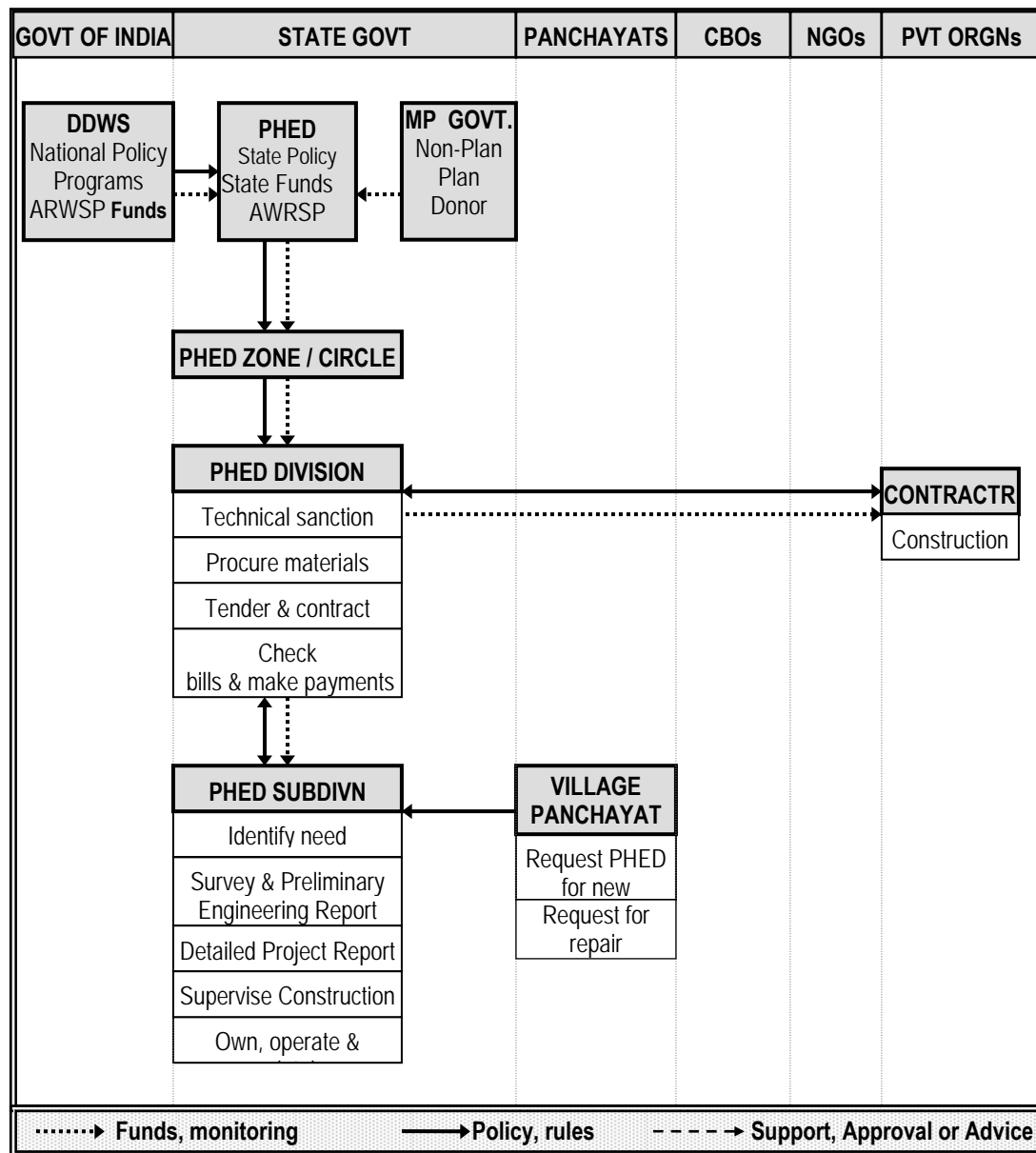


Figure 3.13: Institutional structure for water provision in Madhya Pradesh before devolution

67% in urban areas; by 1991 this had increased to 46% in rural areas and 80% in urban areas, a combined increase in coverage of 33% in the decade (CoI 1991). Access to water in rural areas was getting more difficult with falling levels of groundwater due to extraction through tubewells for agriculture; dugwells dried up in the summer

months, and ground-water salinity was increasing. The western districts and some in the northeast part of the State receive less rainfall and over the years have been classified as drought-prone, but with five major river basins, surface water was not scarce, even allowing for sufficient flow to downstream States. Reservoirs were however built mainly for irrigation and urban supply, and piping water to rural areas was not a priority.

Groundwater was almost wholly the source for domestic water, and remains so till date. However, with the PHED focus on tubewells, dugwells and ponds were falling into disrepair and disuse. Recharge of water tables through watershed treatment under the Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission initiated in 1994 has been widespread and successful in the areas where it has been implemented, as has the 'Pani Roko Abhiyan' (literally, Retain Water Movement) in some other areas. These are however, present in less than 20% of the blocks in the State, and access to safe and sufficient water throughout the year has been a major issue in the last decade (RGNDWM interviews, Wateraid 2005, Das 2006).

Local institutional involvement in water provision in the 90's was perhaps the least in Madhya Pradesh among the three study States, and reportedly, quite far below most other States (CEO, Taal). There were very few reputed non-governmental organizations in Madhya Pradesh as compared to some other States (for example in Gujarat), and without functioning Panchayats, caste-based (or ethnic or kin-based in the tribal areas) community organizations were almost the only kind of local organizations. These systems had also eroded with time, and withdrawn from general community action, retreating to regulation of social and cultural norms and arbitration within the caste only. Water access was, predictably, most problematic in localities

inhabited by the poor and the dalits, and a substantial proportion of the State population belonged to these groups. It is therefore not surprising that the ability of such community organizations to demand action from the PHED was very limited, both for installation of new systems or repair and maintenance of existing ones.

4.2. PANCHAYAT REFORMS IN MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh amended its existing 1990 Panchayat legislation in January 1994 to conform to the reforms mandated by the Central Act, making only a few changes in its existing Act. Three were significant – one, earmarking of one-third of the seats at all levels for women, and for dalits and OBCs in proportion to their population; two, a strong role for the Gram Sabha; and three, the transfer of control over the DRDAs from the Collector to the Zilla Panchayat, and over the Block Development Offices to the Janpad (intermediate) Panchayat. A Congress government was office at the time, and the then Chief Minister (CM) enthusiastically initiated a process of devolution, in what observers maintain was a move to impress the national leaders of the Congress; but with a backlash from his own Ministers, and protest from the State bureaucracy, had to soon revise his position. In the effort to placate them while retaining the wider political appeal of devolution, the structure was revised, and a District Government with a Minister as its Chairman and the District Collector as the Secretary was added, thereby keeping both Ministers and officers happy, but undermining the Zilla Panchayat (CEO, Samarthan, CEO, Taal, Prof, SIPA).

In 2001, the CM declared a policy of ‘Gram Swaraj’ (literally, village self-governance), strengthening the village assembly (Gram Sabha) through a ‘Gram Swaraj Adhiniyam’. Under that, the Gram Sabha is constituted by the voters in each

revenue village, which is usually co-terminous with a hamlet or habitation, instead of the whole panchayat, which typically includes 2-4 villages. The funds for some development programs are transferred from the village government (Gram Panchayat, or GP) to a separate bank account of the Gram Sabha, and are handled by an elected Treasurer who maintains registers and operates the bank account with the Sarpanch as co-signatory. Seven Committees for village-level tasks are also constituted by the Gram Sabha²⁵⁶, for Health, Education, Infrastructure, Agriculture, Social justice, Social security and Public Resources, with eight to twelve elected members in each. The chairpersons of these committees, elected by the GS from among themselves, constitute the Village Development Committee (VDC) that is chaired by the Sarpanch. Half of the members in each committee are required to be from the socially marginalized groups, and one-third women. (Prof, SIPA; GoMP 2001). The cumulative result of various Government orders and legislation is that the Gram Sabha is now a statutory body for direct decision-making, with the Gram Panchayat as its elected executive bound to carry out the recommendations of the general body. Decisions, including budget allocations of the GP have to be ratified by the GS, which meets atleast quarterly, during fixed weeks of the year, and has a quorum requirement of 20% of members, of which one-third have to be women. In effect, a direct-democratic system was instituted (Manor 2001, Behar 2003).

Gram Sabhas are entrusted primarily with civic functions, among which is the responsibility for domestic water provision, to be undertaken by the Health Committee. The following are the items pertaining to domestic water supply which have been listed as functions of the Gram Sabha in the MP Gram Swaraj Adhiniyam

²⁵⁶ Members of these committees are to be elected or selected by the Gram Sabha, or the lists prepared by the Panchayat ratified by them. However, this process was almost completely bypassed in a majority of the villages, and the composition of the committees were filled in the Annual Report of the Panchayat by the Panchayat President (Sarpanch) and Secretary (Sachiv).

2001 (GoMP):

- Repairing and maintaining public wells, ponds and tank and supply of water for domestic use,
 - Construction and maintenance of sources of water for bathing and washing and supply of water for domestic animals.
 - Constructing, maintaining and clearing of public streets, latrines, trains, tanks, wells etc,
 - Filling in disused wells, unsanitary ponds, pools ditches and pits and conversion of step wells into sanitary wells,
 - Planning and managing basic amenities
- (GoMP 2001, reported in Wateraid 2005)

The State and Central government programs that were being implemented by the PHED have, however, not been transferred to the Panchayats, and neither have the professional personnel handling projects at the local levels such as engineers and hydrologists. However, in a set of instructions issued by the GoMP in 1998, some staff of the PHED is listed as being under the control of Janpad and District Panchayats²⁵⁷. The funds from major water provision programs such as the AWRSP continue to be with the PHED, though with the transfer of a portion of State revenues to Panchayats, the latter do have other funds at their disposal for small water supply projects, and operation and maintenance of existing ones. In addition to these direct transfers from the State government²⁵⁸, they also receive funds allocated by the Central government for programs that were being implemented by the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs).

Figure 3.14 shows the changes in the organizational set-up for water provision in Madhya Pradesh, A prime issue in local governance, which a number of observers of

²⁵⁷ This means that they are to work under the direction of Panchayats, but their salaries continue to be paid by the PHED and they report to their superiors in the State Department.

²⁵⁸ The revenue transfers are on the basis of recommendations by the First and Second State Finance Commissions, which were constituted to suggest the division of revenues between the State and local governments.

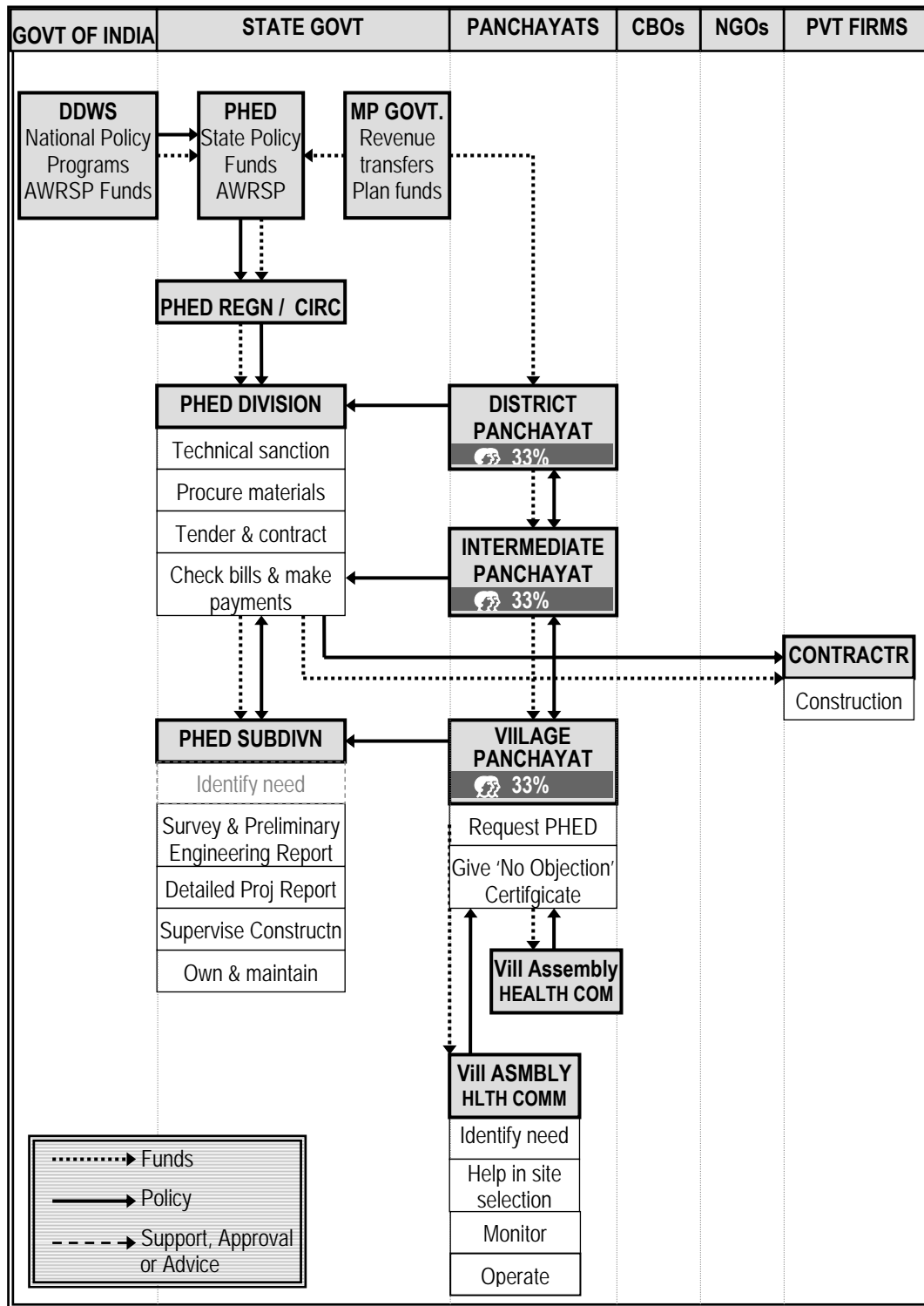


Figure 3.14: Reformed institutional architecture for water provision in Madhya Pradesh villages after devolution.

devolution in Madhya Pradesh have pointed out, is the proliferation of a large number of “parallel organizations” at the village level. A number of task-specific and user-groups such as Joint Forest Management and Watershed Committees, and community-based organizations like the Village Education Committee have been set up by various line departments of the State government and parastatals created to manage programs like the District Poverty Eradication Program (DPEP), the Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (literally, Education-to-all Campaign). The overlap of functions and domains of action between these, the Gram Sabha Committees, and the Panchayat and its Standing Committees are seen to be undermining the legitimacy, resource-base and effective functioning of the latter elected bodies (Behar, 2003, ISS 2000). The resource position of such user-groups is typically far better than that of Panchayats, with the government channeling more development funds through the State programs under which these parallel groups are constituted, than the amounts transferred to Panchayats. In addition, almost all villages have a number of self-help groups (SHGs) for savings and credit organized by banks, NGOs or State departments. Most villages also have ‘Yuvak Sansthas’ (youth groups), ‘Bhajan Mandalis’ (prayer groups), Temple Committees and other such self-organized community groups. The roles of these organizations in the development projects in the village range from almost nonexistent to strong mobilization and organizing. (interview: DC, Samarthan, FDGs in Kharpa, Lasudia Dhakad).

4.3. (LITTLE) BUSINESS AS USUAL: THE PHED AND PANCHAYATS IN MADHYA PRADESH

To understand the modalities for water provision and how the reformed structure functioned at the village level, the organizational arrangement and process of decision-

making for recently constructed water supply systems was studied in three Panchayats, comprising nine villages in Sehore Taluka of the district. Sehore district is classified as semi-critical in terms of over-exploitation of groundwater, and in most parts has a problem of fluoride and iron contamination and salinity. Of the 1019 villages in the district, all are officially recorded as having adequate drinking water facilities (GoI 2001), but in reality the falling levels of groundwater, contamination and not least, the state of disrepair of handpumps and wells – the two main sources - make access to water a major problem in almost all villages (Samarthan Dist Coord; CEO, Taal). In Sehore Taluk 60% of the people depend on handpumps for water, but only a very few – 3.5% - have private ones (see Table 3.7). More than one-third of the households have to fetch water from more than 300 m away²⁵⁹, and in the summer when wells run dry and handpumps yield contaminated water, as far as one kilometer to the nearest irrigation tubewell²⁶⁰.

Table 3.7
Distribution of households by location and sources of water in Sehore Taluk

Sehore Taluk in Sehore District, MP										
Location of Water Source	Total No. of HH	% of HH	Tap	Hand pump	Tubewell	Well	Tank, Pond, Lake	River, Canal	Spring	Any Other
Total	44,885	100.0	7.9	61.5	5.0	24.8	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2
Within Premises	4,317	9.6	3.1	3.5	1.4	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Near Premises	24,528	54.6	4.0	35.9	2.1	12.5	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0
Away	16,040	35.7	0.9	22.1	1.6	10.6	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.2

Source: Developed from Census of India, 2001: H-Series, Table H-8

²⁵⁹ Estimated during fieldwork in the village, through the transect walks.

²⁶⁰ Many irrigation tubewells have electric pumpsets to draw water, and because in the summer the electricity supply is erratic, the anxiety over getting water is very high for households who don't own these tubewells but have to rely on permission from the owner. Through the day, women keep an ear cocked for news that the power supply is back so that they can run to the tubewells before the power goes off again or the owner decides to switch off the pump.

The three study Panchayats, Kharpa, Lasiduya Dhakad and Rola, include 4, 3 and 2 villages respectively, separated by distances of between 1 to 5 kms. All villages have taps, wells, tubewells, tanks and handpumps (GoI, 2001), but like in the rest of the Taluk, many of these are not functioning or dry in summer. Of the nine villages, all except Bisan Kheda and Karadiya Atah had had some new water supply system developed between 2001-2005 under various development programs, or community initiative. The Panchayat or some of its office-holders were involved in all to various extents; in this chapter, however, I only discuss those that are outside the Sector Reform program, which I discuss specifically in the next chapter. Details of the existing and new water supply installations are provided in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8
Details of old and new water sources in the study panchayats in Madhya Pradesh

Panchayat - Village	Population			No. of Hhold	Hhold size	Existing Water Sources				New handpumps
	Total	% SC	% ST			Well	Handpump	Pub.Tap	Other	
Kharpa	583	39	8	143	4.1	2	3 (+4 pvt)		River	1
- Karadiya Atah	402	26	2	61	6.6					
- Ram Khedi	823	2	0	133	6.2					
- Kaheri Kadam	578	12	0	104	5.6					
Lasudiya Dhakad	818	44	5	155	5.3	2	4		Dam	2
- Lasudiya khas	810	15	0	156	5.2	1	6 (+1 pvt)	2	2 ponds	1
- Bishan Kheda	248	42	0	51	4.9					
Rola	1244	5	4	183	6.8					
- Manpura	446	12	0	62	7.2	31	3(+2 pvt)	1		2

Sources: Census of India 2001; for water sources PHED Sub-division, focus group discussions and transect walks.

Except in Bishan Kheda and Karadiya Atah, there has been some work to revive or add to the water sources in all villages. New systems (elevated tank with public taps) have been constructed under the Sector Reform Program of the GoI, implemented by

the PHED. Other work such as excavation of a large pond and construction of a tank in Lasudiya Khas, deepening and repair of two existing wells, and construction of a small dam across a village stream to store water in Lasudiya Dhakad, and installation of a new handpump and tank in Kharpa has been undertaken with funds from other sources. These have been initiated and followed through by either the Sarpanch, the Health Committee President or community groups, with program funds that are channeled through the Zilla and Janpad Panchayats or – in case of the tank in Kharpa – from untied funds available with the Gram Panchayat. In each case, the community has also contributed either money or labor. Samarthan, a Bhopal-based NGO working in most of these villages, has also provided funds in two cases. Development of new water supply systems by the PHED in these villages was restricted to those admissible under the Sector Reform Program²⁶¹, and without other funds, they did not undertake work such as installation of new handpumps or maintenance of existing systems. After devolution and the assignment of water supply functions and some untied funds to Panchayats, the planning and implementation of non-Sector Reform projects had become their responsibility. However, the participatory planning and community involvement that was envisaged did not happen, and the projects undertaken in these villages were initiated and driven by individuals. The Gram Swaraj system intended to develop participatory decision-making in the Gram Sabha has had the unintended consequence of creating a disconnect between the village and the Panchayat by removing the statutory requirement of a general Gram Sabha of all voters in the panchayat. Hamlet-level Gram Sabhas were held only on the four occasions made legally mandatory, and were poorly attended with the 20% quorum was rarely met²⁶².

²⁶¹ That was because these villages were listed as ‘fully covered’ in the PHED records (PHED 2004).

²⁶² This of course did not stop the ‘meeting’; decisions were made among the few people present, of which the largest proportion were usually friends, family members and political allies of the Sarpanch. The ‘minutes book’ was then circulated in the village for more signatures to make up the requisite quorum. The pond in Lasudiya Khas was decided in this manner and constructed by the Sarpanch on land that had already been allocated to a landless Scheduled Caste family. The family was completely

With a Sarpanch from one of the villages that comprise the Panchayat, and typically, the better off, upper-caste and/or more politically connected one, there is a clear concentration of resources in the that village. Information about development programs are easily withheld, and the funds channeled unilaterally by the Sarpanch for politically or personally useful projects. Project decisions were taken by the Sarpanch in consultation with the Sachiv (Panchayat Secretary) and a few other significant people in the village. With information and influence, the Sarpanch is able to source funds from the Janpad Panchayat for his proposals. He is also able to raise the minimum 10% contribution from the ‘beneficiaries’ as most programs require, or commandeer the amount from other village funds such as the Temple Committee or deposit the money himself, since there is usually ample scope to recover any personal investment during the implementation of the project.

The typical process, providing the picture of the emergent institutional architecture, is shown in Figure 3.15. The projects in Lasudiya Khas were all in the above mode. In Lasudiya Dhakad, the initiative was taken by the Health Committee President, who learnt – accidentally on a visit to the Janpad Panchayat – of funds available under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) of the GoI. He mobilized the community to develop plans for repairing and deepening the wells and agree to contribute 10% in labor, persuaded the officer handling JRY to allocate the other 90%, and when that was not sufficient, applied to Samarthan and secured the rest. None of this involved consultations with the Panchayat members, Sarpanch, the village Treasurer or even members of the Health Committee. In Kharpa and Ramkhedi too, it was the Health

unaware till they tried to get possession of the land, and had signed the resolution about the pond taken at a Gram Sabha meeting they did not attend.

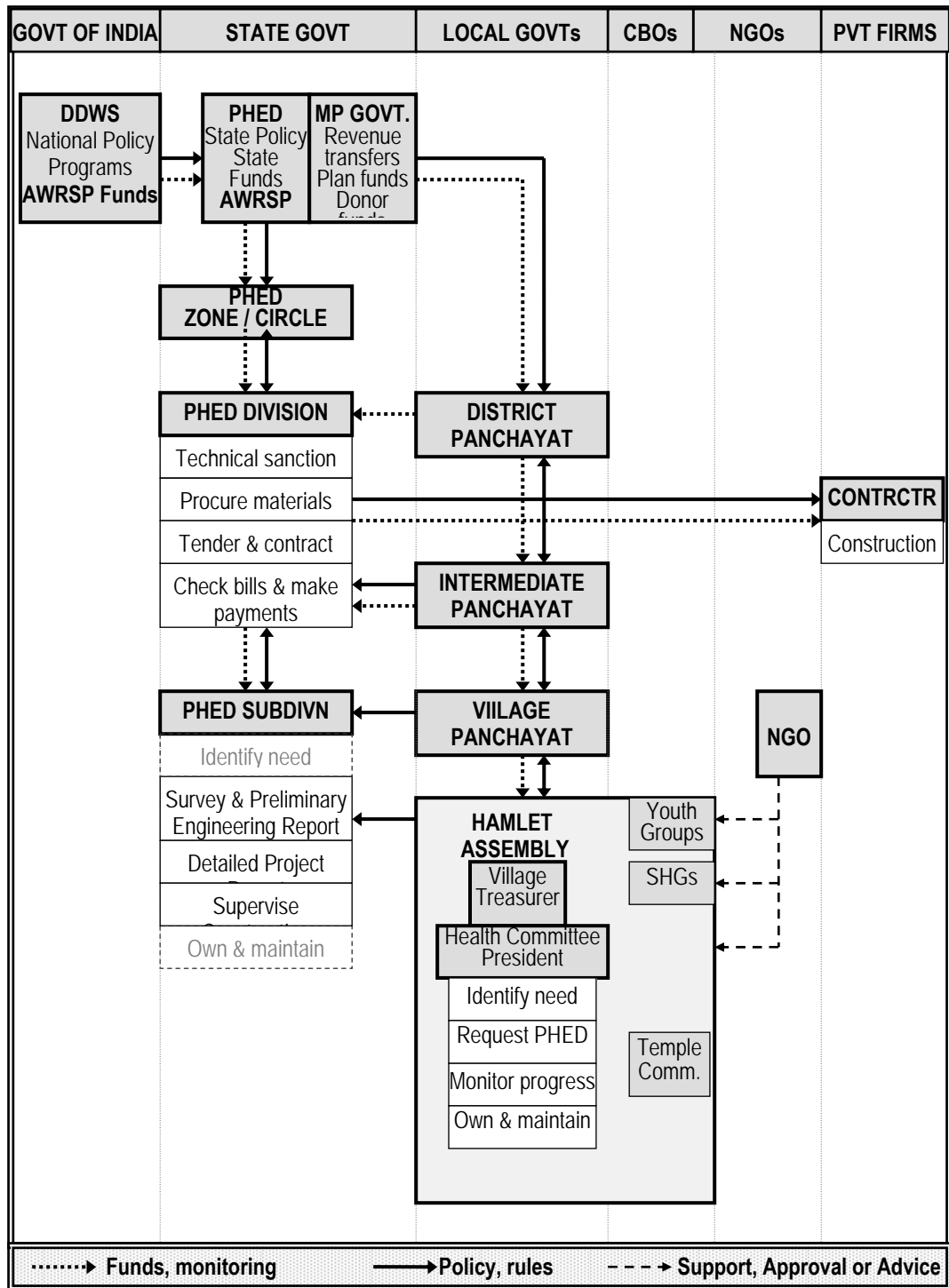


Figure 3.15: Emergent institutional architecture for developing water supply projects in Madhya Pradesh villages after devolution.

Committee President who initiated and anchored the projects; in Kaheri Kadam, it was the previous Sarpanch, and in Jarkhedi, a low-caste neighborhood of Kharpa, a youth group organized by Samarthan. In the last case, the group not only mobilized engagement of the residents, but also compelled the Sarpanch to allocate one third of the required funds from the Panchayat account.

The PHED did not implement these projects though was involved in an advisory capacity, except for the handpump installation in Kharpa and the tank in Jarkhedi which were more 'technical' in nature. "We don't need them to tell us how to dig a pond or repair the well!" said the Health Committee President of Lasudiya Dhakad, though he admitted they would need the PHED to design and supervise construction a proposed mini-dam that was being planned.

4.4. DEVOLUTION IN MADHYA PRADESH: EFFICACY, EFFECTIVENESS AND PARTICIPATION

The nature of devolution and the extent of efficacy of devolution in Madhya Pradesh can also, as in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, be linked to its political situation at the State level and the political-economic and socio-cultural characteristics of the localities. The Congress government in place in the State enacted the conforming Act in December 1993, and in a series of amendments over the following years, prescribed rules of functioning of Gram Sabhas, functions of Panchayats and their functional control²⁶³ over staff of State departments associated with Panchayat functions and devolution of tasks to Panchayats. A bold measure was the introduction of the 'Gram

²⁶³ That is, the personnel remained State government employees and under the control of their respective district heads, but were answerable to Panchayats to some extent in the discharge of their duties.

Swaraj’ structure, which took formal governance processes right into the hamlets (see Figure 3.13). The resulting institutional architecture had the potential to be both highly effective and participative, for not only was devolution substantial, as shown in Figure 3.16 but the institutional arrangements included a large number of spaces and opportunities for participation of women in the villages, right at their doorstep.

This promise was however, belied by the real-politick of the State and the socio-cultural and political-economic characteristics of villages. The ostensibly energetic pace of devolution which earned the Chief Minister brownie points with the national Congress leaders and the media, however, masked the reality that Panchayats were given little additional power or resources. The specified design and procedures of

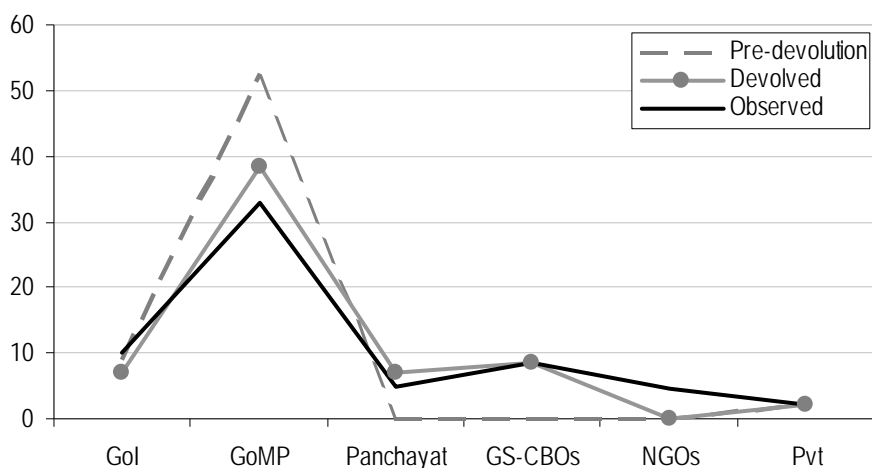


Figure 3.16: Relative extent of decentralization in pre-devolved, devolved and observed governance arrangements in Madhya Pradesh, derived using Devolution Score Sheet (see Table 2.6)

many of the organizations that comprised the Panchayat system – for example, the Zilla Panchayat and the District Planning Committee - ensured the control of elected members of the State Assembly and/or the State bureaucracy over the elected

Panchayat bodies. This was required to placate State leaders and government staff who were increasingly restive, but emasculated the Panchayat system at the district level and reversed the intent of devolution. In effect, the Gram Swaraj Adhiniyam of 2001, which changed the structure at the village level, was another populist step that many observers have perceived as undermining the Gram Panchayat, though ostensibly the design took decision-making closer to the people (CEO, Samarthan; Prof, SIPA). In sum, political compulsions led to apparently active devolution on one hand while the small print ensured continuing State control over the local governments on the other.

The undermined efficacy of the reforms, however, did not preclude more effective provision of water as is visible in Figure. 3.17 and Table 3.9. Per capita availability increased only marginally but in a situation of water scarcity, it meant a great deal in terms of household welfare.²⁶⁴ Moreover, without any supply to private connections, the disparity between households with private sources – typically wells or tube wells – and households dependant on public sources reduced notably. Also, it eased access and reduced dependence on unprotected sources by more than half. None of these are negligible yields from the reformed process.

Participation in the reformed processes was, however, not as notable. The institutional architecture as designed was highly efficacious in this respect, for the spaces created for women in the Madhya Pradesh system were far more than in Gujarat: one third of elected positions in Panchayats, its Standing Committees and the seven development committees of the Gram Sabha. The 20% quorum for Gram Sabhas also included a specification that one-third present had to be women. This presented a host of

²⁶⁴ The women interviewed referred repeatedly to the reduction in the anxiety and effort that was associated with water collection before, and also to the fact that now they didn't have to send their very young children to bathe in distant ponds or other sources.

Table 3.9
Change in effectiveness of water provision after Panchayat reforms in Madhya Pradesh

	Kharpa		Lasudiya Dhakad		Lasudiya Khas		Manpura		MP PR	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Per Capita Availability	34.3	44.6	29.3	44.0	48.8	56.2	42.6	69.5	38.8	53.6
Per Cap from HH Source	88.3	88.3	0.0	0.0	96.3	96.3	103.1	103.1	71.9	71.9
Per Cap from Public Sources	32.1	42.8	29.3	44.0	59.6	67.1	41.3	68.8	40.6	55.7
Disparity	56.2	45.5	0.0	0.0	36.7	29.2	61.9	34.4	38.7	27.3
% Popn with HH Source	3.9	3.9	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.6	2.2	2.2	1.7	1.7
% HH < 50 m from Pub Srce	76.7	91.3	58.1	77.4	87.2	96.8	100.0	100.0	80.5	91.4
% HH - Unprotected Srces	19.4	4.9	41.9	22.6	12.2	2.6	0.0	0.0	18.4	7.5

Calculated from data obtained from users, Panchayat and PHED subdivision office.

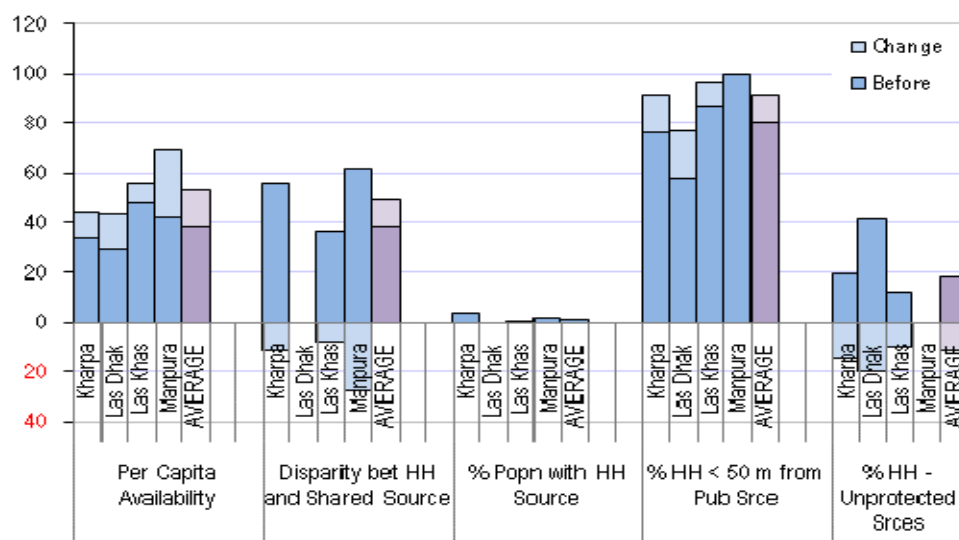


Figure 3.17: Effectiveness of water provision in villages in Madhya Pradesh after devolution

opportunities for participation at the hamlet level – and hamlets in MP are small and compact, not very much bigger than the NHGs of Kerala. But there was little uptake of the opportunities, as can be seen in Figure 3.18.

Undeniably, the local socio-cultural characteristics undermined of the efficacy of the opportunities presented in the reformed arrangements. Though women occupied the

statutory spaces provided in the Panchayats, the other spaces were neither made available by those who controlled decisions at the village and hamlet levels, nor filled except on paper. The provision for Committee membership was however, not met in the Health Committee in two villages, not even on paper, and in various other Committees in four villages. The reason advanced was uncannily similar to the opinion expressed in Umbhel (Gujarat),

‘...its so difficult to know who to include, there are hardly one or two who are active...even they hardly come to meetings, so this would be just cosmetic anyway....and we can’t put their names everywhere...’ (Kharpa, Panchayat member).

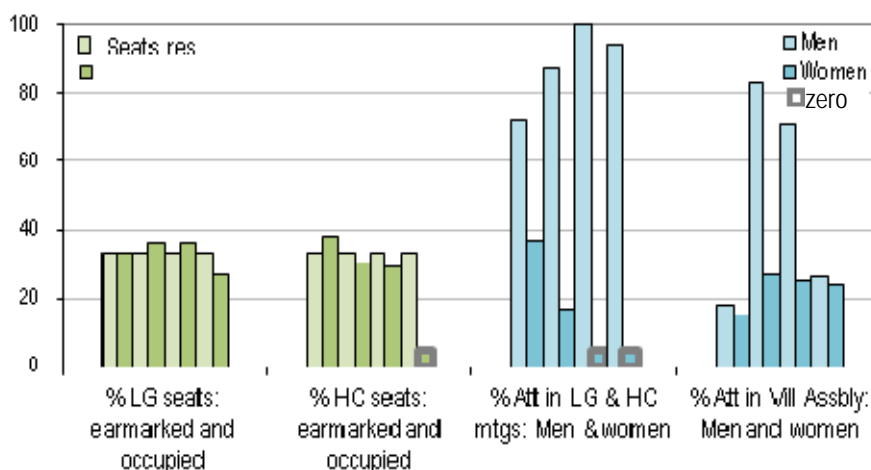


Figure 3.18: Participation in the development of water supply processes in Madhya Pradesh villages after devolution

In most hamlets, there was no election for members of the various Aam Sabha Committees, but names proposed by those at the meeting in which this was decided. Even when their names were included, to fulfill statutory requirements, the women did not always know about their membership. Attendance at Panchayat meetings and Gram Sabha meetings was less than even that in Gujarat, and only three of the women

interviewed had any prior information about the proposed projects before the location was surveyed by the PHED engineer – and mostly by hearsay. Half of the women had never done anything except put their thumbprints where and when instructed, usually by male members of their family. The practice of a male member of the household attending meetings in place of the elected woman is common, and only three of the women interviewed said they had heard about the discussion at the meetings from those men. A frequent remark of the elected women interviewed was... 'why should we bother, they all know and decide, anyway what can we say...' or words to that effect. Participation in the active SHGs in which they had membership was also observed to be intermittent and purely for the saving-credit-repayment tasks; other conversation typically centered on the personal lives and activities of their kith and kin.

This pattern of low participation was arguably a consequence of the socio-economic conditions of the villages. MP has among the highest proportion of poor people relative to other States²⁶⁵ (see Table 2.2) and very low levels of almost all indicators of social development such as literacy, health and education; infrastructure is also poorly developed and rates of employment low. Low levels of education and information and the continuous struggle for a decent existence – sometimes, even for survival – was apparently not fertile ground for civic and political engagement, particularly where feudal relations, caste structures and traditions of restriction and exclusion remain strong. Community organization only happened with interventions by NGOs, and the associative and mutual-help organizations they seeded in the community required constant nurturing and revitalization – even after seven years of effort by Samarthan, very few had developed a motive power of their own. Most unfortunately, the

²⁶⁵ About 30% of the population is below poverty line, compared to 4% in Kerala and 2% in Gujarat.

splintering of the all-panchayat Gram Sabha into village-level Gram Sabhas, instead of increasing flow of information, transparency and participation, actually enabled the capture of resources and powers by the Sarpanch – in the words of Samarthan staff, the reality was ‘Sarpanch Raj’ – literally, ‘Panchayat President’s Rule’.

Given this situation with respect to the overall functioning of the system, it is not surprising that women’s involvement was minimal, and almost non-existent in the processes of decision-making for the water-supply projects studied, as described earlier in this section. The primary reason cited by all the women interviewed was customary restrictions, either gendered or casteist. Only two specifically mentioned the lack of literacy, but other elected women said it was the inability to comprehend the discussions, which took place primarily between the Sarpanch, the Secretary, and one or two other significant male members. Interestingly, only two women mentioned time constraints. Clearly the social and customary practices were the prime inhibitor of women’s participation, though the ‘group effect’ did lead to better attendance in Gram Sabhas and Aam Sabhas. The same was also the reason for the occasional active involvement in community work such as when the poorer sections of the village organized for a specific project such as the water tank in Jarkhedi, and cleaning of a well in Lasudiya Dhakad.

The interesting dynamic in MP is that the participation of men varies sharply in relation to the almost uniformly low attendance of women. The data here is however, likely to be unreliable, as the male elected representatives interviewed were in most villages the Sarpanch and Sachiv, and a few of their associates, who by definition were active and fully engaged. Access to other elected representatives was difficult – whether by design of ‘gatekeepers’ or accidentally, was not clear. The two villages in

which the interviews and surveys were less ‘directed’ – Kharpa and Manpura – are likely to be closer to the reality. And if the pattern in these two is considered, the participation of men does not exceed that of women by much, though Panchayat meetings are far better attended than the assembly. This could indicate that women’s low participation is as much the result of the political economy of caste and class relations in the village as the gendered norms and practices. From the interviews and focus group discussions in these villages, this appears to be closer to the reality than the extremely divergent levels of participation between men and women seen in the data from Lasudiya Khas and Lasudiya Dhakad.

More of the male Panchayat members do attend Panchayat and Gram Sabha meetings, and the Health Committee Presidents were active initiators and organizers of the projects in two villages. But barring such unusually active persons and the Sarpanch, Sachiv and the Gram Sabha Treasurer, only some upper-caste members attended at least half the meetings; the participation of lower-caste members was as marginal as that of women. It was in the case of the projects which were in lower-caste neighborhoods that members from that group, or a perceived leader were specifically called if they were not already present at meetings where it was discussed. As one Sarpanch explained...

”...we have to make sure they know we are doing it for them, they have to cooperate...sometimes there are fights over the location [within the neighborhood] and its good if one of their own people can tell them that there are technical difficulties because of which only that location is possible...”.(Sarpanch, Lasudiya Khas)

An underlying pattern of individual leadership, direct contact with the Janpad Panchayat and mobilization (or commandeering) of community contributions emerges

in the processes for the non-Sector Reform projects. When not initiated by the Sarpanch, the support of Samarthan staff who work in the village has been an important part of the success. The role of Youth Groups has been significant too, and availability of the funds of the Temple Committees. This tends to be large²⁶⁶ as everybody donates freely for the temple, and it typically is in the control of or accessible to the Sarpanch. While individual leadership, community energies and NGO efforts are applied to projects considered urgent by the village residents, the funds available to the Panchayat are managed and used by the Sarpanch, the Sachiv and the relevant technical officer - for example, the PHED AE or the VEO – for self-identified and formulated projects. In sum, the socio-cultural and economic situation in the hamlets and Village Panchayats have led to a substantial modification of the statutory structure in the State, as shown in Figure 3.13, but with the community organizing and support of the NGO and the emergence of individual leadership, community involvement has not been inconsequential.

5. DEVOLUTION IN THREE CONTEXTS

The substantial differences in the designs of the local governance architectures in the three study States that emerged in the encounter of the skeletal structure specified in the GoI Panchayat Act with the respective State level political-economic situations

²⁶⁶ A temple in Rola had been completed at a cost of around 15 lakhs, and others of imposing height and similar estimated cost were being built in other villages. The Temple Committee in Lasudiya Khas reportedly has about Rs. 400,000 to complete construction of the 12m high Temple; the amount used for most of the water projects ranged from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 40,000, except for the pond in Lasudiya Khas which allegedly cost Rs.400,000. This is also the estimate for the proposed mini-dam in Lasudiya Dhakad, and since in that predominantly lower-caste and Muslim village there are no community funds, the contractor interested in implementing the project has offered to pay the 10% 'beneficiary contribution' to get the rest (Rs 360,000) from the Janpad Panchayat. It is common knowledge that he would not only take back his advance from the project funds, but would also make a lot of money in implementing the project. (interviews)

and its further mutation in practice by the local circumstances, has been described in the previous three sections. These context-related modulations of the Centrally instituted reform clearly had very different outcomes in terms of the effectiveness of and inclusion in the resulting organizational and institutional governance configuration for water provision. The important question is of the relative efficacy of the State-specific designs that emerged, and its relationship to the patterns of effectiveness and participation in each case. To answer this question, the patterns of efficacy, effectiveness and participation that were observed in the three State cases (G-PR, K-PR and MP-PR) are compared in Chapter V, and the discernible reasons for the relative outcomes discussed, after describing the three cases of water provision through liberalized arrangements in the same three States, in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER IV

REFORM EFFICACY AND DEMOCRACY: LIBERALIZATION IN THREE STATES

The drinking water sector in India was liberalized in 1999 to enable faster and more effective development of water supply systems, in tune with the neo-liberal discourses in the country and policy prescription of international institutions. Though the provision of drinking water is the responsibility of the States²⁶⁷, in the last three decades the Government of India (GoI) had increasingly become the largest sponsor of water supply projects in rural areas, setting the policy framework and providing substantial funds. As described in chapter II, the target has been to ensure that all habitations have safe sources that provide at least minimum supplies – fixed at 40 lpcd – of potable water to all households. Since 1972, the GoI's Accelerated Rural Water Supply Program (ARWSP) has been the largest drinking water program in the country, and its policy-making role has become even more significant with the institution of the National Drinking Water Mission (NDWM) in 1986 and framing of a National Water Policy in 1987.

The drinking water situation in rural India however, remained dismal even by the early nineties, and in an effort to improve the situation, the GoI introduced significant changes in the design of the ARWSP, in line with the contemporary neo-liberal policy discourses. A pilot Sector Reform (SR) program was also introduced along with the revised ARWSP, directed at replacing the existing pattern of government provision and management of water supply systems with 'demand-driven', community-based,

²⁶⁷ In the division of powers between the governments of India and the States, drinking water is in the 'Concurrent list'. This means that the States have both primary responsibility and full authority to legislate in matters pertaining to drinking water supply, but the Government of India can also act in this regard with the concurrence of the State governments.

participatory development and management of small water supply systems. The key components were local management, user contributions towards capital investment and the full cost of operation and maintenance. In 2002, the pilot SR program was extended country-wide and re-launched as the Swajaldhara program.

The SR-Swajaldhara program was explicitly a liberalization program, to enable the involvement of non-government organizations, private firms, individual experts and most centrally, users, in the production and distribution processes of domestic water. Some of the costs borne by the State were also to be transferred to the users, who were to own the installed system. This last dimension of the program also made it a privatization program, in the Build, Own, Operate (BOO) variation of the BOOT (Build, Operate, Own and Transfer) framework that has become popular in many countries for infrastructure privatization, for some costs and the responsibility for building and operating was transferred to the users²⁶⁸. The design of the SR-Swajaldhara program, including templates for the institutional arrangements, operational guidelines and sequencing of project activities was specified by the Department of Drinking Water Supply (DDWS) in the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) of the Government of India (GoI). Some leeway was, however, provided for the States to tailor the institutional arrangements to their context and accordingly reform existing organizational structures. The institutional set up therefore varies across states, with different implications for efficacy.

²⁶⁸ See Quiggan (1998) and Gamble (2002), for a overviews of the BOOT system and its variations, advantages and problems. As Quiggan explains, “The private sector builds the project, owns it, and operates it. . . . Every time somebody builds themselves a house, they are building it, owning and operating it. What distinguishes things that are called BOO projects is typically that there is some continuing level of government involvement and so we distinguish BOO projects from private investment in general by the fact typically that there's an essential service of some kind being provided, in a situation where we can't simply rely on the existence of a large number of competitive suppliers of that service.”

In this chapter I discuss the functioning of the program in the three study States, to compare how the State and local contexts modulated the received institutional design specified by the GoI, and the relative effectiveness of and participation in the projects that resulted. In the next section I discuss the reforms prescribed and the institutional framework set out by the Department of Drinking Water Supply (DDWS) of the GoI, and the options left open for State-wise variations in the design. I also point out the devices and spaces incorporated in the institutional arrangements to enable actors outside the national and State governments, and users, especially women, to be involved in the process. In the following sections (2 to 4), I present the cases of Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh respectively, including the pre-reform arrangements for State water provision, the reforms undertaken for the SR-Swajaldhara program and the functioning of the reformed institutional architecture as observed in the study villages. In the final section I compare the reformed arrangements in the three States to assess the extent and nature of liberalization, and the effectiveness of and participation in the reformed processes at the local levels.

1. LIBERALIZATION OF STATE WATER PROVISION: SECTOR REFORMS AND THE SWAJALDHARA PROGRAM

By official estimates, almost one-third of rural households in India did not have access to any potable water from safe sources in 1995 (Planning Commission, 2002)²⁶⁹, and of those who had access, a substantial proportion did not get the GoI specified minimum (40 lpcd) or did not have perennial access. To escalate the pace of coverage, the Ninth

²⁶⁹ Even official estimates of water coverage vary; see Planning Commission (2002: 31-32) for the estimates by different organizations and the linear regression trend line.

and Tenth Five year Plans (1997-2002, 2002-2007)²⁷⁰ prioritized the issue of drinking water provision. The approach specified in the latter²⁷¹, and the National Water Policy (NWP, GoI 2002) closely mirrored the neo-liberal reform prescriptions that populated scholarly and policy discourses within the country and donor evaluations and advice²⁷². Such an approach constituted a paradigm shift from the prevailing perception of drinking water as a free, common good, its use for drinking a natural human right and its provision a state responsibility, perceptions which were endemic and embedded in the customary practices in many parts of the country (Saleth 2004; Mehta 2001). However, given the persistence of the problem and the pressures for reform²⁷³ in 1999 the GoI revised the ARWSP and introduced the Sector Reform program, tying grants for water projects to reforms in the existing approaches, institutional structure and processes by the State governments.

The revised ARWSP guidelines notified in 1999 incorporated most of the Dublin Principles: water to be treated as a socio-economic good, people's participation in the development of supply systems to be increased and women to be definitely involved in planning and management (GoI-DDWS 1999). The pilot Sector Reform (SR) program introduced at the same time, by earmarking 20% of the ARWSP funds, to "institutionalis(e) community participation in capital cost sharing, Operation & Maintenance and Water Quality Monitoring & Surveillance in identified pilot

²⁷⁰The Planning Commission of India has prepared five-year plans since Independence, based on regular assessments of the economy and status of development, that set out policy priorities and resource allocations for various sectors and programs for a five-year period. The Ninth Plan was for 1997-2002 and the Tenth Plan was for the period 2002-2007. Available at www.planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/index9.html

²⁷¹ In the priorities for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, decentralization, user involvement and involvement of PRIs and other organizations was emphasized. See <http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/10th/default.htm>

²⁷² See, for example, Pushpangadan and Murugan (1995,1998); Veerashekhara (1999); Reddy (2006), Saleth (2004), GoI (2002); World Bank (1999)

²⁷³ By both domestic and international observers and policy analysts, as noted in 6 above.

districts” (GoI 1999:2) was more explicit. The stated objective of the pilot was to change the existing ‘supply-driven’ process to a ‘demand-driven’ one, through a reformed approach initially applied in 58 districts²⁷⁴ of the country; in 2002, it was extended to the rest of the country as the ‘Swajaldhara’ program. Like its predecessor, the Swajaldhara program also mandated the implementation of the neo-liberal reforms, with an increased financial incentive for States that did. The program was introduced independently, fully funded by the GoI (100% refinance of the costs borne by the State), alongside the existing ARWSP for which the GoI provided only about 50% of the funds required for any project²⁷⁵.

The organizational structure and processes for the Sector Reform program was communicated to the States in 1999; with its re-incarnation as Swajaldhara, all reform initiatives in the rural drinking water sector were brought into its ambit, and detailed guidelines for implementation by the States were developed in June 2003. (GoI, 2003: iii). I set out the GoI prescribed framework below, and in subsequent sections, discuss the variations introduced in the three study States, the emergent structure and processes in the respective contexts, and their relative efficacy and inclusiveness.

1.1. THE REVISED ARWSP AND THE SECTOR REFORM INITIATIVE

The substantial revisions of the ARWSP introduced in 1999 did not specify any major structural reform for its implementation, but only directed a change in the role of the State government, the inclusion of Panchayats and specifically, women, in the process.

The State government’s lead sector institution viz. the PHED /Water Supply and

²⁷⁴ Later, some more districts were added, taking the total to 67 districts.

²⁷⁵ Except for projects in Desert and Drought Prone areas (DDP), where the GoI provided 75%. In all cases, State governments had to provide the balance.

Sanitation Board /Nigam /Authority was to remain the nodal coordinating agency for the project, but shift from implementation to facilitation. This nodal agency was to retain “the overall responsibility for planning, implementation, supervision and monitoring of the approved schemes” (GoI-DDWS 1999: section 2.1.4). The subject of drinking water provision had already been devolved to Panchayats in most states, following the reconstitution of the Panchayati Raj (PR, literally ‘local government rule’) system through the Panchayat Act of 1993²⁷⁶. Inclusion of the Panchayats (local governments) in the implementation of schemes, particularly in selecting the location of standposts, identification of spot sources, operation and maintenance, and fixing of water tariffs was therefore also mandated.

The inclusion of women, in the revised ARWSP guidelines, was specifically with the direction that they must be consulted in the decisions on the location of the standposts or other spot sources in the habitations, and in identifying sources of water. Women were to be the caretakers of installed handpumps and trained as repair-persons; at least 30% of the total trainees in any project had to be women. Satisfactory completion of the projects was to be certified by women, and prominent women of the locality were to be included in the village-level monitoring committees. Project proposals submitted by State governments for GoI funding were required to include details of the proposed involvement of women.

1.2. THE SECTOR REFORM-SWAJALDHARA PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The Sector Reform pilot project, introduced in the same revised AWRSP guidelines, however, specified a completely different institutional framework from that through

²⁷⁶ As is discussed in Section II, Chapters 9-12, of this report.

which the ARWSP was being implemented. 20% of the AWRSP funds (from the GoI) were earmarked for the SR projects, with incentives for the States for faster and more extensive implementation.

The institutional arrangements for developing ‘community-based’ water supply projects, outlined in the SR guidelines, are captured also in the June 2003 Guidelines for Swajaldhara (GoI, 2003). These guidelines clearly state that the program was launched by the DDWS of the Central government with the explicit aim of “open[ing] up the reform initiatives in the rural drinking water supply sector throughout the country.” (DDWS 2002: letter No.W-11037/51/2002-TM.III). The notification of program initiation sent to all States by the DDWS stated that it was to have five ‘key elements’:

- (i) demand-driven and community participation approach;
 - (ii) Panchayats / communities to plan, implement, operate, maintain and manage all drinking water schemes;
 - (iii) partial capital cost sharing by the communities upfront in cash;
 - (iv) full ownership of drinking water assets with GPs; and
 - (v) full Operation and Maintenance (O&M) by the users / Panchayats.
- GPs and Blocks adopting the reforms principles will be eligible for Swajaldhara projects. (DDWS letter No. W-11037/51/2002-TM.III dated the 16th November, 2002)

Refinancing of all costs of projects developed under this program (excluding beneficiary contribution) was made conditional on the full application of these reform principles in the implementation of water supply projects.

Under the SR-Swajaldhara guidelines, a State Water and Sanitation Mission (henceforth, SWSM) was to be constituted as a separate registered society of the nodal agency – Department, Board, Nigam, Authority or Agency – implementing rural water supply projects in the State. The Mission was to have an Apex Committee chaired by

the Chief Secretary/Additional Chief Secretary of the State, the head of the nodal agency as the Committee Secretary and the heads of various related departments²⁷⁷ as members. An Executive Committee was to be constituted by the Apex Committee, headed by the Secretary of the department/ agency looking after drinking water provision in the State, with a Joint-Secretary of the department as Committee Secretary. Officers from other departments with an interest in safe water supply²⁷⁸ were to ex-officio members of the executive committee. A maximum of six NGOs, experts in the field of information, education and communication (IEC), human resource development (HRD), management information systems (MIS) or the media could also be co-opted into the Executive.

At the district level, Swajaldhara was to be implemented through the district Panchayat (DP), which was also to channel program funds to localities. A District Water and Sanitation Committee (DWSC) headed by the Chief Executive Officer of the DP or the District Collector or Magistrate was to be constituted, as a DP Committee, with the Executive Engineer in charge of drinking water provision in the district as the Secretary²⁷⁹. Members were to include district officers in the departments of Health, Education, Social Welfare, Panchayati Raj, Information and Public Relations, and the Project Director of the DRDA. Three members were to be co-opted from among reputed NGOs or/ and experts,²⁸⁰ and the NGOs were to be

²⁷⁷ Including the departments of Public Health Engineering (PHE), Rural Development (RD), Panchayati Raj (PR), Finance, Health, Education and Information and Public Relations (I&PR)

²⁷⁸ Including the Departments of Rural Development, Public Health Engineering (Chief Engineer), Panchayati Raj, Health, Education, Social Welfare, Information and Public Relations

²⁷⁹ In the Sector Reform program the formation of a District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM), named 'PRAKALP' had been specified. It was to be constituted as a registered society with a Governing Body headed by Chairman of Zilla Parishad, or where the Zilla Parishads had not been constituted, the Chairman of the District Planning Committee or the District Collector/Deputy Commissioner.

²⁸⁰ Previously, under the Sector Reform guidelines, all MPs/MLAs and MLCs of the district, Chairman of the Standing Committees of the Zilla Parishad and District Collector/Deputy Commissioner were also members, and the CEO of the Zilla Parishad was to be the Member Secretary.

responsible for generating community participation in the projects through volunteer ‘motivators’ in the villages. Optionally, at the district level a Core Group comprising professionals in community development, drinking water supply and other related areas could also be formed, to help the DWSC in implementing the program.

There were two variants in the Swajaldhara program. Swajaldhara I included situations where individual GPs with a district, typically those with more acute scarcity of safe water sources, were selected for the implementation of the program. Swajaldhara II could be applied to those districts in which the more acutely water-deprived GPs had already been covered, to extend the program throughout the district. Moreover, in the latter cases, systems could be installed to raise the per capita water availability to 55 lpcd or more, if the users were willing to bear the additional cost.

In the project villages, Swajaldhara projects were to be implemented by a Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC), constituted under the chairmanship of the President of the GP or a member of the Panchayat elected by the VWSC. For projects spanning a number of villages, such a Committee was to be constituted by the IP²⁸¹. Though the composition of the VWSC could be decided by the State government, *at least 30% of the total members had to be women*, and persons from the marginalized communities, poor families, experts and representatives of NGOs or CBOs working in the village had to be included.

The organizational framework piloted in the Sector Reform program and finally mandated in Swajaldhara guidelines is shown in Figure 4.1.

²⁸¹ The State was required to make appropriate arrangements in their local government legislation, if necessary, to enable these Committees to function as integral part of the respective GPs/ IPs, and in the interim, issue government orders to that effect.

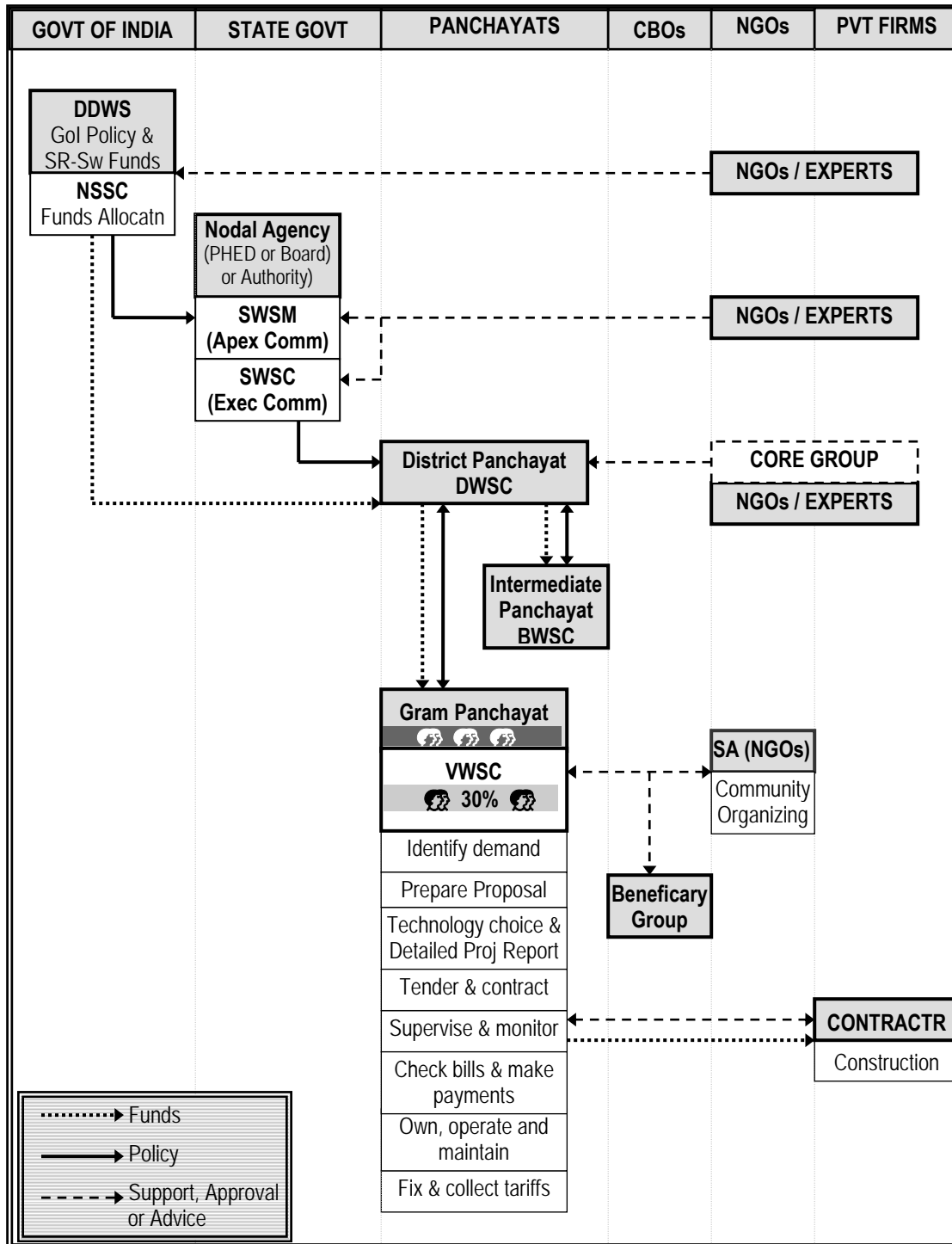


Figure 4.1: Institutional structure for implementation of Swajaldhara program specified by the Department of Drinking Water Supply (DDWS), Government of India.

1.3. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT IN THE SR-SWAJALDHARA PROGRAM

Though not reiterated in the June 2003 Guidelines, the Dec 2002 notification of the program delineates the process for development of projects. Proposals were to be developed by GPs/BPs/VWSC or Beneficiary Groups and forwarded to the DDWS through the district-level implementing agency (DIA), requesting the necessary funds. Beneficiary Groups (BG) could be constituted by any group of households that were to be connected to the proposed water supply system, and formally registered under the Societies Act. They could submit proposals through the GP or IP as the case may be. The National Scheme Sanctioning Committee (NSSC) of the DDWS would scrutinize and sanction proposals. Funds would be disbursed directly to the DIAs which would be responsible for (a) the formulation, implementation and management of the project; (b) receipt and management of Central funds for the project; (c) selection of agencies for project implementation by IP / GP / VWSC / BG; and (d) sanctioning of the schemes and entering into bipartite or tripartite agreement between BG /GP/ VWSC / IP. (DDWS 2003).

Communities' or user contributions towards the capital cost, at 10% of the total if the supply system was to deliver 40 lpcd of water and 20% if it was between 40-55 lpcd, was to be collected and deposited in a project account before GoI funds were granted. At least 50% of the community contributions had to be in cash, and the balance could be contributed in labour, land for the project, or in other ways. Users could also design capacities beyond 55 lpcd, if they were willing to bear the entire additional cost.

The BP / GP / VWSC / BG proposing the project was responsible for execution of the sanctioned schemes including collection of community contributions towards capital

cost (in cash), opening and managing bank accounts for management of project funds, selecting contractors for construction activities, procuring construction materials and supervising construction activities. It was required to provide details and progress of implementation to the Gram Sabha and ensure community participation in project activities. After completion, it would also commission and take over the completed water supply system in the presence of the Gram Sabha, and manage operations and maintenance of the system through collection of fees from users. The NSSC²⁸² could grant a one-time start-up operation and maintenance fund (O&M) to the GP/ VWSC/ BP within six months of their take over of the schemes. This start up grant was not intended to replace the community contribution for O&M but to institute an O&M revolving fund.

1.4. STRUCTURAL VARIATIONS IN THE SR-SWAJALDHARA INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

While the institutional structure described above applies to all States, some elements of the structure and process are not binding, and the States can vary the arrangements to an extent. It is not mandatory for the States to formalize the SWSM as an autonomous entity by registration under the Societies Act²⁸³, nor to include experts or representatives from NGOs or other civil society organizations among the membership of either the Apex or Executive Committees of the SWSM or in the DWSC²⁸⁴, as is mandatory for the VWSC. The formation of a Core Group of professionals at the district level is also optional²⁸⁵, and the constitution of the VWSC is left to the

²⁸² National Scheme Sanctioning Committee of the DDWS, GoI.

²⁸³ The Guidelines state “The SWSM *may* be a registered society.” (GoI 2003: 9, emphasis mine)

²⁸⁴ According to the Guidelines, “...3 members who shall be experts and/ from (sic) reputed NGOs, *may* be co-opted into the Committee...” (GoI 2003: 11, emphasis mine)

²⁸⁵ Item 7.3.7 in the Guidelines – “The Core Group *may* be positioned to assist the district Water and Sanitation Committee...” (GoI 2003:12, emphasis mine)

discretion of the State government, on condition that one third of members are women and other marginalized groups are included²⁸⁶. The training necessary to support the change in roles of the staff of the nodal agency or for the VWSC members could be undertaken by the State Institute of Rural Development or sourced from other experts/institutions. It was only suggested that the services of NGOs might be used for social mobilization, capacity development at the village level and such other activities, and that in such case the NGOs could be additionally trained for the purpose. The formation of women-only user groups at the village level to engage with the VWSC was also not mandatory. Also, if the State government wished, consultants and/or professionals could be engaged for any of the necessary tasks.

These openings left for deviation from the institutional structure and processes prescribed in the program guidelines are not insignificant, for they allow States to vary the extent and nature of involvement of non-State organizations and individuals substantially. Transfer of functions to organizations outside the purview of the state is the defining element of liberalization; and any reduction in the suggested involvement of non-state actors alters the potential of the reformed arrangements to produce effects is concomitantly reduced. To what extent this happened in the application of the reform and how it affected the effectiveness of projects developed through the reformed arrangements and the participation of women in the process in the study States is discussed in the three sections below.

²⁸⁶ Item 7.4.2 in the Guidelines. (GoI 2003:13)

2. SECTOR REFORMS IN GUJARAT: GWSSB, WASMO AND PANI SAMITIS

In the 1991 Census of India (CoI 1993), only 60% of the households in rural Gujarat had access to safe sources of drinking water, and the situation had not improved substantially by the late nineties. For though the State efforts persisted, the rate at which habitations were becoming water scarce due to pollution and falling water tables outstripped the pace of State efforts. Till the recent reforms, the primary State agency for domestic water provision was the Gujarat State Water Supply and Sewerage Board (GWSSB), a semi-autonomous parastatal within the Water Supply Department. Reportedly, the erstwhile Public Health Engineering Department was replaced by the GWSSB “to obviate the cumbersome formalities...[such as] government procedures for budgeting...[and] introduce greater flexibility and efficiency” (interview with Ex-Chief Engineer, GWSSB). But the GWSSB nevertheless faced a host of issues, as was endemic to similar parastatals across the country. I describe the structure, functioning and issues faced by the GWSSB and the state of water provision in Gujarat prior to reforms, introduction of the SR-Swajaldhara program and the functioning of the reformed institutional architecture in the State.

2.1. PRE REFORM INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE FOR WATER PROVISION IN GUJARAT

A picture of the institutional framework and processes for development of water supply systems in rural Gujarat was assembled from Hirway (2005, 2008), interviews with senior government officials in the Water Supply Department and documents of

the GWSSB (listed in Annexure V). All drinking-water programs of the State government and the GoI were implemented by the GWSSB, which undertook need-surveys, design and construction of the systems, and operation and maintenance of multi-village water-supply schemes. Smaller, individual village systems and point sources like public taps and handpumps were handed over to the GP for operation and maintenance, though technical support for major repairs was provided by the GWSSB sub-division office when required. The GWSSB functioned through a hierarchical arrangement of zones, circles, division and subdivision, with a core staff primarily of engineers who are employees of the State government.

Though the development of water supply systems in the villages was the responsibility of the GWSSB, Panchayats in Gujarat continued to allocate resources from their own revenues and discretionary funds, or marshaled finances from donors to develop water supply systems, even after the responsibility was transferred to GWSSB²⁸⁷. In the case of smaller installations, field offices of the GWSSB – subdivisions and lower – surveyed ‘not covered’ (NC) and ‘partially covered’ (PC)²⁸⁸ villages within their jurisdiction and proposed appropriate systems. GWSSB engineers decided the capacity, coverage, location of installations and technology to be used, with help from the Ground Water Board when required. GPs were consulted during the process and helped acquire land for the installations but the GWSSB staff decided the design and prepared detailed proposals and estimates. For multi-village or regional schemes, the relevant higher offices undertook these tasks, and consulted Intermediate or District

²⁸⁷ As described in Chapter III, Section 2, Panchayats in Gujarat had substantial sources of own revenue and were also allocated a share of State revenues. Philanthropy for development of their native villages by the elite has also been a hall mark of civic action in south Gujarat, and this is common knowledge.

²⁸⁸ Partially covered refers to villages with less than the minimum 40 lpcd of water specified by the GoI as the norm that is to be arranged for by the government. NC villages are those which have less than 10 lpcd. The Gujarat government has a 55 lpcd norm; the costs for this additional capacity built into projects are borne by the State government from its own revenues.

Panchayats depending on the area covered. Proposals were scrutinized and sanctioned by higher-level officers of the GWSSB, and implemented by proposing offices aided by field staff; this included tendering and contracting, supervision and payment to contractors. Single-village systems were handed over to GPs for operation and small maintenance, though the GWSSB undertook major maintenance and repair tasks.

Though the local government reforms of the mid-nineties required the transfer of various functions including water supply to Panchayats, there was scarce change in the institutional structure and processes, as described in chapter III and shown in Figure 3.3. The organizational architecture for water provision that therefore existed in Gujarat by the end of the nineties was the same as before the Panchayat reforms, and is shown in Figure 4.2.

2.2. WATER PROVISION BY THE GWSSB: APPROACHES AND ISSUES

In the 70's and 80's GWSSB focused primarily on developing water sources and regional water supply schemes (RWSS²⁸⁹) delivering piped water to clusters of villages, a strategy that to date remains the State government's main approach to drinking water provision (Hirway 2005: CEO, WASMO). Though single-village water supply systems and point-sources such as handpumps and wells were also developed, the emphasis has been on medium and large projects transferring water in bulk to groups of villages. This approach has been extensively critiqued, for the drinking water situation remains dismal. Despite the extensive coverage reported by the State government, with only 50 of the 30,269 habitations not having access to even 10 lpcd

²⁸⁹ Also known as Multi-Village Water Supply Schemes or MVWSS

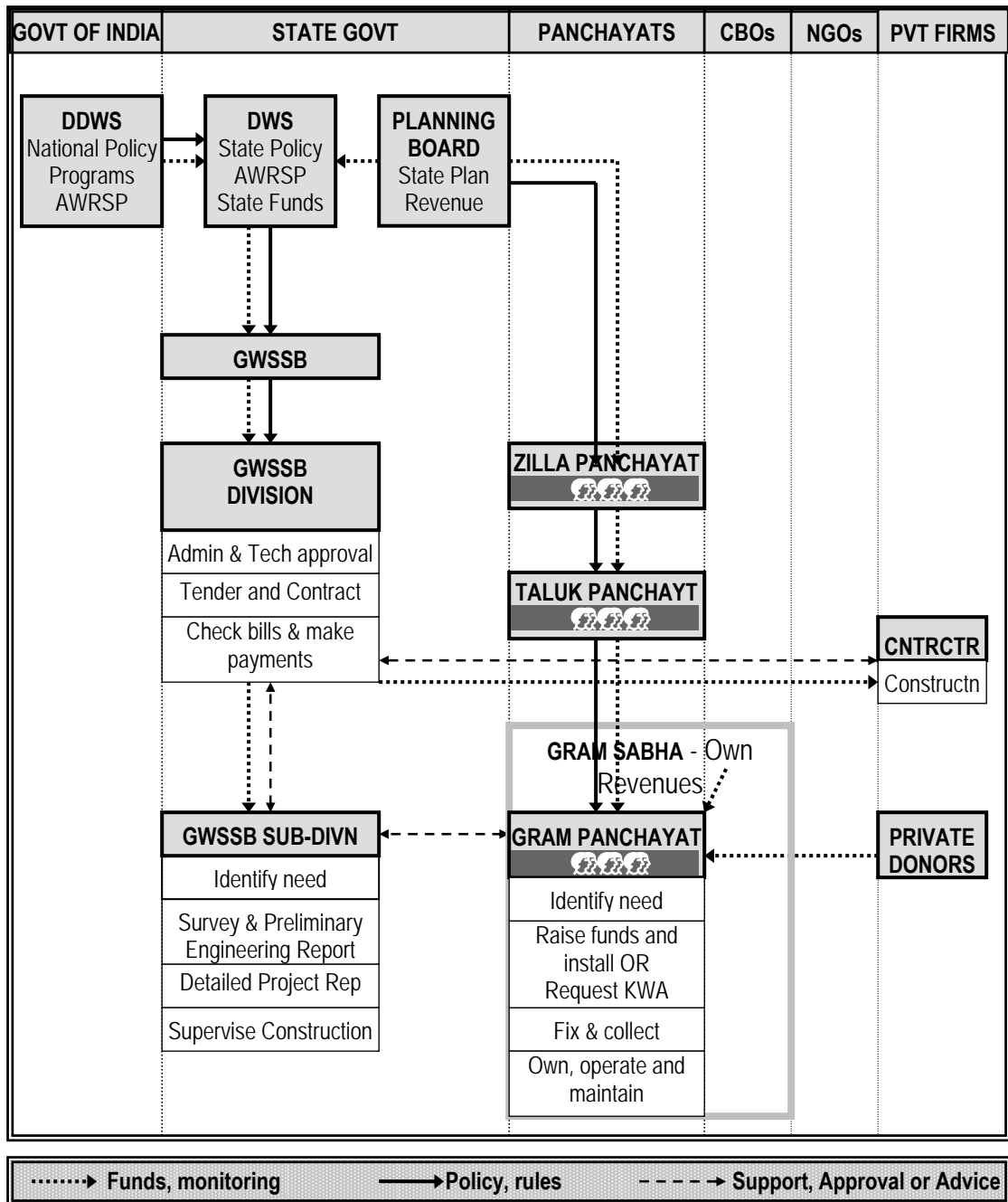


Figure 4.2: Institutional Architecture for Water Provision in Gujarat prior to Sector Reforms

of water, and 1428 having between 10 and 40 lpcd, the actual situation is far worse. Many 'fully covered' (FC) and 'partly covered' (PC)²⁹⁰ villages get water that is not potable: State government surveys indicate that the water supplies in almost 30% of villages are contaminated, with nitrates, arsenic, flouride or a combination of these salts far above permissible limits set by the WHO (WASMO 2004), and independent micro studies bear this out (Bharwada and Mahajan 2002). There are other problems - tail-end villages in RWSSs were usually deprived, and elsewhere supply was irregular and unreliable, very inadequate quantities of water were supplied, and the water was often not of potable quality either because of contamination of the source or though breakages in the distribution system (Hirway 2005).

According to Hirway (2005), these problems are rooted in the top-down approach of GWSSB, and the lack of people's involvement in the management of the schemes at the local level. Centralized functioning of the GWSSB leads to inadequate supervision and monitoring, resulting in poor operation and maintenance; breakages and leakages remain unattended, there is under growth of plants in pipelines, lack of enough water pressure in pipelines, unauthorized connections and theft of water. Clearly, the RWSS approach has not delivered. In addition to being costlier than smaller individual-village schemes, sources are often inadequate in relation to the demand, there is corruption and misappropriation of funds in water related programs in general and regional schemes in particular. Other research studies have shown that individual village-level systems (IWSS) are cheaper and perform better but with the availability of piped water under the RWSS, local sources have become defunct (Bharwada and Mahajan 2002, Sharma 1996, cited in Hirway 2005).

²⁹⁰ According to GoI norms, a habitation is considered fully covered if 40 lpcd of water from safe sources is available. Partly covered are those with between 10 to 40 lpcd of safe water within the habitation.

Despite these issues, the State's preference for large-scale systems and bulk-transfer to water-poor areas continues. The Narmada mega-project for transferring water from the Sardar Sarovar dam across the river Narmada in south Gujarat to the parched northern parts has been positioned as the 'life-line of Gujarat', and is slated to reach water to 8215 villages (45% of the 18144 villages of Gujarat) (WASMO 2004), and in 2003, there were 121 additional RWSSs under construction (GWSSB 2004). Smaller systems continue to be maintained by Panchayats, which also managed the internal distribution systems of regional schemes.

2.3. SECTOR REFORMS AND SWAJALDHARA IN GUJARAT

In face of the grim drinking water situation and the growing water crisis in recent years, the Gujarat government is perceived to have adopted a 'crisis management approach', relying on the Narmada mega-project and additional RWSSs to meet the need to a large extent (Hirway 2005). At the same time alternative approaches have been initiated by civil society organizations and NGOs, including revival of traditional local sources, rainwater harvesting and watershed treatment and recharging (PRAVAH 2004, 2005, Hirway 2005). The efficacy and sustainability of such smaller and local solutions have been amply demonstrated and has led to some State support for such programs. These are all community-developed and managed projects, which have successfully demonstrated the positive results of participatory planning and generated some enthusiasm for a non-centralized approach. A successful Netherlands-aided project – the Gogha Water Supply and Sanitation Project - for community-management of a regional water supply system²⁹¹, reforms in the AWRSP and the

²⁹¹ The project was initiated to pilot community management of a RWSS in the Gogha Taluka of Bhavnagar district of Gujarat, and became the precursor of the Sector Reform Program in Gujarat.

introduction of the pilot Sector Reform program of the GoI in 1999 also directed a shift in the overall approach. In the words of one key informant,

“...there was an ideological shift in the State’s approach...it was realized that all this investment [in the Narmada project] would only be fruitful if we decentralize systems...if reliable, adequate, safe water, regular water supply, 365 days in a year, had to be provided, it can no longer be done by GWSSB...learnt a lot from the Gogha experience...community had to be empowered, its capacity built, technical support provided...the system had to be reformed...institutional restructuring would be required at all the levels to... [bring about] decentralization, to empower local bodies, to encourage community participation, to ensure financial viability of the sector, to encourage GO-NGO-private sector partnerships”(Senior Advisor, WASMO)

The Sector Reform pilot program was introduced in three districts – Surat, Rajkot and Mehsana – of Gujarat in 2000. The Gujarat Jal Seva Training Institute of the GWSSB was designated the State Coordinator for the program with the Secretary, Water Supply Department as Chair of the State Water and Sanitation Mission. A District Project Management Unit was established in the three pilot districts, with officers deputed from the GWSSB, and housed in the respective Division office. The District Water and Sanitation Mission and the Village Water and Sanitation Committees (called *Pani Samiti* in Gujarat) under the GP were also constituted as directed in the program guidelines. NGOs were identified and associated as Implementation Support Agencies, to undertake community mobilization and dissemination of information in the villages. But despite these structural changes, the GWSSB remained the primary implementer in the initial stages of the pilot program.

It was through the implementation of the Gogha Project that a distinctly different institutional structure was initiated, with the setting up of the Water and Sanitation Management Organization (WASMO) in September 2002. Donor support for the

Gogha project included funds for setting up an independent organization to institutionalize community participation and management in water provision across the State, and with the relative success of the Sector Reform program, the GoG provided additional funds. WASMO was established as an independent and autonomous organization of the State Water Supply Department, with the mandate of promoting decentralized and community-owned and managed water supply systems. It was made the nodal agency for the implementation of the ongoing Gogha Project and Sector Reform Program, and soon after, the Swajaldhara program. The GWSSB continues to implement the AWRSP.

WASMO is the State Water and Sanitation Mission in Gujarat, headed by a CEO appointed directly by the GoG, advised by an Apex Committee and assisted by an Executive Committee that he convenes. Both of these Committees are constituted as per the Swajaldhara guidelines, and include five to seven non-official members from among well-known NGOs, academics and research institutions with expertise in the water sector. The District Water and Sanitation Committee chaired by the District Collector and the Village Water and Sanitation Committees continue in the same form as under Sector Reform program, and NGOs are selected by the DWSM as Implementation Support Agencies (ISAs), to “assist the village community in planning, implementation, management, operation and maintenance of water supply, rainwater harvesting and sanitation structures.” (WASMO 2004:6) WASMO itself has, in the words of its CEO, “developed a need-based organizational structure”, with Coordination, Monitoring and Support Units (CMSU’s) in the project areas (CEO, WASMO), “staffed by motivated personnel with diverse experience and commitment to serve”. (WASMO 2004:6). Where the Sector Reform program was already

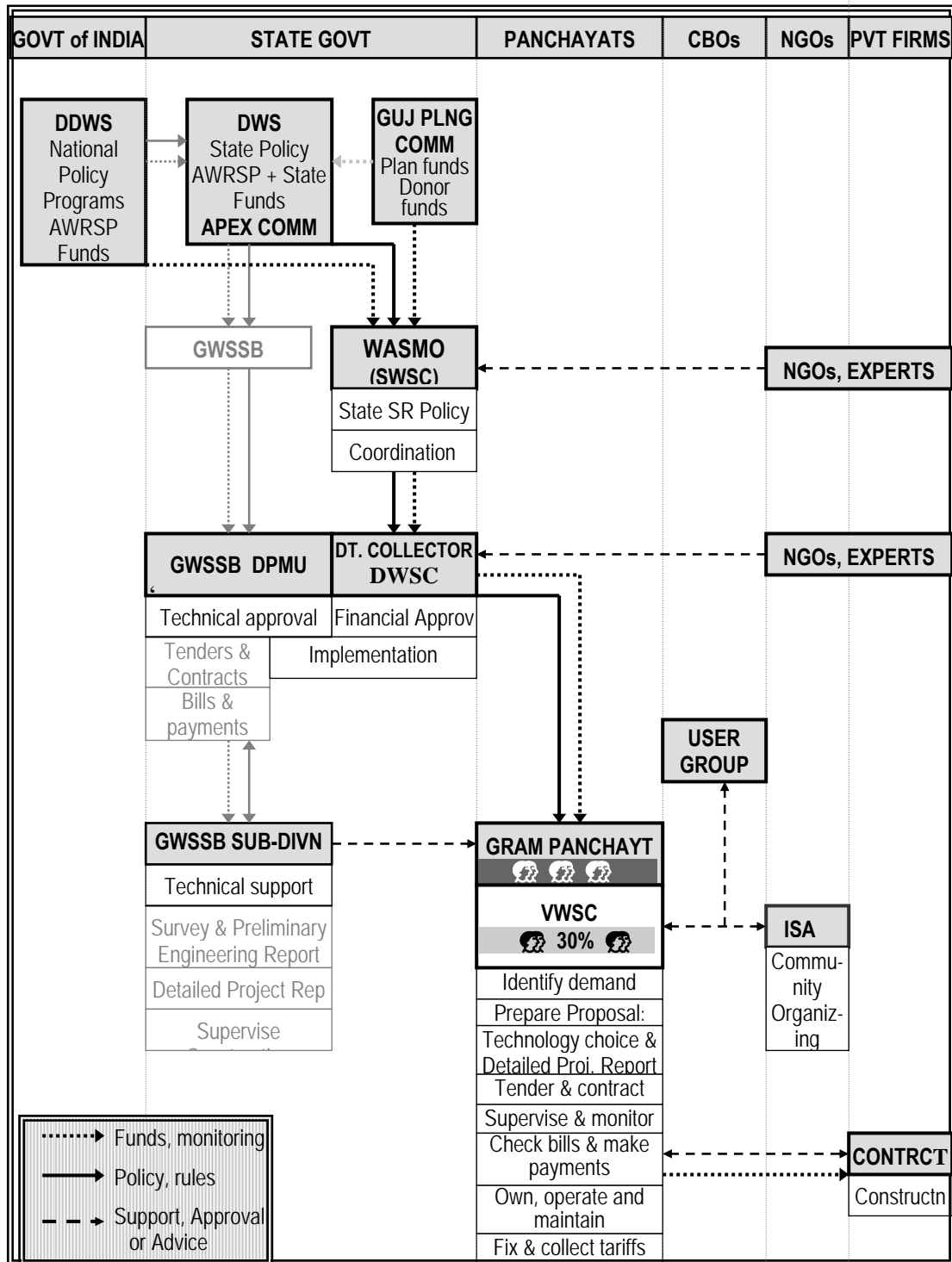


Figure 4.3: Reformed Institutional Framework for SR-Swajaldhara in Gujarat

underway, as in Surat, the DPMU continues as the CMSU, with the addition of staff for community mobilization and coordination. The reformed institutional set-up is shown in Figure 4.3.

WASMO is intended and designed to be a temporary organization, to be dismantled when the earlier modalities of State provision are transformed into the demand-driven, community-based process that is envisaged in the reforms. Staff is therefore hired on contractual basis for short periods, unlike the large permanent staff of the GWSSB; WASMO also helps train GWSSB staff to re-orient them to community-led processes.

2.4. SECTOR REFORMS, GUJARAT STYLE: PANI SAMITIS AND PARTICIPATORY WATER PROVISION

The reform of the existing modalities for State provision of drinking water and the alternate institutional structure and processes put in place by the government of Gujarat for implementation of the SR-Swajaldhara program have been described above. To understand how these reformed arrangements work at the village level, water supply projects developed under the program were studied in four villages in two talukas of Surat district. Table 4.1 shows the drinking water sources and coverage in the two talukas, and the water availability in the four villages – Laskana and Ladvi in Kamrej taluka and Vadadla and Tatijhagda in Palsana taluka – is shown in Table 4.2, including both existing and new (SR) projects. More extensive village profiles as well as further details of existing and new water sources are in Annexure III.

As described before (chapter III), villages in this part of Surat differ in their size and composition. Villages near the city are large, with mixed caste groups in different ‘falias’ or neighborhoods, good infrastructure and services. Towards the north are small villages with a large proportion of tribal families - Vadadla is one such - often with lesser infrastructure, though almost all are well-connected by metalled access roads and regular bus service to nearby towns.

Table 4.1
Percentage distribution of households by source of drinking water and its location (2001).

Surat District	Kamrej Taluka*						Palsana Taluka*					
	Location of Water Source	Total HH	% of HH	Tap	Hand-pump	Tube-well	Well	Total HH	% of HH	Tap	Hand-pump	Tube-well
Total	29,527	100.0	89.0	6.2	2.4	1.4	17,416	100.0	66.6	13.5	5.7	14.0
In Premises	12,269	41.6	40.2	0.5	0.6	0	5,564	31.9	28.1	0.5	2.6	0.6
Nr Premises	14,954	50.6	44.2	4.4	1.1	0.5	9,864	56.6	33.4	10.9	3.0	9.3
Away	2,304	7.8	4.7	1.2	0.7	0.8	1,988	11.4	5.1	2.1	0	4.1

Source: Developed from Census of India, 2001: H-Series, Table H-8

* Note: The rest of the population depends on other unprotected sources such as ponds, open tanks, river, streams or irrigation wells.

The area is flat, and houses are clustered in different neighborhoods of the ‘Gamtal’ or village area according to caste, with the lower-caste and dalit neighborhoods at a distance from the other clusters as is typical of villages in India. The main occupation is agriculture, though a segment of the working population commutes to other jobs in the nearby towns and to a local sugar factory²⁹². Agriculture is a mix of grains, vegetables and cash crops like sugarcane and bananas, with two or in some instances three crops supported by a dense network of irrigation canals. Landowning families

²⁹² In Kamrej Taluka.

are therefore reasonably well-off, while the landless find employment as farm labor in the agricultural seasons, and sundry jobs in Surat city in the off-season.

Table 4.2
Sources of water in study villages, before and after SR-Swajaldhara projects

Village	Total Popn	No. of HHs	Old Elevated Storage Reservoir			Wells	Other (unprotected sources)	New Elevated Storage Reservoir (SR Project)		
			St. Cap in liters	HH conn	Stand -posts			St. cap in liters	HH conn	Stand -posts
Laskana	@ 6000 (8452)	@ 1250 (1749)	50,000	300	3	3	Pond (1)	1,55,000	680	4
Ladvi	1546	280	10,000	67	5	1	Tank, Handpump-2, Field wells (12), borewells (40)	80,000	168	7
Tatijhagda	800	148	17,000	48	0	0	RO plant, Field wells(100), handpum-2, pond-1	50,000	81	3
Vadadla	897	193	No OHT	0	0	2	RO plant, Tank, Handpumps-2, field wells (80), checkdam at 1.5 kms, canal	50,000	46	6

Sources: Population statistics from Census of India 2001; details of existing and new water sources and distribution system are from DPMU files, focus group discussions, transect walks in the village by the author.

The four study villages are accessible by paved roads, had basic infrastructure including piped water supply to some households (before the SR projects), electricity, post-office, telephone and cable television service, schools and health centers.

However, only about 25-30% of the households were connected to the existing water supply system, and atleast one-third of those received little water because of the low pressure in the pipelines; these were households located either at the tail-end or, as is typical of upper-income households, on relatively higher ground within the village.

The situation in Laskana is characteristic; according to the current VWSC President,

“Originally [we had] Panchayat supply, directly from bore, no storage capacity....not for everyone, not at all enough... only rich people had connections to the house, mainly rabaris [a middle-ranked caste group]but these people had pipes but no water...Sarpanch’s house is at [the] highest level, so no supply....” (originally in

Hindi; Laskana VWSC President, male)

The Additional. Assistant Engineer (AAE) of the Surat DPMU explained the reasons for lack of better coverage:

“... [The] main problems – spread-out settlements, small villages...poor quality of groundwater, high TDS [total dissolved solids above 2000]. So never full-village coverage before SR...official population in most villages in this area is low, but ‘illegal’ population is more – migrants to work in local industries, fields...SRP can provide for bigger projects to cover all, which GWSSB can’t, GWSSB is only allowed to provide for census population...” (AAE, DPMU, Surat).

Vadadla, with the largest proportion of tribal and lower-caste households, had no piped water system; the only sources till 2001 were a tank, one handpump, and private irrigation wells in the agricultural fields outside the village. Though it had a paved approach road, electricity supply and a post office, there was only a primary school and public health sub-center. Other facilities like higher schools, medical facilities and banks were within 10kms, and there was twice-daily bus service from the village.

It is noteworthy that two villages also had Reverse Osmosis plants for production of purified drinking water, installed in Vadadla in 2001 and Tatijhagda in 2000, by the Village Samooh (Committee) from funds donated by wealthier households and successful immigrants. Residents are allowed a limited quantity of water (10-20litres for each person) for drinking, on payment of a fixed amount per month. In Tatijhagda, a card system has been instituted, where daily collection is noted. More water than is allocated can be collected, if available, on payment of cash.

According to the Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE) in the DPMU, Surat, the SR program was introduced in the district in 2000, with seminars organized by the

GWSSB and the DP in all sub-district headquarters. The SR principles and processes by which the village could develop additional water supply systems under the program were explained to the attendees, who were mostly elected Panchayat members and village notables, Eventually,

“... villages applied for projects...In SRP, NGOs surveyed the villages...Villages applied, [responsibility was] distributed to selected NGOs,...NGOs surveyed, prepared plan, got approval...NGOs are there from beginning, till 3 months after audit report is filed.” (AEE, Surat DPMU; words in brackets mine)

The Laskana VWSC President described the process as it happened in the village:

“...Sandeepbhai [of Aadesh Trust, the NGO-ISA] explained system first, we liked it, then explained to people – took a while, about a month. We got contributions according to paying capacity, and total exceeded the required 10% [of capital cost]. The excess was placed in maintenance fund. ALL households had contributed something, minimum Rs 50, maximum 11,000 (2-3 people), 5000 (10-15 people) ...” (President, LaskanaPanchayat; originally in Hindi, emphasis and words in brackets mine)

In all four villages, interviewees reported almost identical processes. Aadesh Charitable Trust and Nirav Mahila Trust, two Surat-based NGOs, were appointed the consultants (ISAs) for the projects, with the former working in all study villages except Ladvi. The NGOs were contracted by the VWSC constituted for the purpose of the program, and their charges included in the project cost. They conducted a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) exercise and a household survey in the village, and developed a Village Action Plan (VAP) for water. A suitable project proposal, including design, rates and estimates, was then developed by the NGO with the GWSSB technical staff. On approval of both the VAP and the project proposal by the DWSC, the VWSC hired contractors through a tendering process overseen by

GWSSB and NGO staff.

As in Laskana, beneficiary contributions were collected in all villages according to the household's ability to pay, with some households contributing substantially higher amounts; in Tatijhagda one household paid almost 50% of the total collected amount (Rs. 50,000). In each case the total collections exceeded the 10% of the project cost that the user group was required to contribute²⁹³, and the excess was retained as a maintenance fund by the VWSC. The VWSC hired an operator – to run the pump and release water at two fixed times during the day, for 1-2 hours – but in two villages the Panchayat paid half the salary. The electricity connection to the pump house was also in the name of the Panchayat; interviewees in Laskana and Vadadla explained that this arrangement was to avail of the reduced rates for electricity allowed to Panchayats under a State program (Jyotir Gram Yojana) (VWSC member, Laskana; Panchayat member, Vadadla). Another explanation was also provided in Vadadla:

“If in VWSC name, we have to pay, but if in Panchayat name it is free...that is, the bill is passed on to the GWSSB, who pays – or rather, does not pay, they owe crores²⁹⁴ to the Water Resources Department and the Gujarat Electricity Board!” (Panchayat member, Vadadla).

The process through which the new projects were developed in the villages is shown diagrammatically in Figure. 4.4. As is visible, it closely adheres to the organizational arrangements and formal procedures as set out by WASMO. However, the crucial element of community organizing and involvement that is a core principle in the

²⁹³ Users are required to contribute 10% of the project cost, for projects designed to supply water at 40 lpcd; for additional capacity, upto 55lpcd, users are required to meet 20% of the project cost. Projects in these villages were designed at 60 lpcd, taking into account drinking water requirements for cattle, and the water requirement norms set by the Gujarat government, but the users still paid only 10% of the cost. The balance was paid by the Gujarat government (CEO, WASMO)

²⁹⁴ A crore is ten million.

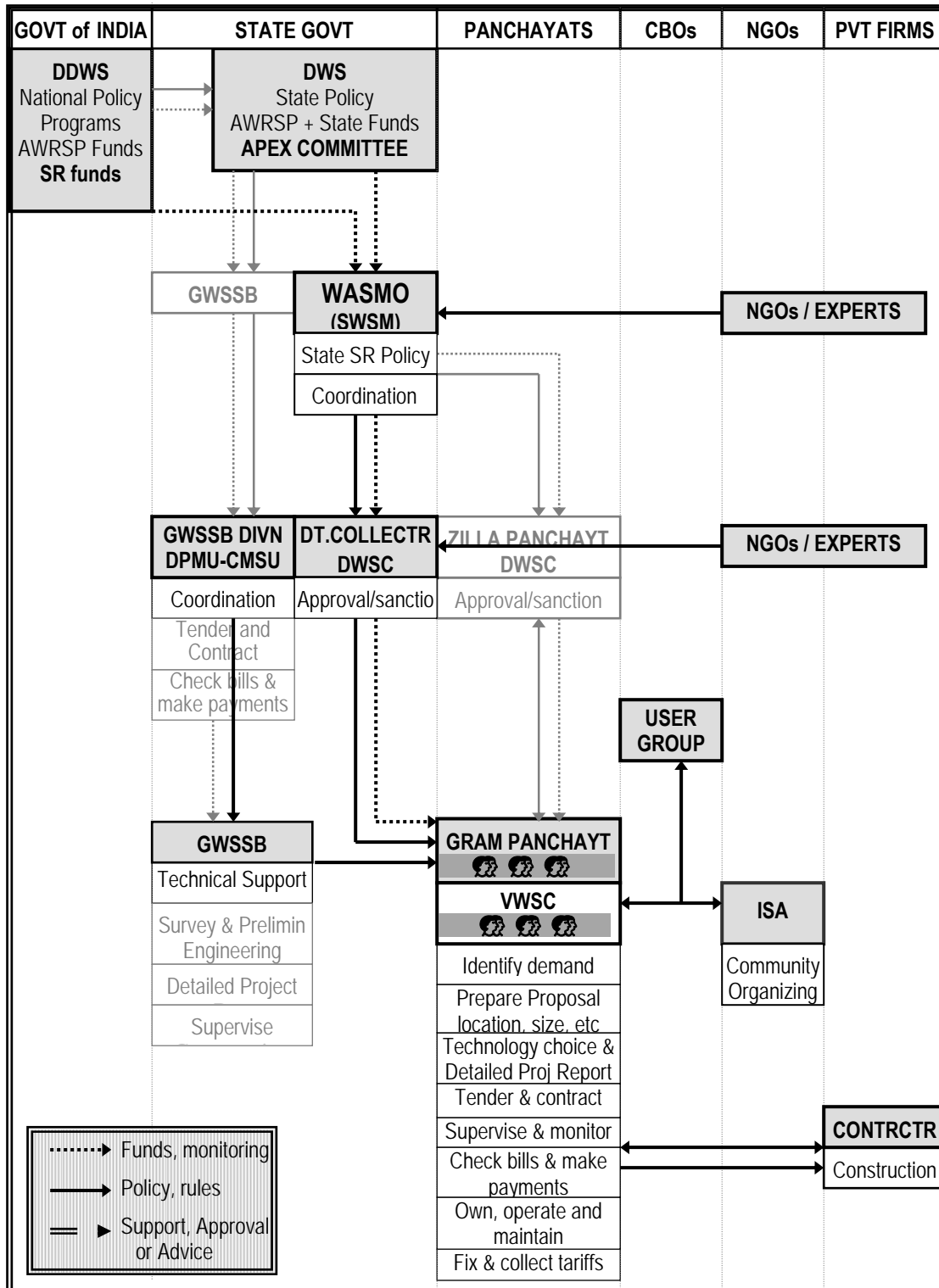


Figure 4.4: Observed Institutional Architecture for Implementation of Sector Reform projects in Gujarat

program is abbreviated substantially. The formation of the VWSC in the villages was *a priori*; the program was introduced to the village residents afterwards. In three of the study villages, the VWSCs were formed by the Panchayats on advice from a GWSSB officer; in Ladvi, village elders learnt of the program from its implementation in another village. The guidelines suggest that after receiving information about the program, community members and users would be asked to discuss, organize themselves into a group and initiate the process along with the respective Panchayats; this process was almost completely bypassed. The projects were initiated by the Panchayat, and handled by the VWSC like a Panchayat project. While this facilitated the implementation process and provided benefits like the cheaper rates for electricity, the emphasis on ‘generating demand’, ‘enabling the community’ and ‘empowering’ them to meet their water needs was clearly missing. A large part of the decision-making also remained centered in the GWSSB, with technical staff deciding the design, location and other details, though with the agreement of the VWSC and/ or other eminent people in the village. As the AAE explained –

“...Yes...the involvement of beneficiaries could not be done as required...it takes a lot of working with the village people...educating them, explaining the main ideas of the program...we’re not social engineers, first we are civil engineers....When this project started, GWSSB got the GJTI to train the deputed staff in participatory methods, participatory planning, demand-driven approach etc...training was for the technical staff, also NGOs who were associated, but we were not used to that approach ...now we only give technical help and suggest options but do the planning with people.” (AAE, Surat DPMU)

In sum, the mandated changes in the pre-reform structure were visible in the implementation of the projects in the study villages, but some of the softer and more important elements were missing. How effective these reformed arrangements were in

meeting the local water needs, and to what extent were the processes participatory, I discuss in the next section.

2.5. SECTOR REFORMS IN GUJARAT: EFFICACY, EFFECTIVENESS AND PARTICIPATION

The shifts from the State-centered governance system of water provision in Gujarat are striking, both in the extensive reforms that were actually instituted, and the transformations that took place in practice at the local level (Figure. 4.4). The State was not the sole actor in the pre-liberalized governance configuration even before reform, as Panchayats had traditionally had and continued to have a substantial role. The reformed structure that was instituted for implementation of the SR-Swajaldhara Program was substantially liberalized, by creating a separate parastatal (WASMO) with a greater degree of autonomy than the GWSSB had, and, more starkly, in the involvement of user-groups that was enabled. Equally striking is the extent to which

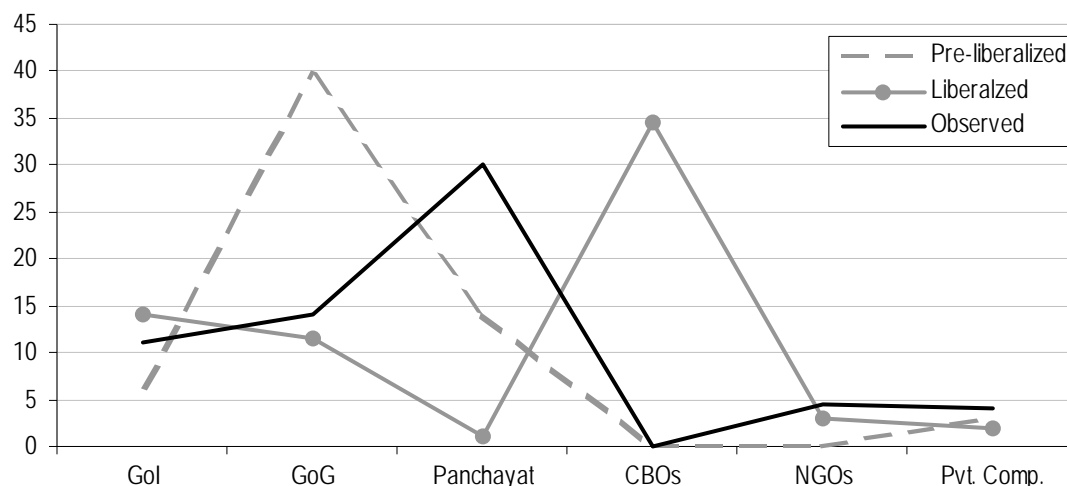


Figure 4.5: Shifts in the distribution of functions from State provision to liberalized (SR-Swajaldhara) governance systems in Gujarat, derived using the Devolution Score Sheet (Table 2.6)

the envisaged role of community groups (and users) is actually taken over by the VWSC of the Panchayat. In effect, liberalization has resulted in devolution, following and amplifying, the existing pattern of Panchayat activity in water provision.

Despite this unintended 'roll-back', the implementation of the four projects through the reformed arrangements has made a substantial difference to the availability of water in the study villages. Three villages already had a piped water system, and all four had public standposts and handpumps for households not connected to the system. These had been installed either by the GWSSB or the respective Panchayats over the years. However, even calculated on the basis of installed capacity, average water availability was close to the minimum norm of 50 lpcd (fixed by the GoG) in all four villages as seen in Table 4.3 and Figure. 4.6. Community members reported that water actually received from these installed systems was far less, because of leakages and inadequate maintenance. Leakages from the distribution networks in the very old system in Ladvi and even the more recent one in Tatijhagda were not attended to, valves in standpost taps deteriorated very quickly and often water flow could not be turned off fully after use (fgd nos 8,9). In Tatijhagda the water flow in the supply borewell had reduced over the years, as had discharge from the handpumps. Water from installed systems had to be therefore augmented from other unprotected sources such as wells, ponds, irrigation borewells and even a nearby checkdam on an irrigation canal. Quality of water from installed systems was also poor, with high TDS in all villages, contamination from rusting pipes in Laskana and muddy water yielded by the old borewell in Ladvi.

The new systems installed through the SR program therefore were a boon to all four villages, in almost every respect, as can be seen in Table 4.1 and Figure. 4.6. Water availability increased to much above the necessary minimum in all except Laskana, and even in the latter, the quantity of safe water available doubled, to above the minimum specified by the GoI. Water quality also improved, for in addition to the

Table 4.3

Change in water situation in study villages after SRP water project in Gujarat

	Laskana		Ladvi		Tatijhagda		Vadadla		Gujarat SR	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Per Capita Average	41.4	60.7	44.0	113.2	67.5	139.4	44.2	110.9	49.3	106.0
Per Cap - HH Source	68.1	76.5	47.0	94.3	65.5	142.5	0.0	185.5	45.2	124.7
Per Cap - Pub. Source	7.7	13.9	15.0	44.5	22.2	45.9	20.1	41.5	16.2	36.4
Disparity	60.4	62.6	32.1	49.9	43.3	96.6	0.0	144.0	28.9	88.3
% Popn - HH Source	24.0	54.4	23.9	60.0	32.4	54.7	0.0	23.8	20.1	48.2
% HH < 50 m from Public Source	20.0	28.0	71.4	100.0	33.8	84.5	51.8	100.0	44.3	78.1
% HH - Unprotected Sources	56.0	17.6	4.6	0.0	33.8	0.0	48.2	0.0	48.2	4.4

Calculated from Panchayat records and SR project files

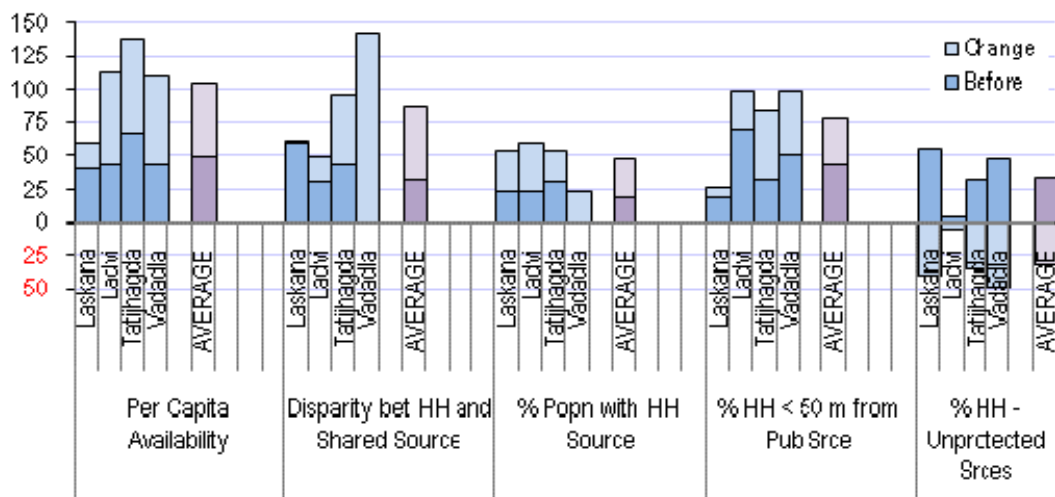


Figure 4.6: Change in water situation after Sector Reform project in Gujarat study villages, from Table 4.3

measures taken in the new systems, the older systems were also repaired. For example, the old borewell with reduced flow in Ladvi was replaced and cracks in the existing elevated storage reservoir were repaired in Tatijhagda; the VWSC, once formed and energized by the construction of the new system, initiated overhaul and repair of older installations. Reliability was also improved and duration of supply increased, but according to users, the most important improvement was that disruption of supply because of breakdowns was minimized. The new systems had not needed any repair since they were commissioned, except once in Laskana when the new pump broke down (reported in FDG no 4, Laskana).

Was the reformed process more participatory, and to what extent did it enable women to be involved? As mentioned in the previous section, the process of community organizing and participatory planning was very abbreviated, if not totally bypassed. The Panchayat formed the VWSC without prior discussion in the community, and members were nominated (not elected) in all villages. Once formed, however, the VWSC was involved in the process to a great extent. It emerged that though they did not take many of the key decisions about the new project, they were aware and agreeable. There was also little consultation or deliberation with the actual users; most users were involved only to the extent of paying the beneficiary contribution. They were all, however, aware that the new system had been developed under the SR program, though many did not know details of the actual process.

The involvement of women was, however, noticeable by its absence, as can be seen in Figure 4.6 below. The VWSCs in all four study villages had at least two women members, of whom one belonged to a Scheduled Caste or Tribe in all villages except in Laskana.. Their membership, however, remained largely a formality. Though five

of the eight women VWSC members interviewed in the four villages had ever attended a meeting; only one had attended more than once; of the 54 opportunities that were available across the four villages, between them they had utilized only six. All except one said they went to attend a meeting out of curiosity – “to see what happened” – and none of them joined in the discussion. Two of them, one in Ladvi and the other in Vadadla, were however fully aware of the different stages and details of the implementation process, though like the others, they did not participate in deliberations or undertake any activity. All knew about the project almost from its inception, as did the other women users who were interviewed. The latter also reported non-participation in the project activities, though all had known of the new projects soon after its inception.

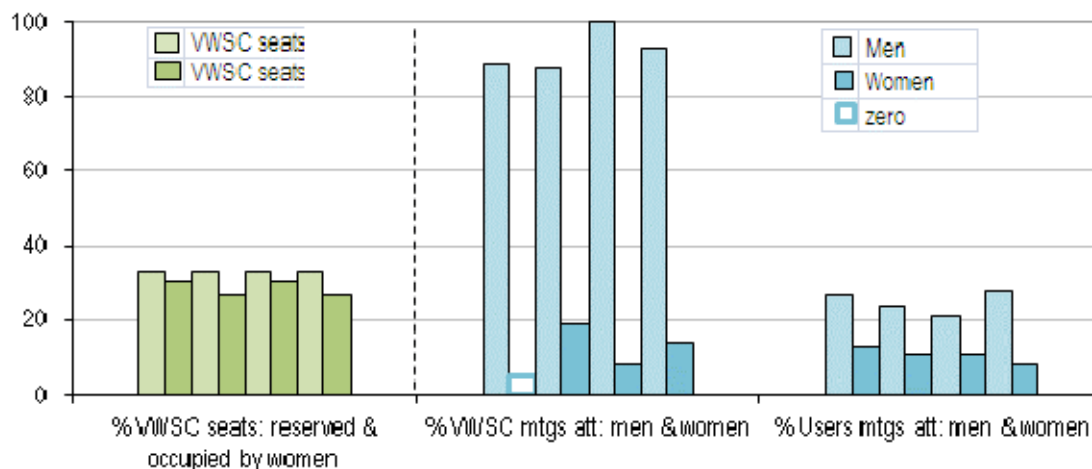


Figure 4.7: Women’s participation in the development process for the Sector Reform Project in Gujarat, from interviews and Panchayat records)

Of the thirteen women elected representatives interviewed, eight were from the better-off families in the village, educated at least till class 12 and wives of members of the Panchayat or the Gram Samooh. Almost all admitted to reading or scanning the minutes when the register was brought home for their signature. The two dalit (Halpati

caste) interviewees reported being asked to visit the Panchayat office, or on occasion the President's house, to affix their thumb-prints, and on the former occasions, asking for information about the project and the decisions taken. This clearly indicated their interest in the process, so why did they not participate more actively? Most of the interviewees smiled; from one familiar with the local culture, it was almost a redundant question. "What do we know of such things, the men do it...", "I don't know when they meet...", "I have all the housework to finish, how can I go...", were most often the reasons given. The one member in Ladvi who attended two meetings said "I went twice, but it was so embarrassing to be the only woman present...in any case, the discussion was all technical, I didn't say anything...". The Harijan woman member in Ladvi had another reason – meetings were often held in the President or Secretary's house, which was generally out-of-bounds for people of her caste.

This pattern of non-participation stands in stark contrast to the active involvement of the male members (see Figure. 4.6), and is surprising in view of the literacy and awareness levels, and the greater freedom of movement enjoyed by women of the area. Discussions revealed that the customary boundaries and prohibitions on intermingling and movement in public spaces had eroded, but very selectively. Customary practices had changed for social occasions such as weddings or other celebrations and during festivals, but not in the arena of public or community affairs. Panchayat or other government offices, and processes centered in them remained largely male bastions, and only women without an adult male relative dealt with 'official' matters themselves. Village governance was even more completely the prerogative of males, and most often, of males of the upper caste and better-off families. The Village Samooch that had a stronger developmental presence than even the Panchayat included no female members, like the Committees formed to manage

the Reverse Osmosis plants in two villages.

Despite their limited involvement, however, both men and women users in all villages expressed their satisfaction with the new program in the focus group discussions. This was echoed in a number of interviews (users in Laskana, Vadadla, Tatijhagda), with interviewees emphasizing one crucial difference made by the SR; the short time taken for implementation of the project. GWSSB installations of piped water systems never took less than two years, about 3-5 years being typical; all SRP projects were completed in less than a year. Also, there was no need for the continual requests and persuasion to GWSSB that was normally required – if there was need, and a proposal could be quickly formulated by the VWSC according to program guidelines, funds were readily allocated. Another gain was in the quality of construction; even GWSSB staff agreed that it was remarkably better than in their own projects. The VWSC hired the contractor and supervised the work; presence of the members and other future users in the village itself meant that there was continuous monitoring of the construction activities. Also, the AAE pointed out that,

“...residents were very quality-conscious, and watchful of the quality of materials and design..... they sometimes get architects advice on tank design, or for nice pumphouses, often insisted on better quality materials than was possible under the government-sanctioned rates...they were willing to pay the difference...”(AAE, DPMU Surat)

The head of Aadesh Charitable Trust, the NGO which had been involved in three of the study villages, summed up the situation thus –

‘People are surprised....very happy because full village is covered. Surprised at the system evolved....they were very skeptical at first, refused to believe, poked fun at the GWSSB staff, our [NGOs] staff etc....but now they are impressed and happy. Many reasons...it is a very quick process, GWSSB projects take years, also it is fully a piped water supply scheme...no one wants handpumps now. The work is also good... it is

‘good’ primarily because of high awareness, also media is watching...in Gujarat, even in the villages people value quality...for example, in Ankhroli [a nearby village], only the pipeline was constructed from existing tank, only three lakhs [Rs 300,000] estimate, but one NRI party was very quality-conscious, paid one lakh [Rs 100,000] extra just for Finolex [a premium brand] pipes...” (CEO, Aadesh Trust)

In sum, though the users were not involved in the decision-processes, the program was effective in Gujarat and all were very satisfied. Is the SR program equally effective in Madhya Pradesh and in Kerala? Are users as satisfied? Do the different socio-economic and cultural contexts make any difference, and in what ways? In the next two sections, I set out the cases of Kerala and Madhya Pradesh respectively, to find answers to these questions.

3. SECTOR REFORMS IN KERALA: KWA, SLSC AND BENEFICIARY GROUPS

Drinking water had historically been self-provided in Kerala, primarily from household wells. For those without, natural ponds and community-created common wells were the norm, till falling levels of groundwater and increasing pollution made these sources unavailable or unsafe. Since the sixties, the State government began to take increasing responsibility for water provision and did so till the reforms of the nineties. The State’s Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) was the main provider till 1984, when the primary responsibilities were transferred to the Kerala Water Authority (henceforth, KWA), a parastatal organization constituted under State law. With the institution of the the Kerala Water Supply and Sewerage Act, 1986, all functions relating to the provision of domestic water were fully vested with the Authority; among others,

“Preparation, execution, promotion, operation, maintenance and financing of the schemes for the supply of water...Rendering all necessary services in regard to water supply...Preparation of State plans...Fixation and revision of tariffs, taxes and charges of water supply and maintenance services...Establishment of state [sic] standards...” (The Kerala Water Supply and Sewerage Act, 1986, quoted in Government of Kerala, 2002)

With this Act, the locus of water provision shifted away from private, community and local government efforts, and the KWA became almost the sole institution developing and managing systems for domestic water provision in the State. In this section I discuss the efforts of KWA, the issues faced by the organization and the institutional framework for water provision before Sector Reforms were introduced. In the following sections, the processes and structures developed in Kerala for the implementation of the SR-Swajaldhara program, and their operation as observed in selected study villages is discussed.

3.1. PRE-REFORM INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE IN KERALA

Households, communities and local governments in Kerala had typically constructed small spot sources like wells and ponds for domestic water supply. The KWA, however, focused predominantly on large-scale, piped-water supply projects, often covering more than one hamlet or panchayat area. This was a very expensive approach in a State where despite an overall high density of population, in large parts of the State neighbourhoods were scattered or houses located on homestead land at some distance from each other. For those not covered by the piped systems – and these were the majority of households, for the large systems had long gestation periods and coverage was very limited – the KWA installed public handpumps and standposts.

A picture of the historical trajectory, structure, functioning and current issues of the KWA emerges from a 2002 Government of Kerala (henceforth, GoK) review of the

organization (GoK 2002) and other recent evaluatory studies²⁹⁵, as also from the interviews with senior State government officers (see Annexure V). Since its inception, the KWA has held responsibility for piped water provision for both rural and urban areas, and over the years has constructed and maintains 607 multi-panchayat and 1093 single-panchayat water supply schemes²⁹⁶. All programs of the GoI, including the AWRSP, are implemented by the KWA. Project and establishment costs have been funded by budget allocations of the GoK every year (both capital and revenue grants), program funds from the GoI, loans from the GoK, GoI and large public-sector corporations, and both grants and loans from international donors²⁹⁷.

The organization functions under the overall supervision of a Board comprising of the heads of the State departments of water supply, finance, local administration and rural development, among others, two members representing the local governments, and technical and accounts members. The organizational structure is typical of infrastructure parastatals in the country, with a series of hierarchically ordered offices, and a core staff of technical personnel, primarily engineers²⁹⁸. The lowest tiers – the subdivision and section offices – manned by Assistant Executive and Additional Assistant Executive Engineers respectively, are the field offices that deal directly with users, community groups and local governments.

²⁹⁵ Including “Technical Assistance to Govt. of Kerala for Developing a Sector Vision for the Drinking Water & Sanitation Sector : An Assessment of the Current Status and Future of Kerala Water Authority (KWA)” by CRISIL and the “Water and Sanitation: Sector Status Report” by the Socio-Economic Unit Foundation, both funded by the World Bank’s Water and Sanitation Program for South Asia (WSP-SA)

²⁹⁶ Kerala has 999 GPs, and some have more than one scheme. Even those Panchayats which do have piped systems may or not be fully covered.

²⁹⁷ Including the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) and Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO), and donors like the World Bank (WB), Danida, Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

²⁹⁸ For operational purposes, the State is divided in three regions – north, south and central – and further into 10 circles, 42 divisions, 127 subdivisions and 298 section offices, headed by the Superintending, Chief, Executive, Assistant Executive and Additional Assistant Executive Engineers respectively.

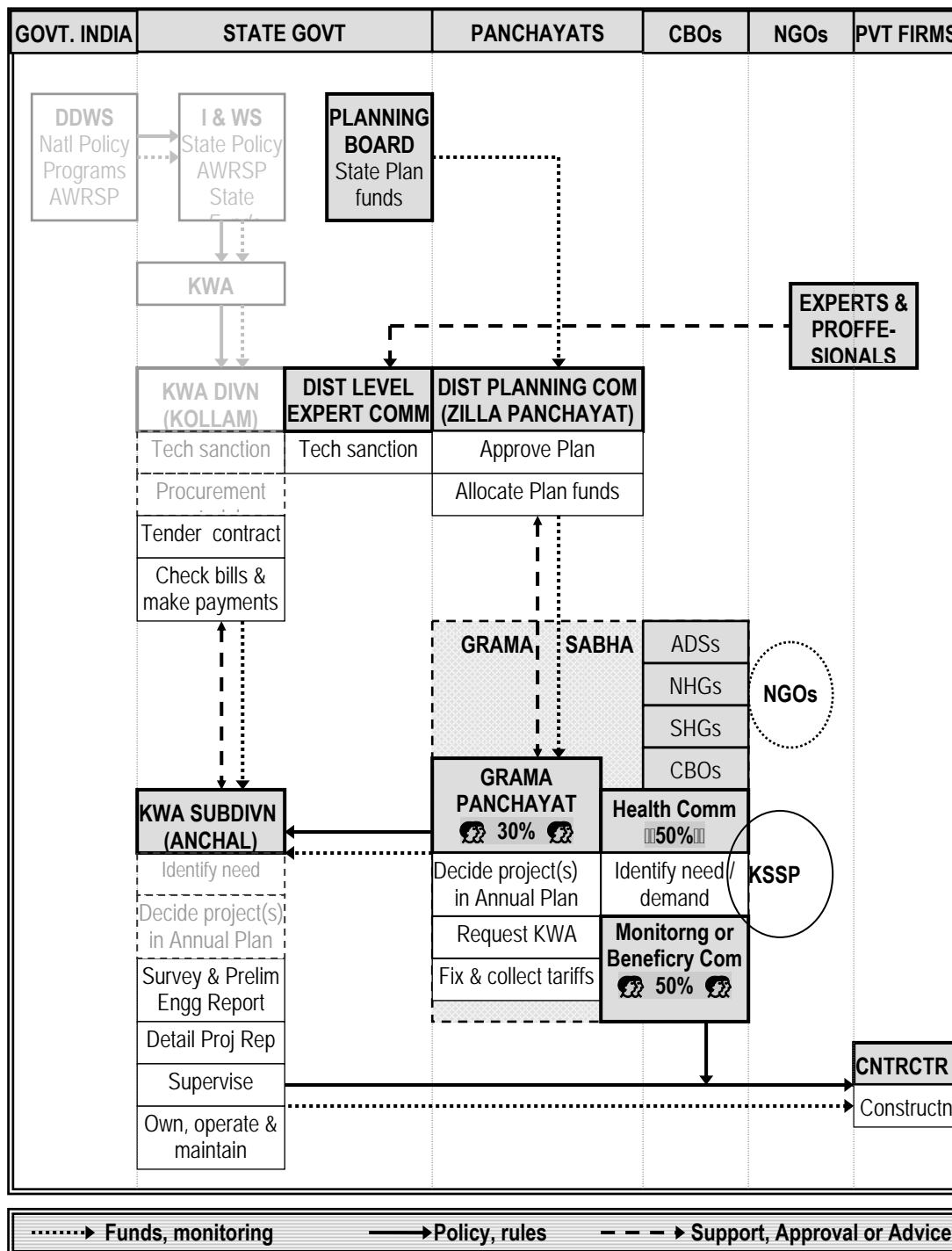


Figure 4.8: Institutional architecture for water provision by the State in Kerala prior to the introduction of sector reforms.

Need is assessed and proposals are developed by the appropriate field office depending on the size and coverage, vetted and sanctioned by officers in the higher tiers and implemented by the proposing office with the help of local area office – typically, the Division - through contractors; again, a process that closely mirrors that in parallel organizations in other States. After the local government reforms in 1995 and the introduction of participatory planning, Gram Panchayats became responsible for identifying need and planning for water supply projects, and monitoring the construction processes, but the actual construction process continued to remain in the purview of the KWA. This was only in the case of projects funded from Panchayat resources (allocated by the State government); in other State government programs and the ARWSP, the entire planning, budgeting and implementation remained with the KWA. The institutional architecture for water provision that existed in Kerala at the time when the SR program was introduced in 1999 is depicted in Figure 4.8.

3.2. WATER PROVISION BY THE KWA: TRAJECTORY AND ISSUES

Nine years after KWA started functioning, a survey by the GoI revealed that almost one-fourth of the habitations in Kerala remained without access to the 40 lpcd of safe water from protected sources that was its responsibility to provide. Reportedly, the reality was far worse, with wells considered safe running dry for months or affected by pollution, handpumps set in inappropriate locations and groundwater levels falling (Officer, State Bureau of Economics and Statistics). Like its counterparts in other States, the organization was increasingly becoming ineffective and unsustainable²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ In addition to projects being supply driven and often over-designed, internal inefficiencies led almost inevitably to escalation of project costs. Planned projects had to be shelved because of lack of funds or proper implementation, leaving a huge inventory of procured materials unused. Losses on account of very low tariffs, number of unauthorized connections, distribution inefficiencies and faulty metering, among other reasons, left inadequate resources for servicing loans. Overstaffing and corruption were other issues. (Secretary, SPB; State Coordinator WB-WSP).

and a Sector Status Report (2005) states that

“on account of various internal and external reasons, the institution and investments have become unsustainable. The systems are typically supply driven, at times over designed, high UAF, and poor cost recovery. The impact of the model was: (i) drinking water provision, which was mostly self financing was brought under heavily subsidized governmental provision, with the people made increasingly dependent (ii) investments made over the years [in wells, ponds etc.] were rendered at least partially infructuous and (iii) increasing cost of service delivery and disregard for cost of capital [public funds].*De jure*, KWA is an autonomous institution, but *de facto* it depends on GoK for most of the critical decisions.....for carrying out of most of its functions and execution of the above powers, the Authority has to take prior approval of GoK, which for all practical purposes renders its autonomy ineffective.” (SEUF 2005:50)

Till 1991, tariffs were collected from users by the local governments, who in turn were billed by the KWA for the maintenance cost of installations. After 1991, however, KWA was empowered to collect water charges directly from consumers, and from the urban local governments for public taps and handpumps installed and maintained by KWA³⁰⁰ within their jurisdiction. But tariff revisions had to be approved by the GoK, and despite the 1991 order that specified an annual increase of 15% in subsequent years, tariffs have not been revised since 1999. At the user's end, the long gestation period of projects led to inadequate supply as in the meantime populations outgrew designed capacities or source condition changed³⁰¹, installations were inadequate, inappropriately placed or ill maintained.

Country-wide discourses on decentralization and user involvement as the panacea to this situation underpinned the devolution of water provision responsibilities to Panchayats in the local government reforms after 1995. However, the existing

³⁰⁰ Volumetric rates were fixed by assuming 8 hours of supply from taps in rural areas and 12 hours in urban areas, at Rs 1 per kilolitre in 1991, and have subsequently been revised only once, in 1999.

³⁰¹ Rivers running dry, groundwater falling – CEED interview

structure has proved too resistant to change³⁰², and as discussed in chapter III (Section 3), the KWA continued to be the main implementer for all projects³⁰³.

3.3. SECTOR REFORM AND SWAJALDHARA IN KERALA

When the Sector Reform pilot project was introduced by the DDWS in 1999, there was already recognition of the need for community involvement in local service provision among many senior officers of the State³⁰⁴. Panchayat reforms and the (State-led) shift to a participatory planning process in 1995 had initiated a paradigm shift in local governance. Historically domestic water had been self-provided, and in the face of increasing scarcity, community initiatives had emerged in some places and attracted wide attention, such as in Olavanna³⁰⁵. Organizations were being promoted by the GoI and international donors to replicate and institutionalize the community-based models - the World Bank supported Jalanidhi³⁰⁶, RNE supported district programmes (Alleppy and Idukki)³⁰⁷ and the GoI supported Giridhara Scheme³⁰⁸ implemented by the Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF).

³⁰² See discussion in section 3.3; by 2008, functionaries and funds of all service departments have been transferred to Panchayats, except water supply (Mishra 2008)

³⁰³ With the PPC and institution of the local planning process, however, water provision has been a prime focus of Panchayats in their own budgets and between 1997 and 2002, local governments constructed about 100,000 community wells and installed almost 50,000 street taps, together, 1,58, 119 water supply points; since its inception, the KWA had installed about 1,75,000 street taps. It has a much higher number of individual connections – 8,33,391. (GoK, 2002)

³⁰⁴ Though according to the Director, SEUF, not as much within the KWA (interview).

³⁰⁵ Olavanna is a village in north Kerala, where a community developed and run a water system.

³⁰⁶ 'Jalanidhi', or the Kerala Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency is a GoK program to trigger the alternate demand driven delivery model. Supported by an IDA line of credit from the World Bank, the project piloted a bottom up planning process through a quadrilateral partnership between community, NGO, GP and KRWSA, and is now scaling up the program across the State.

³⁰⁷ SEUF CEO interview

³⁰⁸ The scheme is supported by the Water Supply Program –South Asia, of the World Bank, and involves reviving and repairing existing installations before handing them over to Panchayats or user groups.

Two districts of Kerala – Kasargode and Kollam – had been selected by the DDWS for implementation of the Sector Reform Pilot Project initiated in April 1999, but the program started in Kerala only in Jan 2001. The Irrigation and Water Supply department of the GoK set the detailed guidelines for its implementation in the State, including the project objectives, components, design and institutional structure (GoK 2001). In addition to the objectives of institutionalizing a demand-based approach to community water supply, the project had the specific objective of strengthening Panchayats (PRIs) through technical assistance and development of a management information system (MIS). A State-level Steering Committee (henceforth, SLSC), chaired by the Secretary of the Irrigation and Water Supply Department was constituted, to set the policy environment for the project, provide overall guidance, form rules for selection and remuneration of program staff and monitor progress.³⁰⁹ The WSP-SA representative in Kerala was named State Coordinator for SRP. The World Bank’s Water Supply Program – South Asia (WSP-SA) representative in Kerala was named State Coordinator for SRP.

The GoK Guidelines emphasize³¹⁰ that the institutional structure “[was] worked out within the broader framework of the Panchayati Raj Institutions...on the premise that constitutional bodies will have longer-term sustainability than those by virtual organizations”. Named a ‘People On Top’ model,

³⁰⁹ The SLSC members included the Secretaries of the departments of Finance Resources and Local Self Government (Rural), Managing Director of KWA, the Executive Director of KRWSSA, and the Panchayat President, Panchayat Secretary and Collector of the implementing districts. Representatives of the RGNRWM (GoI), the World Bank’s Water Supply Program in South Asia (WSP-SA) and one NGO were also members, and an expert advisor for Sector Reforms and the President of one of the GPs in which the project was implemented could be co-opted. (GoK 2001)

³¹⁰ The primacy of people’s participation in the program is repeated in various ways throughout the document....

“[T]he institutional design [is] a partnership between the following entities:

- i. Beneficiary Groups acting through a Beneficiary Committee
- ii. Grama Panchayats
- iii. Service Agencies
- iv. The District Panchayat acting through the Project Support Unit
- v. The Steering Committee.

The Beneficiary group [shall be] vested with the most important responsibilities of planning, designing, constructing, operating and managing rural water supply and sanitation facilities ... contribute their share of capital investment and levy and collect water charges Existing participatory mechanisms like NHGs [Neighborhood Groups] and Grama Sabhas will be fully involved.” (GoK 2001:16)

The Grama Panchayats were to coordinate the project activities of the Beneficiary Groups (BGs), facilitate clearances from State line departments and contribute 10% of the capital cost. Service Agencies would be contracted to support the GPs and BGs in social, engineering, hydro-geological and other aspects; they could be individual experts, consortium of experts, institutions or NGOs. The District Panchayat was to take the lead in facilitating implementation of the project, receive the funds directly from the GoI and transfer it to the BGs through the GPs. It was to house a Project Support Unit, chaired by the District Panchayat President and staffed with a multidisciplinary team of experts³¹¹, to manage project implementation. The District Collector, who chaired the District Level Expert Committee (DLEC), would also coordinate project Implementation (GoK 2001). The structure and tasks set out for various actors under SR, and later Swajaldhara, are shown in Figure 4.9.

The GoK SR Guidelines emphasize the primacy and autonomy of the Beneficiary Groups, which are legal associations of all user families of a water supply system, in taking all decisions related to the design, implementation and management of the

³¹¹ The staff were to be consultants, in the areas of Public Health Engineering, Community Development, Human Resource Development and Financial Management; as far as possible, from among the senior staff of the KWA, GoK or other public sector organizations. Three engineers, one IEC specialist, one Chartered Accountant and an MIS specialist were also to be hired, from the GoK, public sector, academic institutions or the open market. In addition, short-term consultants could be appointed, and eight supporting staff.

installations. A model byelaw specifying the constitution, membership rules and election of an executive Beneficiary Committee was developed by the SLSC. Two adult representatives from each household, one a woman, constituted the Beneficiary Group, who would elect an executive Beneficiary Committee from among themselves. 50% of the members of the BC were to be women, and atleast one-fifth from dalit families. Three members of the BC were to be trained as Master Volunteers, in social, engineering and financial management aspects respectively, to “act as functional leaders in the social mobilization, engineering construction, operation maintenance and judicious management of finance and accounts.” (GoK 2001:19) The SLSC also decided to place Grama Panchayat Volunteer Resource Teams (GVRTs) in the Village Panchayats where the pilots were to be implemented, instead of the support agencies (SAs) suggested in the Guidelines. With two engineers, two community mobilizers and one accountant, the GVRT was to assist the beneficiary groups to organize and establish the association, form the BC, develop the proposal and execute the project.

When the Swajaldhara program started in Kerala (on April 1st 2004) the structure was changed to follow the design set out by the DDWS. The State Water and Sanitation Mission was constituted according to the program, with an Apex and Executive Committee to oversee the program in the State. The KWA was made the State nodal agency for the program, and DWSMs constituted as District Implementing Agencies, with a DWSC as executive. *In a move that brought control back to the State government*, the District Collector was named as Chair of the DWSM, despite the clear DDWS injunction that DWSMs should be under the District Panchayat if they were active – which they definitely were in Kerala³¹². The Executive Engineer of

³¹² This structure of the DWSM as District Implementing Agency for the state was approved by the Government of India for Kerala, as a special case. (SEUF 2005:56)

KWA was Secretary of the DWSM. The DWSC was the executive to receive and allocate funds from the GoI, and give administrative and technical sanction to BG proposals, organizing which was to be the responsibility of VWSCs of the GPs. In 11 non-SRP districts the program was to be implemented in selected Panchayats (Swajaldhara I) by the KWA working with the VWSCs of the GPs. In the two SR pilot districts, the PSU remained in place to extend the program to all Panchayats in the district (Swajaldhara II), and the PSU team leaders were included as members of the DWSM and DWSC. A monitoring cell was constituted in KWA headquarters with Deputy Chief Engineer, Projects & Monitoring Unit, as coordinator.

This structure was designed by the State, and set in place with the roles of the different organizational actors specified in detail. Of the three States, Kerala has the most extensive and detailed Guidelines for implementation of the program in the State³¹³, in which the unequivocal supremacy of the BG is reiterated in many sections. That it is “their own system” and users had to plan, construct, own, operate and maintain it – “we [sic] only pay most of the capital cost and help them with the technical part” – was also a remark made by many interviewees in the PSU and GVRT. How the design worked, the emergent processes at the local level, and whether this view of the respective roles of the government and the BGs was reflected in the actual functioning of the reform structure, was studied by examining the implementation of the program in five locations in Kollam district. This is discussed in the next section.

³¹³ In Gujarat, there was no such document; the Guidelines published by the DDWS were re-issued by the GoG (WASMO 2004) with the addition of an introductory letter from the Minister and Secretary of Water Resources, in Gujarati (the local language). The only documents which describe the State-specific structure and processes were the Annual Reports of WASMO, from which the State-specific design variations from the GoI framework could be read. In MP there was no document from which the State-specified arrangements could be read, except the GO authorizing the formation of a PSU within the PHED.

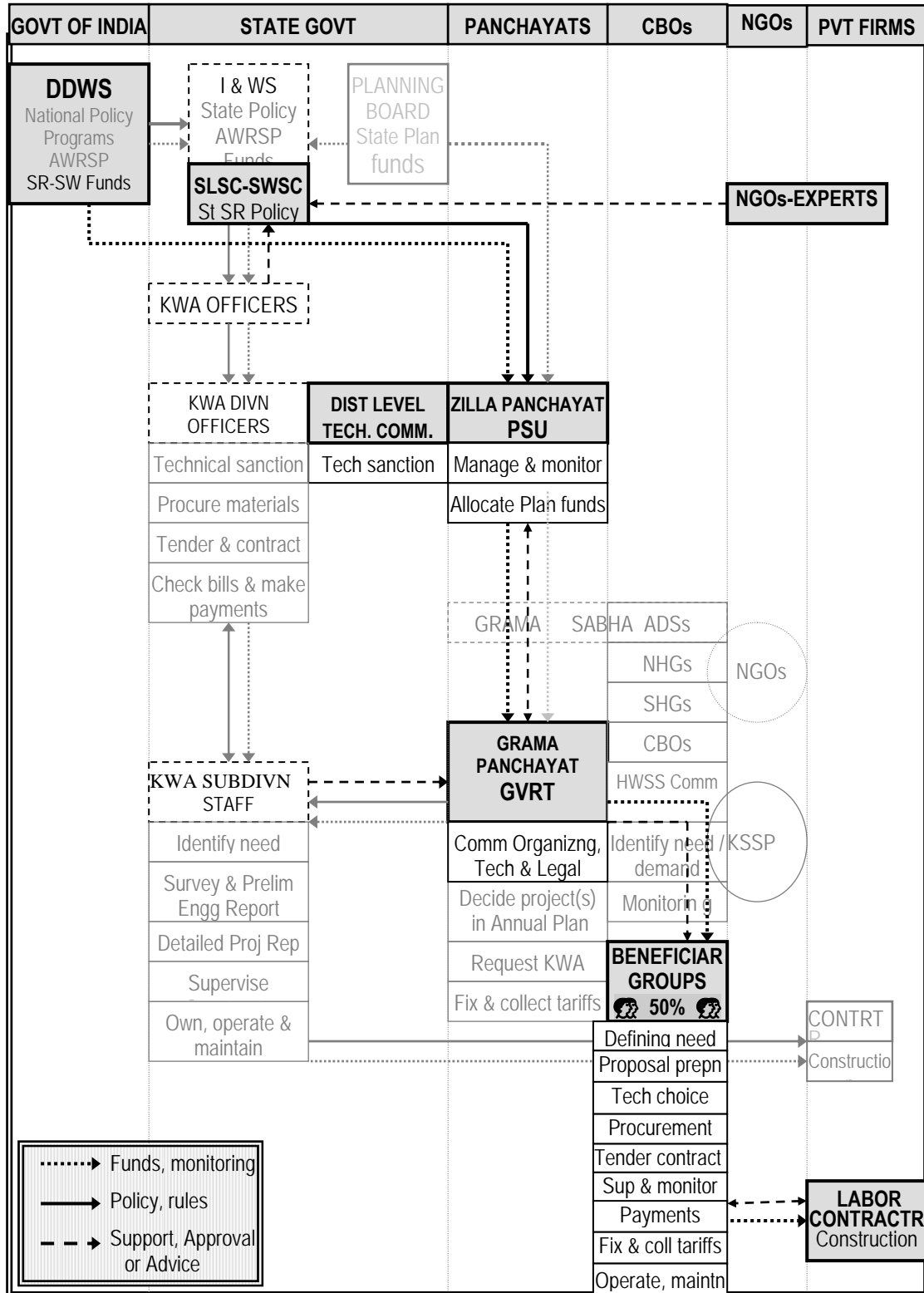


Figure 4.9: Reformed Institutional Structure for the Sector Reforms - Swajaldhara Program in Kerala

3.4. SECTOR REFORM-SWAJALDHARA IN KERALA: GVRT AND BENEFICIARY COMMITTEES

By 31st March 2004, 315 of the 430 water supply projects proposed by BGs in Kollam and Kasargode districts had been completed under the SRP, and the rest were carried forward under Swajaldhara II (GoK 2004). As the program was transmuted to Swajaldhara, however, progress slowed; in the year after it was introduced, more than 600 projects were proposed under Swajaldhara I and II across the State, but only 7 completed and many were to be cancelled. Apparently, the SWSM constituted was weak and ineffectual, had not been given a strong mandate, a budget head and staff to enable it to function effectively (SEUF 2005:11; interview with SEUF CEO).

To understand the functioning of the reformed institutional set-up, implementation of the SRP and Swajaldhara was studied in Kollam district, where the reforms were first introduced. The Sector Reform pilot began in Kerala in 2001, but it was not until 2002 that the organizational arrangements were in place in Kollam. Of the two pilot districts, the program had an earlier start and made better progress in Kasargode; in Kollam the PSU and GVRT did not start functioning smoothly till the leadership of the ZP and the PSU both changed – the ZP President’s term was completed and a new President from the opposing party³¹⁴ took over, and the first Team leaders was replaced (SLSC minutes, Consultant PSU). But by mid-2003, the initial problems due to weak leadership, confused reporting relationships and turf conflicts between the existing Panchayat bureaucracy and the PSU had been resolved³¹⁵, and 29 projects

³¹⁴ Since neither of the two political parties – the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) had a clear majority in the District Panchayat, they had agreed that the five year term would be split between Presidents from each party in turn. The UDF President had just stepped down and the LDF President had taken over in 2003.

³¹⁵ These problems, decisions made by the SLSC for their resolution and actions taken are recorded in the minutes of the meetings held by the SLSC.

were either completed or underway, in 26 GPs in Kollam (PSU records). The PSU and GVRT were fully staffed when this research was being done in 2005-2006 and according to them, had been adequately resourced in terms of a budget, office space, equipment, stationery and computers for more than two years (as observed, and from Team Leader, PSU).

To understand program implementation at the local level, three projects initiated in late 2003 – in the Nilamootil, Mayiladumkunnu and Pulari hamlets – were studied, and a fourth at Ambalakonam, which was just being completed. Nilamootil and Ambalakonam were in the Aanchal panchayat, Mayilladumkunnu in Yeroor and Pulari in Thevalakkara, and the Aanchal GVRT served all these projects. The process was retraced through interviews with elected officials of the DP and GP, staff of the PSU and GVRT, and members of the BG and BC, documents of the PSU, GVRT and BG and observation of their functioning (see Annexure V). The project document in all four cases is impressive in comparison to the Gujarat project files, with comprehensive details about the user families and the BG as a whole – including the process of organizing the latter – and the actual water supply system³¹⁶. Of these, information relevant to this discussion is presented in Table 4.4 below, and additional details provided in Annexure III. One of the most striking dimensions is the number of community-based organizations existing in the project areas, with women actively involved in all.

According to GVRT staff, the district PSU, the Grama Panchayat or the GVRT introduced the program through awareness programs, but users in the study projects

³¹⁶ Discussions with GVRT staff and BC members confirmed that information about the user households had been collected through an independent survey by the GVRT staff and verified by presenting results at a BG meeting, and the water supply system had been constructed as per the technical details in the project document which incorporated changes in design and/or costs.

reported that seminars and discussions were held after they requested information from the GP. They first heard of the program from other sources:

[The] Ward member came and told us....we went to meet the Panchayat President and the Panchayat members..... and requested them to give information, then panchayat arranged seminar. In the seminar water scarce areas [were] identified. After the seminar, at ward level kind of meeting....they found out cluster and from there they form[ed] the group. That is the process....From the seminar we came to know... (fdg, Pulleri)

“[We]....come to know that there is a project established in the nearby area, Orunadabagathu, to solve the water problems. So the people from here went to join but they couldn't get chance to join there. Therefore, the people of here [sic] plan to organize a project like the one and then sir [indicating the GVRT member present] came and took a class. Accordingly, as per the instruction, some people gathered and from them President, Secretary and Treasurer were elected. (President, Ambalakonam project, woman).

Table 4.4
Composition of BG households, pre-project access to water and the new water supply projects in Kerala

Project area	Beneficiary Group				Pre-project sources (% hh dependant)				New Supply System		
	No.of hhs	Av hh size	% hh BPL	CBO involvmt % hh	Own well	Other s well	Public source	Srce dist (% hh > 50m)	Tank cap (liters)	Per hh pipe length	Dur of supply
Neelamoottil	71	5	40	87	50	42	8	25%	15,000	79 m	
Mayiladum-kunnu	85	5	27	22	68	31	1	67%	12,500	52.5 m	
Pullari	130	5	62	45	7	15	74	80%	20,000	51 m	3-4 hrs
Ambalakonam	45		42	68	18				10,000	47 m	2 hrs

Compiled from project files.

At the organizational level, the Aanchal GVRT arranged discussions with ward members and local residents, to understand the patterns of water availability in their areas and the extent of need. A list that prioritized areas of most acute need was developed in a joint meeting of the GVRT, GP, IP, DP and well-known social workers.

All project areas were among those with high priority and except Pulleri, were spread over highly undulating terrain, in drought-prone areas where most wells are seasonal. For half the year, residents depended on the few perennial wells in some households or on ponds in the valley. During the dry months, almost three-fourth of the households had to carry water uphill from sources more than 100 m away. Water quality in both wells and ponds was also a problem, with high iron content or polluted by manure pits and fertilizers used in the paddy fields surrounding them. Pullari is located in the plains adjacent to the brackish backwaters of the Ashtamudi lake, and was equally water-starved. In this area, few people had wells; and most people fetched water from public standposts in the adjoining ward, walking the 150-odd meters.

Interviewees agreed that the BG was quickly formed, in 2-3 meetings organized by the GVRT staff. In most cases, those who initiated the efforts mobilized other residents and anchored the process –

We went around to all houses to tell them about it...there was water scarcity so many wanted to join...in the first meeting there were only 20 people so we called the second meeting where we had quite a few people, around 60-75. We collected Rs 24 as membership fee....They elected the BC – I was the President – and then all the work was done by us....Sir [the GVRT mobilizer] brought the papers, byelaws, registration form, everything...ofcourse the engineers came for finding the place and doing the drawings, but we did the tender, we supervised...we had to collect the money [beneficiary contribution] from everyone before that...first we collected 1000 Rs from all members, then we did the estimate and collected 500 Rs again...(President, Mayiladumkunnu BG)

Two representatives of each household – one male and one female – were members of the BG in all projects. Three to five of the 11 members of the BC were women³¹⁷, with the highest number (5) in Ambalakonam. Women were also elected as Presidents and other officer-holders, except in Pulleri.

³¹⁷ Half of the members are required to be women, by the model byelaws adopted by both BGs.

All the projects are designed to provide piped water to all households from a raised reservoir placed at the highest point in the area, to which water is pumped from an open well located in the valley below. Perennial sources were found, as expected, in the valley area, and the water is in some projects pumped up a height of more than 40m to the storage reservoir so that all households get adequate pressure in their pipeline. Hydrologists from the Ground Water Board, requested by the GVRT, located sources in consultation with senior residents of the area, and estimated yield. (FDG - Neelamootil, GVRT engineer). The BG purchased the land on which the source was located and the elevated reservoir had to be constructed.

All households contributed equally to the 10% of the capital cost as was required in the program – approximately Rs.1500 initially. A contribution, the amount to be decided by the BG at the time, would be asked of families moving into the locality in future. In Pulleri and Neelamootil, those unable to pay in cash contributed in labor for the construction. All BGs employ a pump operator to run the system; he is paid by a monthly water charge (ranging from Rs.20 to Rs.35) levied by the BG on member households, which he collects. The agreement is that when major repairs are required, members would contribute equally towards the cost.

In all projects, the BG met about once a week during the construction process, for the BC to report progress and place issues for decision by the assembly, though after the system was operational, meetings were generally held once a month. A specific date was fixed for monthly meetings, and though attendance was thinner, the Secretary still maintains systematic records of attendance and discussion at the meetings in a “Minute Book”. Documentation is extensive in all BGs; in addition to the minutes,

accounts were maintained by the Treasurer, and a log book for pump operations and receipt books for the monthly contributions by the pump operator, who also filled a maintenance register and a water charge collection register. Byelaws and manuals for the functioning of the BG – its constitution, O& M rules, monthly reporting formats and chlorination formats were provided by the GVRT. At the time of this research, three of the projects had completed more than two years, and elections to the BC had been held for the second time, but most of the original BCs were still in place. Users explained that “...they were doing good work...it would not have been good to change the committee in the middle of the construction...” (FDGs - Neelamootil, Mayilladumkunnu).

Both BG members and GVRT staff reported that the latter provided necessary information, legal and technical support for the project; after the formation of the BG and election of BC, its major task was the preparation of the Detailed Scheme Report, which was placed before the BG for approval before being sent for technical sanction and funding to the PSU. The PSU presented the Reports from various projects for technical sanction by the DLTC (for SR projects) and the DWSM (for Swajaldhara projects). They also collated and sent progress reports and financial requirements of proposed projects in the district for DDWS approval and remittance of funds, through the DWSM in case of Swajaldhara projects.

The institutional structure and processes for the implementation of the SR program as observed in the study projects is shown in Figure 4.10 below. The entire process closely reflected that envisaged in the DDWS Guidelines, and embodied in the institutional design, but a number of operational issues were discussed by BG and BC members. A common problem was water quality: it was muddy and salty in

Neelamootil and Mayiladumkunnu, but for different reasons. In the former, it was due to percolation through the weep-holes in the well wall during the rainy season, a construction feature insisted upon by the engineers. In the latter, silt from the bottom was inevitably pumped into the reservoir when water percolation into the well decreased in summer. Both projects also had very low yields from the water source, much below that estimated by the hydrologists, and a full day of pumping was required to refill the raised storage reservoir in the summer months.

A less technical problem was the non-payment of monthly dues, particularly during the rainy season when private wells were full. Some others, without private wells, also stopped paying because they were getting “less water” (only once a day), and it was often discoloured. This was a contentious issue in Neelamootil, where, as the pump operator explained,

The main thing is the capacity of the tank is 12,000 [liters] only. They want water in the morning and evening. We are not in a position to do so. Because the well doesn't recharge till the next day. Yes it will not recharge during the summer season....means February to May end. In June monsoon will come....and the red colour also comes during the rain....there is another source nearby, but no money for the new well...and electricity is a problem as the three-phase line is far...
(Pump Operator, Neelamootil)

Pulleri had a different issue – the frequent cuts in electricity supply. This meant that the pump operator could not have a fixed schedule, and had to wait for the times when it was possible to refill the reservoir, preventing him from other livelihood activities which augmented the small salary he earned as the operator.

There were also allegations of financial irregularity and misappropriation of funds by the BC, from users in Neelamootil and Mayiladumkunnu:

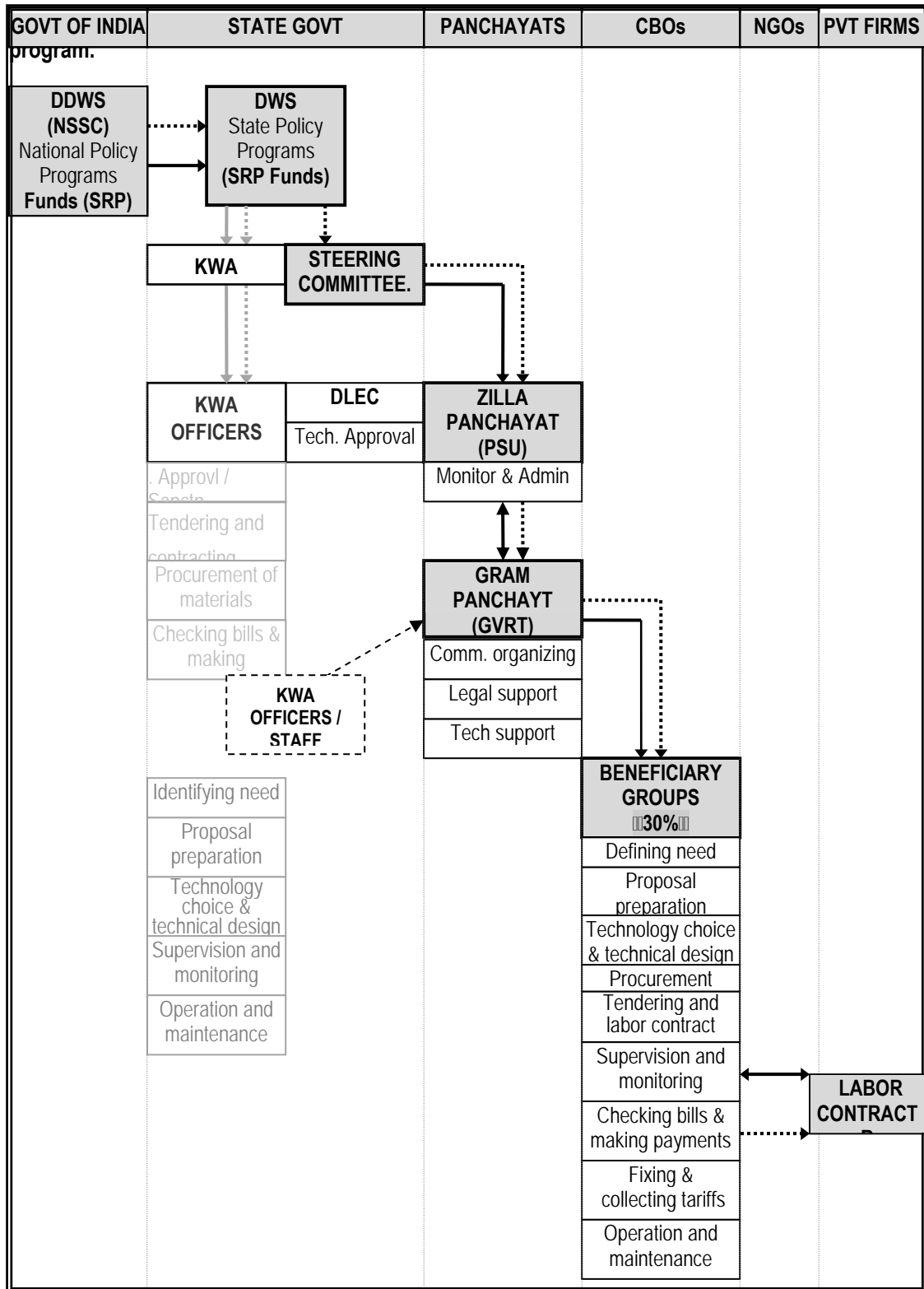


Figure 4.10: Observed institutional architecture in Kerala Sector Reform Project

First they said, Rs.1000. When the pipes are about to arrive, then they started telling that they would require an additional Rs.500, even foundation [support pillars] have to be laid. They collected Rs.500. But when they came here last time, they said, Rs.400 would be returned.... This has another catch as well. If we do not pay the water tax [Rs.25/month] three months consecutively, our water connection would be cut....now [they] have given several new connections; has money been collected against that? Has it come to the Samiti? Have these 85 families [the BG members] come to know about it? If not, why? It was announced at the time of inauguration that without our permission, no new water connections would be provided....(BG member, Mayiladumkunnu)

[T]hey started collecting 30 rupees per month from every one. Now for three-four months they are not collecting the money. Therefore there is no entry [in the register]. Actually they have the project eleven lakh and they have spent about 9 – 9.5 lakh rupees. The balance money where it has gone nobody knows. What they have done with it, whether it is deposited in the Bank or somebody has taken it, we do not know because it was managed by the private agency. Government is giving money 90%, 10% we have collected from all members, thousand five hundred rupees each. And then the electricity charges and other operation is about two thousand rupees per month. For that we are collecting Rs. 30 each from the family..... Actually the project is meant for 50 persons but they have taken 72 persons. From 72 persons they have taken Rs. 1500 each that itself is a big amount...and now the electricity bill is reduced to 300-400 Rs [from @1400 earlier] (User and BG member, Neelamootil)³¹⁸

Committee members explained that accounts were complicated and could be updated and presented only at meetings after they were balanced, which gave rise to such questions. The flow of funds was unpredictable, not least because the government money only came in after the construction was well advanced:

[T]hey [the ZP] gave 80% of the total only when we finished 80% of the work...I had to take loans...private loans...so that the work will not stop....when we got more money we repaid the loans, also the interest...so they think we are taking the extra money for ourselves...and in this project the estimate was revised, now it is Rs.2000 for each member...” (President, Mayilladumkunnu)

Also, the reduction in electricity bills only meant that outstanding dues were being paid off, such as pending repair bills, pump operators salary arrears, etc. Why was all this not explained at the BG meetings? The President said it was, but few members

³¹⁸ The high electricity charges that BGs were paying in the first year had been reduced after the recent Kerala government’s notification that the rates for such projects would be the same as for domestic connections; previously, these projects were billed as commercial projects.

attended; also, many of the personal loan transactions were not entered in the accounts. Other BC members and users present during the interviews agreed that the accusations were baseless, though no one understood why the ZP was only remitting 80% of the funds that had been approved.

Discrepancies also stemmed from the difference in the estimated amounts and the actual costs of the project. Estimates contained in the Detailed Scheme Report, on which basis the GoI share was granted, were based on the PWD/ KWA rates as required by the rules. These rates were often substantially below the prevailing market rate. This issue had been discussed in a number of meetings of the SLSC, but the Committee took a long time to resolve that estimates could be based on rates published by the PSU, which would be consistent with local market rates. Till then, the solution that was developed was to keep the actual construction cost @ 80% of the estimated rate, and use the difference to adjust for market rates. This mechanism was devised in consultation with the GVRT staff, in fact, on their suggestion, but it complicated accounts and made them difficult to explain.

This practice also had a perverse effect of making the projects unattractive for contractors, who under daily tight supervision of users, were unable to ‘make extra money’, as was almost *de riguer* for government projects. It also encouraged a practice of ‘false tendering’; that is, the same contractor quoted different prices by filling in tenders under various proxies. Even worse, GVRT members reported that in a couple of projects, those who won the contract had quoted a low price that was quite infeasible, and had stopped construction midway demanding a revision of the contract.

Despite the complaints of financial irregularity, the same users agreed that the project

was a “good thing” and had eased the acute scarcity during the summer months, an opinion echoed by other users as well:

In the past, our sources, including the well from where I would fetch water, used to get dried up in summer and we had to go to low lying areas. In my opinion, this is the best thing for all of us. Since I have physical problems, I could never carry the water from long distances. So my personal opinion is that it is extremely useful. I also do not waste water. I have not planted even a sapling for that matter. (woman user, Mayiladumkunnu)

3.5. SECTOR REFORM IN KERALA: EFFICACY, EFFECTIVENESS AND PARTICIPATION

The liberalized structure instituted in Kerala shifted a large proportion of the functions involved in water provision to *area-based* user-groups (Beneficiary Groups), and from the working of the four SR projects described above, it was clear that the reformed structure worked almost fully as designed (see Figures 4.9 and 4.10). The description of the structure as a ‘People on Top’ model was not inappropriate, as the beneficiary groups were the organizational fulcrum and functioning as envisaged, despite the issues that had surfaced. In each case, members of the BG and BC saw it as something that ‘we have done’, with the financial, technical and legal help of ‘the government’. Their full involvement in the process and many significant decisions was not only evident, but the pride and sense of ownership was palpable. This was despite the fact that the State government determined their constitution and byelaws, and there were extensive guidelines and reporting requirements imposed by the PSU. This made the structure and functioning of the BG and the processes of development, operation and management of the water supply system almost identical across projects. While the rationale was to prevent malpractices and ensure transparent, democratic and equitable functioning of the user group, it replicated one structure and manner of functioning,

allowing little place for the groups to evolve their own unique systems.

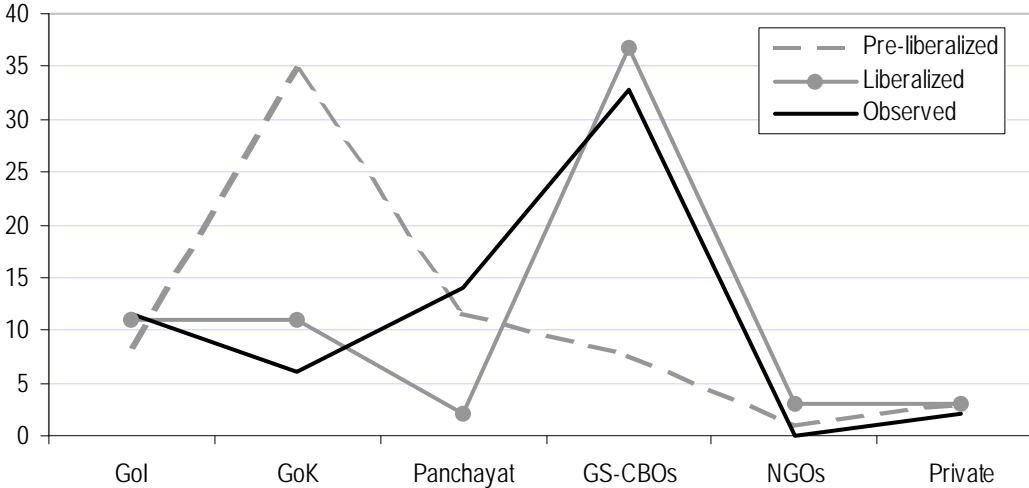


Figure 4.11: Shifts in the distribution of functions from State provision to liberalized (SR-Swajaldhara) governance systems in Kerala, derived using the Devolution score Sheet (Table 2.6)

To what extent was the new institutional architecture more effective than the previous arrangements? Was the reformed process more participatory, and the organizational arrangement more supportive of women’s involvement? Comparisons of the water availability before and after the projects were implemented, and the changed patterns of access, clearly illustrate that water availability increased notably for the beneficiaries of these projects (see Table 4.5 and Figure 4.12). All residents, except those with perennial wells, had faced acute problems for almost half the year, from Feb to June, and had to rely on the goodwill of well-owners, or carry water over long distances and uphill from the valley – often, from wells or ponds with contaminated water. The most important change was therefore that the minimum required quantity of water for personal needs had become available during the dry season. This was in addition to that available from the sources they previously used, where they returned

Table 4.5

Effectiveness of liberalized governance arrangements for water supply in Kerala

	Neelamootil		Mayiladum-kunnu		Pulleri		Ambalako-nam		K-SR	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Per Capita Availability	31	93	32	91	30	76	39	83	33	86
Per Cap from HH Source	75	77	75	77	75	76	75	74	75	76
Per Cap from Public Sources	27	27	27	27	27	27	39	47	30	32
Disparity	48	0	48	0	48	0	36	0	45	0
% Popn with HH Source	7	100	7	100	5	100	7	100	7	100
% HH < 50 m from Pub Source	21	21	18	18	58	58	100	100	49	49
% HH - Unprotected Sources	72	0	75	0	37	0	0	0	46	0

Calculated from project files

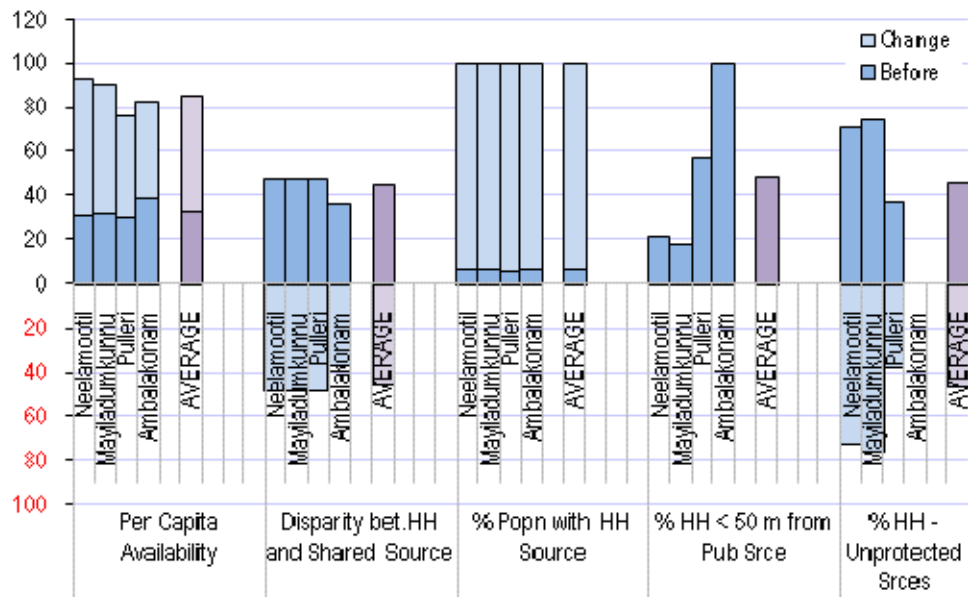


Figure 4.12: Effectiveness of Sector Reform Program water supply projects observed in Kerala, from Table 4.5

when on some days water from the new system was inadequate or contaminated. An equally notable change was in the proximity of collection points – the piped connection to each house. All summer water did not need to be carried over long distances nor did access depend on neighbors. In the two years that projects had been operational, repair time when breakdowns occurred had been reasonably short. The question of quality, is however, more vexed. Water in three completed projects

were either colored, salty or both, at various times. Except chlorination the water was not treated, and no BG had done any scientific examination of water quality since it was expensive and facilities were not easily accessible. While the wells which were the most common sources earlier – and continued to be when there was water – were unprotected, all households routinely boiled drinking water and applied other traditional methods, which apparently rendered the well water safe. Users continued to prefer that over the piped supply for drinking purposes, for when the piped water was discoloured or unpalatable, they had to undertake additional treatment such as with alum to sediment the suspended silt.

An even greater change was in the extent of users' involvement with and control over the development and management of the project. A decade ago, only politically or socially significant persons ever knew about projects proposed by the KWA or even the Panchayat. This had changed with the institutionalization of the participatory planning and budgeting process about five years previously, but only to the extent of proposing, lobbying and eventually, if it was implemented, monitoring the construction process. Under the reformed institutional arrangement however, users – or their elected representatives in the BC and other committees – were fully involved in the process. They undertook most of the tasks involved, and were part of the final decisions even where 'experts' were involved, such as in the identification of sources³¹⁹, and the preparation of the DSR containing the technical details of and cost estimates for construction.

The extent of involvement of women was notable, surpassing that of men in two projects – Neelamootil and Mayiladumkunnu. (See Figure 4.13 below) Not only were

³¹⁹ Done by hydrologists from the GWB

women elected as significant officers in the BC, and discharged the responsibilities that came with the position, but ordinary members of the BG were also involved in organizing meetings, collection of dues and supervision of construction activities. In Ambalakonam, the President, other users and the GVRT organizer all reported that meetings were mostly attended by women members, and with six women in the Committee, it had almost become a ‘women’s project’ (GVRT member, FGD Ambalakonam). In Pulleri and Nilamcootil, this was less true; in Pulleri, two BC members reported that their ‘husbands attended the meetings and did a lot of work’ and in Nilamootil less women habitually attended than men (Users, Pulleri, FDG 3)

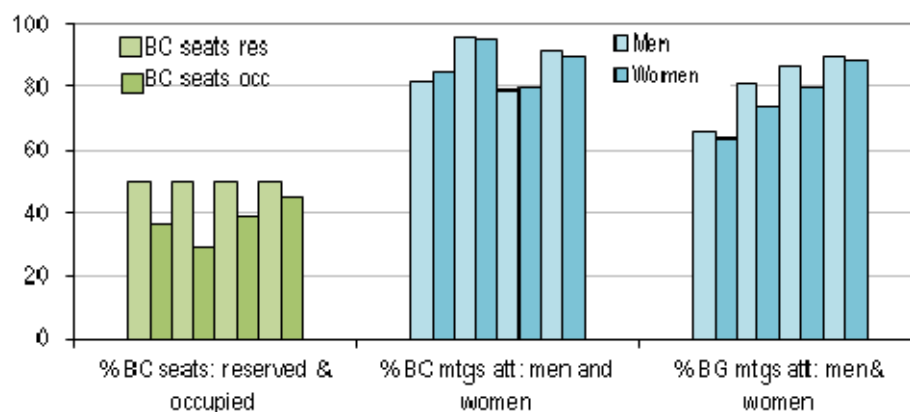


Figure 4.13: Patterns of participation of women as compared to men in SR projects in Kerala, from interviews and BG records.

Certainly this level of involvement of women was a new phenomenon in the case of water supply projects, or other ones considered equally ‘technical’. The PR reforms and participatory planning process had enabled women’s active involvement in public affairs, especially in Panchayat plans for small community water supply projects. Project implementation had however, continued to be the responsibility of KWA, without any involvement of users. The space for participation in the reformed institutional structure was nevertheless fully used; observers agreed that participation

in the organizational structures that had developed during and after the PPC – NHGs, ADS and CDS – and successful involvement in the Kudumbasree units for economic activities had prepared the way for such involvement (CEO CapDeck, Secretary SPB). The high level of organizational participation among residents in all four areas also testifies to this (see Table 4.3).

What motivated and enabled the women to take an active part? Answers were mixed, including ‘I got elected...’ (BC member, Neelamootil), “We really needed water...” (BC member, Ambalakonam.), “I am President of our NHG and the SHG...” (Vice-President Mayilladumkunnu) and “I am a member of the Mallavattam project and I know how to do this...” (President, Ambalakonam). Some just shrugged or smiled. And how did those who had more responsibility find the time, and manage all the housework? Some of them reported doing it themselves, helped by daughters, mothers or sisters, but at least three interviewees reported that their husbands also helped (interview nos 31, 34, 37). The same remark also was made in the fdgs at the Ambalakonam and Mayiladumkunnu project sites. A GVRT staff later explained that,

Women are making good money through Kudumbasree.... also cashew processing at home ...[so] the men are supporting them in household too. They [the husbands] are also getting into kitchen from the morning. The women have to leave for job and earning so men are doing. They are giving more help and the main thing is that in Kerala there are in a nuclear family there is no other way, no extended family and so they have to help....there is some tension also...” (member, Aanchal GVRT)

One pattern that was consistent across the projects was that males occupied the positions of Secretary and Treasurer in all four BCs, and the Purchase Committee had women only in Ambalakonam. Supervising Committees, on the other hand, had a majority of women members. On pointing this out, the President of Ambalakonam explained that it was because these people (Secretary, Purchase Committee members)

had to do “a lot of running around”, but that she always asked for detailed information on all activities and about the accounts.

This level of participation is remarkable in comparison to Gujarat, and explanations need to be explored. Before attempting that in the last section, however, the patterns that occur in a very different socio-economic and cultural context, in Madhya Pradesh, are discussed. In the next section I set out the context in which sector reforms were introduced in Madhya Pradesh, the institutional arrangements that were made for its implementation and how they played out at the local level, and changes in the efficacy of and participation in water provision.

4. SECTOR REFORMS IN MADHYA PRADESH: THE MPPHED, VWSC AND HEALTH COMMITTEES

Much as in other States, water provision in Madhya Pradesh (MP) had become the responsibility of the State’s Public Health Engineering Department (MPPHED, or more commonly, PHED) during the seventies. However, unlike Gujarat and Kerala where the responsibility was transferred to parastatals in the eighties, in MP the responsibility remained fully with the line department even after the reforms of the 90’s. The series of local government reforms in the state after 1995 did not bring very substantial change; the State’s PHED continued to remain the primary institutional structure for implementation of water supply projects, at least till the end of the nineties. In this section I describe the structure and functioning of the PHED, status of the domestic water situation in the State, the introduction of the Sector Reforms-Swajaldhara program, and its functioning as observed in the study villages.

4.1. PRE-LIBERALIZATION INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE FOR WATER PROVISION IN MADHYA PRADESH

A picture of the functioning of the PHED has been assembled from a number of sources – a review of the drinking water sector in MP by Wateraid (2005), the report of an organizational review of the MP-PHED by an independent consultant in 2005, the 2003 Annual Report of the Department and not least, interviews with senior officials of the department and staff of state-level NGOs familiar with its working (listed in Annexure V). Like its counterpart parastatals in other States, the MP-PHED implemented all water supply programs of the GoI, (primarily the ARWSP)³²⁰ and the Madhya Pradesh government. Since 1986, the AWRSP, directed towards providing atleast 40lpcd of safe water in all habitations, has been the largest drinking water program in the State, and though a number of other programs introduced at various times continue, allocations for the State government programs have dwindled very substantially over the years (PHED 2003).

The MP PHED is headed by the Engineer-in-Chief, who reports to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry. Its operational structure is multilayered, with the geographical expanse of the State divided into Regions, Circles, Divisions and Sub-divisions, coordinated from a Head Office in the State capital, Bhopal, by the Engineer-in-Chief.³²¹ In sum, the department, though it has offices across the State, is

³²⁰ Though the water supply components of other programs like the Minimum Needs Program (MNP), the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) of the GoI were also implemented, the bulk of the funds – and therefore, the projects, were financed through the ARWSP (See PHED 2004).

³²¹ The Engineer-in-Chief coordinates the work of the department across the four PHED regions in the State. Each region is headed by a Chief Engineer, and comprises a number of Circles, which in turn contain Divisions and Sub-divisions. The Superintending Engineer heads the Circle, and Executive Engineers and Assistant Engineers look after the lower offices respectively. There is one Division Office for each district in the State, as well as a District Laboratory for water quality testing. There is, however, one Sub-division office for a number of Blocks, depending on the area and population. In

highly centralized with most significant decisions taken at the Head Office in the State capital. Moreover, the authority of officers heading Divisions and Circles is very low in relation to the resources required for the large water supply projects that are typical of the Department, which leads to most projects having to be approved at the Circle or Regional level.

The PHED undertakes both rural and urban water supply projects. In rural areas, projects are identified and formulated for ‘no safe source’ habitations and ‘partly covered’ habitations, based on the department’s annual surveys of water sources in various habitations. The Sub-division office formulates the proposal with size, location, technology and design of the project, and after budget approval from the authorized higher office, implements it. Village Panchayats are rarely consulted, though Intermediate Panchayats sometimes are in the case of multi-village schemes, particularly after the local government reforms. The most regular consultation was with the District Panchayat, which since 1995 had increasingly been granted the responsibility and funds for various development and service provision programs of both the MP and Indian government³²². The institutional arrangement for water provision prior to the introduction of reforms is depicted in Figure 4.14.

recent years regions and circles have been re-organized or relocated, and additional ones created (Khanna 2005; SE, Bhopal).

³²² With the shift of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) to the District Panchayat (DP) and the erstwhile Project Director DRDA being named the CEO of the DP, the Central Sector Schemes (CSS) that were being implemented by the DRDA automatically came under the purview of the District Panchayat. In addition, a proportion of State revenues began to be transferred to the DP when the State Finance Commission recommendations were implemented.

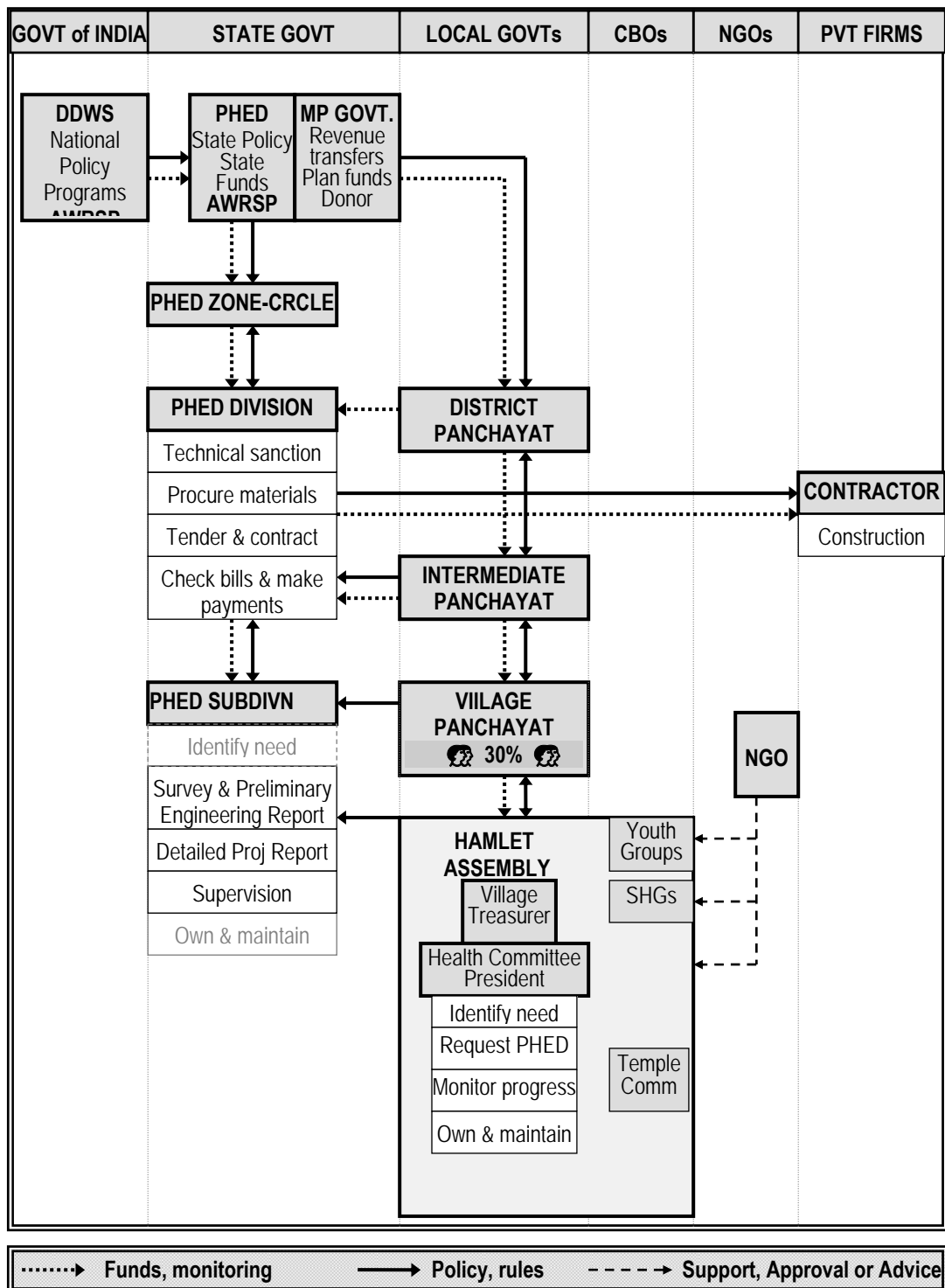


Figure 4.14: Institutional architecture for Water Provision in MP prior to Sector Reforms.

4.2. THE MPPHED AND STATUS OF WATER PROVISION IN THE STATE

The PHED concentrated on making water available through three kinds of systems: piped water supply schemes (PWSS) in villages with more than 20,000 population, mini piped water supply schemes (MPWSS) – which supplied water in one spot – and installation of handpumps. Ground water was the primary source, constituting 90% of the drinking water supplied, despite the State being traversed by four major rivers. However, even after more than two decades of effort by the PHED, about 20% of the habitations in the State still had less than the minimum of 40 lpcd of water that is considered absolutely essential. By 2003, despite the regular annual extension of coverage, the proportion of NC and PC villages number had *increased*, to over 40%, with the number of ‘Fully Covered’ (FC) habitations actually shrinking (Das 2006). This is attributed to falling groundwater levels, rise in chemical content in the water, growth in village population that reduced per capita availability and breakdown of existing systems³²³. In 2005, more than one-third of the 126,172 habitations in the State were still water-poor (Wateraid 2005).

The State lacked an overall water policy, and functioning of the PHED was constrained by a number of factors. In addition to suffering from the typical inefficiencies of a large, multi-layered bureaucratic organization, it had to work with the other departments who had jurisdiction over the water resources of the State, such as the Ground Water Board and the Irrigation department. Like its counterparts in other States, the overwhelming focus on the installation of hardware, the use of technologies unfamiliar to the rural populace and the burden of maintenance of every installation, even in villages at substantial distances from its local (sub-division) office

³²³ This change is concentrated in some districts and Das (2006) shows that these are also the districts which are drier or known for over-exploitation of groundwater.

were other constraining aspects. Their operations were underwritten by the State and Central governments, but since all programs were subsidized and water tariffs were minimal – if they were paid at all – it functioned on a perpetually deficit budget. Like the GWSSB in Gujarat, it owed millions in electricity bills to the State Electricity Board. The issues were therefore much the same as faced by its counterparts in other States, and the need for institutional reform was articulated often (Wateraid 2005, Das 2006, CEO Samarthan, Head, RGDWM Unit).

It was against this backdrop that the GoI–DDWS Sector Reform pilot project was initiated in the State, in five districts identified by the DDWS – Raisen, Sehore, Gwalior, Hoshangabad and Narsinghpur³²⁴. In these, development of water supply projects was initiated through the process mandated in the SRP – ‘demand-driven’ and incorporating the principle of beneficiary contributions towards capital and O&M costs – which was substantially at variance from the PHED’s established procedures. The central tenet of the program was the reform of existing institutional arrangements and organizational procedures to incorporate substantial involvement of local governments and users in the entire process, a situation unfamiliar to PHED staff. The inception of the SR program in MP and the institutional structure delineated for its implementation and its functioning at various levels was therefore slow and uneven, as described below.

4.3. SECTOR REFORMS AND SWAJALDHARA IN MADHYA PRADESH

Though the GoI initiated the program in 1999, the Sector Reform pilots started in MP

³²⁴ A sixth district – Durg – was also included, but because the district is now in the State of Chattisgarh which was carved out of MP in 2002, it has not been included here.

in 2001. The MP government designated the PHED as the Project Implementation Agency (PIA), and the position of Project Director was created at the State Level to coordinate the implementation of the program in the State. Though located in the office of the departmental head (Engineer-in-Chief), the Project Director was to report directly to the Principal Secretary of PHED in the Ministry (GoMP 2002). There was little change introduced in the structure elaborated in the GoI SRP guidelines (GoI1999, revised 2001), except that existing Health Committees were designated as the village-level implementing bodies (SE, PMU Bhopal). However, it was not until August 2003 and the introduction of the Swajaldhara program that the government orders (GO) for constitution of the SWSM (with Apex and Executive Committees), DWSM, DWSC and VWSC were issued. Till then the SRP project functioned under the Project Director at the PHED Head Office, a designated EE in charge of Sector Reform in the Division Offices of the SR districts and two Asst Engineers in the Sub-divisions. At the district level, the EE worked with the CEO, District Panchayat, as for other projects such as AWRSP, and the Asst Engineers with the Intermediate and Village Panchayats within the subdivision (GoMP 2003)

When eventually constituted, however, the DP was named the DWSM. District-level Health and Family Welfare Committees had been constituted in 2001³²⁵, chaired by the District Collector, and these were named the DWSC for actual project implementation. The EE (Swajaldhara) of the PHED Division Office was the Member-Secretary of this Committee. At the village level, the Village Development Committee of the Village Panchayat³²⁶ was to be the VWSC. The SWSM and its Apex and Executive Committees were constituted as mandated in the GoI guidelines, but

³²⁵ By GO 1-8/9/2000/M-II, dated 28th Nov 2001, of the MP Public Health and Family Welfare department (GoMP 2003)

³²⁶ VDCs were constituted under the MP Panchayati Raj and Gram Swaraj Act of 1993, as one of the three Standing Committees of the Panchayat.

with additional members from some other departments (for example, Department of Women and Child Welfare) as members, in addition to those specified. Both these Committees were much larger than those of the Gujarat and Kerala SWSMs, but they did not include any members from civil society organizations, nor any experts or professionals as in the latter two cases. NGO representatives or professionals were also not included in the DWSM or DWSC; nor was the Core Group suggested by the GoI constituted.

Though it had been decided to constitute a Project Cell PHED Head Office to assist the Project Director, constituted of five expert consultants in the areas of social mobilization, monitoring and information systems, human resource development, and communication, it was not until Dec 2004-Jan 2005 that the notification for appointment of professionals was issued. Till then it was manned by officers of the PHED, and no outside consultants were appointed; UNICEF had supported the placement of five professionals as District Liaison Officers (DLOs) in the SR pilot districts and one State Liaison Officer (SLO) with the State Project Director. With the reconstitution of the PMU in 2004, the UNICEF-supported professionals placed at the district level were re-assigned to the Unit. (GoMP 2004).

The intended institutional structure, processes and roles of various organizational entities within a district is specified in the Project Document (proposal) prepared in 1999 by the Sehore PHED Division for the DDWS. The project cycle was to span 3 years, with four phases wherein,

“ The main activities ... are to train grass roots workers and make people to (sic) understand the idea of community participation by information media. The help of NGOs & other voluntary organizations will be appreciated by providing honorarium...Institutionalizing Phase comprises formation of grass root level

committees, identification of NGOs.\ Training Institutes (sic) and signing of MOUs....The sarpanchs will be assigned a job, to attract the villagers by arranging social programmes in the gram sabha meetings in which committees will be formed having 4 to 5 members...Sensitization and Identification phase...would involve sensitizing and creating awareness among various govt. functionaries \ political leaders \ NGOs \ community at all levels through various communication channels about the programme....Group discussions and workshops shall be organized through selected Community based Organizations and Gramsabhas to mobilize active participation of the community in the programme....” (GoMp 1999: pp7-8)

The proposal included the constitution of the DWSM and DWSC according the SR guidelines, and representatives of two NGOs were coopted as members in the DWSC. The ‘Nodal Water Supply Agency’ was the PHED and funds would be channelled by the EE, Sehore. Responsibilities of various levels of local government were also specified. The DP would sanction scheme, allot fund and monitor, the IP was responsible for “(S)anction of village and its proposal on Block Level” and the VP would select the site of the installation and maintain the PWSS (GoMP 1999: 27). Clearly, the institutional structure in MP for the SRP and eventually, the Swajaldhara, was state-centered, as shown in Figure 4.15, with the PHED continuing as the primary implementing organization at both State and district levels. The faded-out parts of the diagram show the pre sector reform institutional set-up and the organizational differences between that and the overlaid (reformed) structure provides a picture of the shifts in functions and resources that was intended.

4.4. TURF TROUBLES: THE MPPHED, VWSC AND HEALTH COMMITTEES.

Though the project proposal for the Sehore SR pilot was prepared in 1999, setting out the intended plan of action in the district (GoMP 1999), the actual implementation of the program apparently did not start till late 2001 (SE, PMU Bhopal). The launch of Swajaldhara in Dec 2002 added some impetus, but the mandated institutional

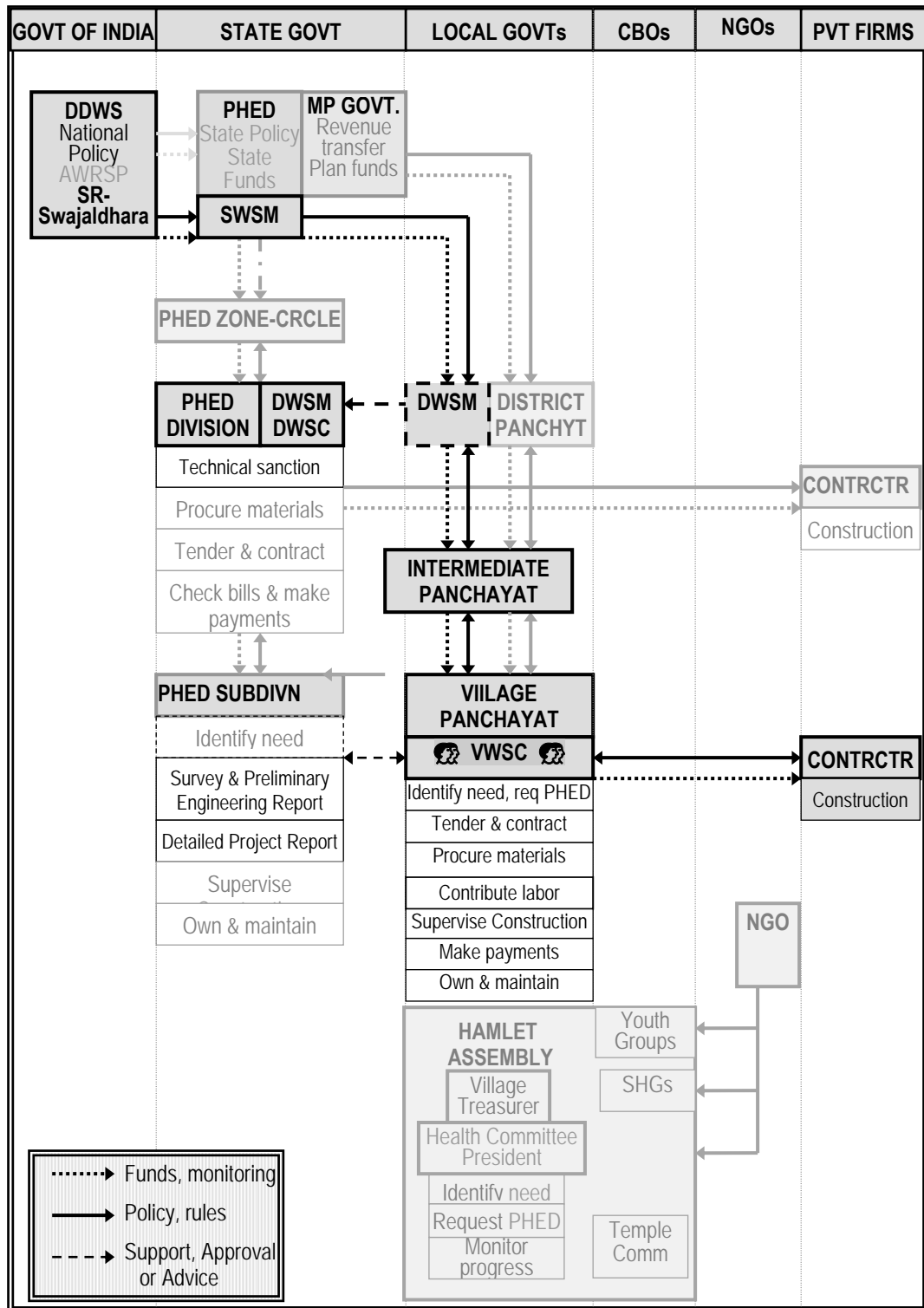


Figure 4.15: Reformed institutional architecture for SR-Swajaldhara projects in Madhya Pradesh

structure was not in place till 2003, either at the State or district levels. The necessary government orders were issued in August 2003, and the SWSM was registered only in Dec 2004 (EE, PMU Bhopal, GoMP 2004). Even after the institutional structure was officially notified, there was delay in filling the positions and appointing staff. The Project Director for the State was appointed in mid-2003 and the notification for constitution of the PMU and appointment of professionals was issued in Dec 2004; till then officers of the PHED were deputed or positioned for short durations. Though a proportion of the requested funds were received from the DDWS in 2000-2001 in response to the proposals sent by the MP PHED, it was, reportedly, not utilized for more than a year. (Social Mobilization Consultant, PMU)

A major bottleneck in implementation was the frequent change in officers with key responsibilities in the project. Reportedly, the State-level Project Director was changed six times between 2000 to 2005, and three District Collectors had held office in Sehore during that time. The Executive Engineer and the ZP CEO had also changed atleast once. The lack of continuity was exacerbated by the lack of motivation in the PHED and a fair degree of resentment, for in the pilot, the funds from the DDWS were channeled through the ZP directly to the GP. It was only with the changes notified after the program was converted to Swajaldhara, which included designating the EE as the 'Drawing and Disbursing Officer', and the realization that all projects would henceforth have to be on the reformed model that acceptance of the program increased among PHED staff.

“(There was) lack of interest of the EE in the district, because money is used by the Sarpanch, given by the Collector....After April first 2003 when Swajaldhara was initiated (in MP), the execution was to be done by the PHED, so we took lots of interest...because we were (again) the masters...se we made proposals worth 78 crores (780 million). But GoI said only 10.8 crores would be given, since the

procedure was that funds would be given according to performance...we had not utilized much before..." (EE Swajaldhara)

"In fact that's what happened, advances were taken from GoI, work hasn't been done, accounts not settled. Now GoI is insisting – that all governments sign MOUs with GoI by March 2005, that sector reform principles will be implemented in all sectors, before they give any money to states. (PMU Social Coordinator)

When engineers from the PHED Subdivision did begin to identify and develop projects in the reformed pattern – for after April 2000 AWRSP funds shrank – there was little prelude to implementation of the project in villages – "...no training, awareness-raising (sic) or even information to the Health Committees..." (Social Mobilization Consultant, PMU; also echoed by EE, PMU). This was an observation made by PHED officers interviewed at both State and district levels³²⁷ as well as members of the PMU. The project was treated much as the earlier government projects were, except that 10% of the cost was recovered from the users. There was confusion within the implementing department, and sufficient information about the project did not reach lower-level offices (CEO, Samarthan). Field officers were not clear that the two main principles of the reforms were that it be 'demand driven' and have public participation (SE, PHED Head Office).

To understand how the *de-jure* reformed structure that was developed in the State for water provision actually functioned, particularly at the district level and below, the implementation of the program was studied in three Panchayats (including a number of villages each) in Sehore. The processes through which piped water supply systems were developed in four of the nine villages covered in this study were mapped, through interviews with district, block and village officials, elected representatives in

³²⁷ EE, AEEs, Bhopal PMU members.

the VP, users, and field staff of the NGO working in these villages. Information about the villages pertinent to this discussion and details of the pre-existing water sources and the SRP projects are given in Table 4.6³²⁸

Table 4.6
SRP villages, their pre-SR access to water and the new water supply projects in Madhya Pradesh

Village	Population			No. of Hhold	Hhold size	Existing Sources				SR Project (piped supply)			
	Total	% SC	% ST			Well	Hand pump	Stand posts	Other	Storage Capacity (liters)	Times refilled per day	HH. Conn (Nos)	Stand posts
Kharpa	583	39	8	143	4.1	2	9 (+4 priv)	2	River	6,000	1	4	4
Ram Khedi	823	2	0	133	6.2	4	5	2	2	8,000	1	2	3
Lasudiya Dhakad	818	44	5	155	5.3	2	5		Dam	,8000	1		4
Lasudiya khas	810	15	0	156	5.2	1	6 (+1 priv)	3	St.tank-3000 l cap, 2 ponds	8,000	1	6	4
Manpura	446	12	0	62	7.2	1	6			20,000	0.5	9	4

Sources: Developed from 2001 Census of India, Samarthan and PHED Sehore subdivision records, participatory mapping and transect walks in the villages; interviews.

The process of developing projects in the reformed arrangements that emerged from village interviews bore out the descriptions of how the reforms were received at the State level and the understanding (or its lack) in the implementing agency described by officers of the PMU (above). Except in one village – Manpura – where the process was initiated after demands from the village women in response to an awareness campaign carried out by the AE of the area, village residents had almost no information about the program except that it involved a 10% contribution from users. The AE in charge of the area was particularly noted for his social awareness and commitment to development, and had conducted street-plays and information-sharing sessions in many villages of the area, of which Manpura was one. In the other study

³²⁸ Other details of the villages are presented in the Appendices.

villages the program was implemented like the pre-reform projects, in response to requests and the initiatives of the President of the Health Committee (in Ramkhedi and Kharpa) or active residents of the village (Lasudiya Dhakad). In Lasudiya Khas, the Sarpanch received information from the intermediate Panchayat and because of the political gain and the pressure from residents supported by the NGO working in the village, negotiated installation of the system with the PHED. None of the study villages were classified as ‘Not Covered’ habitations (they were ‘Partially Covered’), and therefore were neither a priority with the PHED, nor could funds be allocated readily from other programs such as the AWRSP (PHED 2004, 2004a)

No ‘beneficiary groups’ were formally constituted in any village, though in Kharpa two tanks were installed, one each in the upper and lower-caste neighborhoods of the village and had identifiably distinct user groups. The project was treated as a village project, and user contributions were in both cash and labour for construction. Even then, not all villages were able to collect the necessary 10% of the estimated cost; in Lasudiya Dhakad, the NGO provided a small proportion from its donor account, and in Kharpa, the NGO and the Panchayat together made up the deficit³²⁹.

One of the important actors in this process was the NGO (Samarthan) working in villages of the area. There was no formal support role allocated to the organization in the SR pilot, but Samarthan field staff had been working with residents for over five years, attempting to stimulate collective action and democratic processes within the new Panchayat system. Supported by a number of donors for different aspects of their work, one of their primary engagements was in mobilizing village communities to

³²⁹ The NGO (Samarthan) had donor funds for the purpose, and the Panchayat could contribute towards the tank in the lower-caste neighborhood because of the earmarked funds it received under various programs for that segment of the population.

develop micro-plans for village development through a participatory process. Since the need to augment water sources emerged as a top priority in almost all villages, their involvement in the process was substantial – from organizing meetings, helping beneficiary or village committees to negotiate the PHED system and dealing with contractors to providing some funds for installations in the poorer villages such as Kharpa and Lasudiya Dhakad³³⁰. In villages with a greater proportion of land-owning elites, the implementing committees mobilized extra funds to augment their collections from the wealthier families or from the ubiquitous Temple Committees which typically had a substantial corpus. Working with existing Youth groups or where such groups were absent, supporting the development of new ones, was a core strategy of Samarthan, and these groups were the key organizational actors in some villages (Kharpa, Ramkhedi).

Once initiated, either the village Health Committee (Kharpa, Ramkhedi, Manpura), the Construction Committee (Manpura) or an ad-hoc Implementation Committee led by the Sarpanch (Lasudiya Khas) anchored the process. In two villages, individuals substantially led the process – an active and community-spirited resident in Lasudiya Dhakad (Sarif Khan) and in Manpura, the Treasurer of the Gram Sabha. Though the PHED engineer developed the formal proposal, with the technical details, drawings and estimates, and prepared tender documents and supervised the construction process, the spearheading committee decided on location, collected contributions selected the contractor and monitored the whole project. Money was paid by the PHED, the Village Panchayat or the Intermediate Panchayat as the case may be, but in almost all cases project accounts were also maintained by the committee, though the

³³⁰ These villages had a greater proportion of SC and ST households, almost none of which owned any productive land; most families depended almost fully on wage labor in the agricultural seasons. See Appendices for the social profile of study villages.

funds were not transferred to them. The PHED or the contractor supplied the materials, though in the latter case, the respective committees were involved to a great extent.

The substantial role of the village committee was clearly a product not only of the NGO organizing, but also because it also had the full information about the SR-Swajaldhara project and the roles defined for various actors. Samarthan was the NGO co-opted into the DWSC, though not an active participant in its deliberations³³¹. Field staff reported that they had to educate the village residents and organizing committees about “the new way of doing things” and in Kharpa, where the engineer was clearly offended by the residents “taking charge”, also persuade the engineer to take renewed interest in the project. Anchoring negotiations between factions in the village and conflict resolution was a ubiquitous role that required a major proportion of their energies in the village (Field officer, Samarthan).

The emergent institutional structure observed in the study villages is shown in Figure 4.16 below. Interviewees pointed out a host of issues in the implementation of the program; from lack of community participation, to malpractices by the PHED, a few of which were observable in the study villages. Community participation varied substantially across villages, and the State PD’s observation that in most cases the “Sarpanch (VP President) does all the work’ was certainly true in Lasudiya Khas. “The hardware part is going on, but software part practically nil”, according to the PD. In Kharpa and Manpura, Samarthan’s mobilization and sharing of information clearly underpinned the wider involvement of residents, but since NGOs were not appointed

³³¹ According to the district co-ordinator of Samarthan in the Sehere office, the DWSC met very occasionally – three times in the previous year was what they recollected – and they were rarely notified of meetings in time.

as Support Agencies³³² – as directed in the SRP guidelines – this was not the usual situation.

According to all reports (Wateraid CEO, Samarthan CEO, PMU staff) MP had few NGOs, atleast not many of repute, though “many government officers have set up something in their relatives names, there are so many projects in which NGOs are supposed to be involved”(PMU staff). The SE and EE (Swajaldhara) in the PHED Head Office observed that user contributions were not forthcoming, though the latter qualified that the 10% of the capital cost was not a problem in most cases. It was the “maintenance they are not willing...so State government takes the view that when 50% of our population is poor, with their work routines they cannot maintain and run the project, they should not be asked to” (EE). The Assistant Engineer in the Sehore Subdivision had another explanation –

“[Earlier] basic problem was because people were losing faith (in the PHED), so they [the GoI] said let the people do it, but before, it was done systematically, we surveyed where there was no coverage, partial coverage etc and then undertook work in those villages first. With this [SR program] ofcourse the more ‘able’ villages are coming forward with contribution and getting the project. Now the poorest villages or difficult villages are left – SC, ST areas, etc. These people are not able to give the contribution, so now they will not be covered. It is said that people are not contributing, but when such places are only left, how will they contribute? So in both cases they get left out. The rich people, they have own sources, but also want to use community sources handpumps, wells, tubewells etc. So they want more work [in the village], they are getting more than 40 lpcd.” (Asst Engineer, SW Project Cell, Bhopal)

Another interviewee also made the same observation; that the program was

“(P)rimarily augmenting private supply in better-off sections – wells, borewells with submersibles, tubewells and handpumps.” (CEO, Samarthan). This was clearly the

³³² According to both the SE and EE (Swajaldhara) in the PHED Head Office, no NGOs were involved till the time of this research (2005 May), but a decision had been made to start including them; selection procedures, qualifications and guidelines for identifying appropriate organizations were being decided at the time.

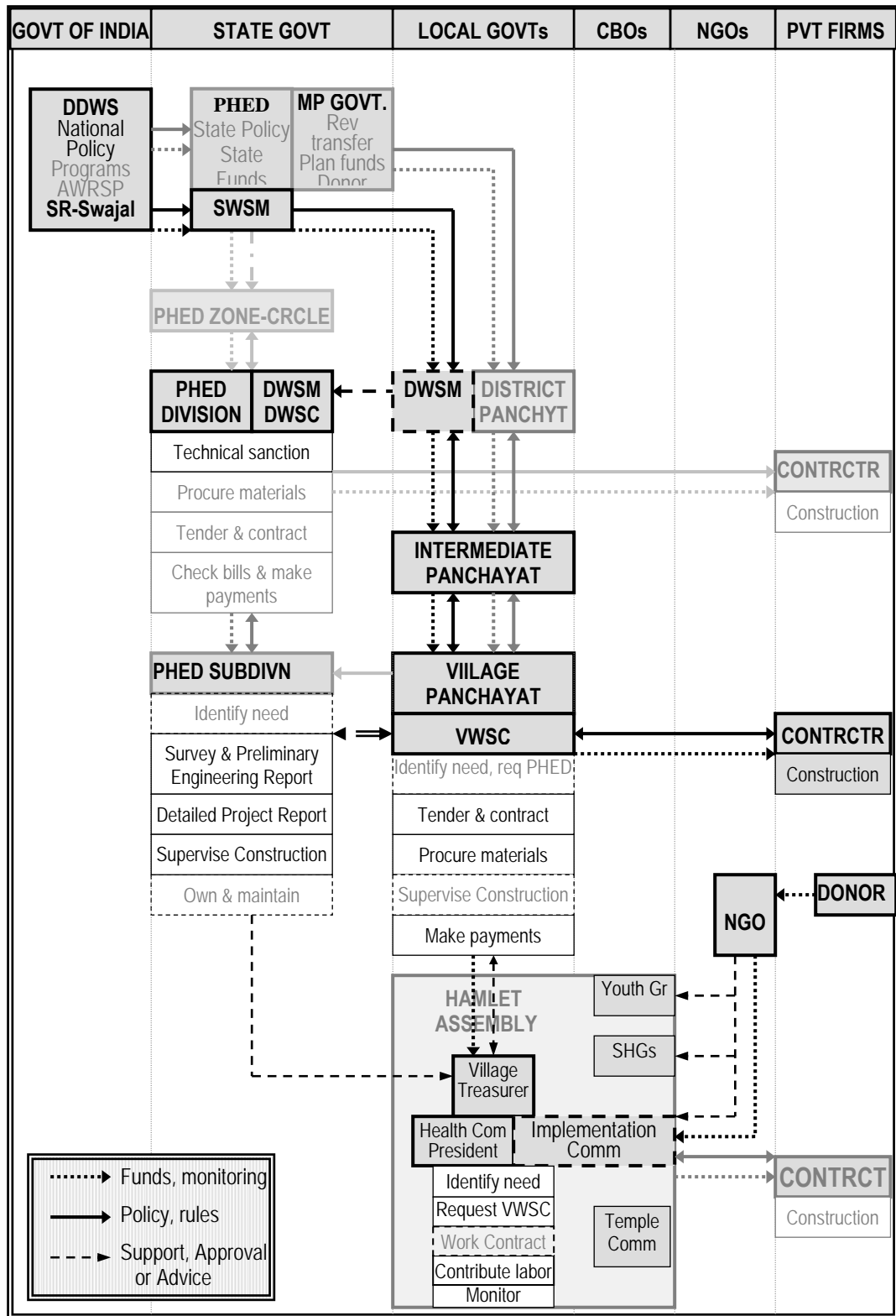


Figure 4.16: Emergent structure for SR-Swajaldhara projects in MP

case in Lasudiya Khas where the tank was located right in front of the Sarpanch's house, and reportedly, only people of that (richer) neighborhood had contributed. There was also a palpable lack of ability to pay in the poorer villages – Lasudiya Dhakad and Kharpa - where Samarthan and the Panchayat had had to provide funds to make up the beneficiaries' contribution. In a new project being considered in Lasudiya Dhakad, a small dam, the contractor interested in the project had offered to pay most of the community contribution; apparently, not an unusual situation, for often, "...there is no community...one person, either the Sarpanch or contractor contributes..." (PMU staff).

There, however, appeared to be another side to the story –

Now it is always discussed that community contribution is not forthcoming, but actually that's not the real picture. One has to mobilize – after all, community spends a lot, building temples, having havans, pujas, joint celebrations for festivals, etc. So mobilization is possible. But...[we] have to have credibility, and the PHED doesn't have – no one believes they will do the work after taking the community money. (PMU staff)

Recently constructed or ongoing construction of imposing temples³³³ was certainly a visible landmark in six of the ten villages in the study Panchayats, and according to both the Temple Committee officers (eg., Sarpanch, Lasidiya Khas) and village residents (fdgs in Manpura, Ramakhedi), almost every household³³⁴ contributed some amount from time to time during the construction process. 'Bhajan Mandalis' or prayer groups were also present in every village, even those without a temple.

But in addition to the lack of credibility of the PHED, which prevented community interest, there were other issues in the implementing organization –

³³³ The temple heights ranged from about 10 meters to almost 25 meters, though in none of the study villages there was any building – residential or otherwise – that was more than 5–6 m in height. Expensive finishings were also common, such as glazed tiles or polished stone flooring.

³³⁴ Presumably, the Hindu households.

“Despite being a ‘technical’ dept, PHED has fixed technology, standard designs – not even ten alternatives for villages [sic] to choose from...how did the department do this before? Primarily by outsourcing, getting the contractors to do it...they just check depth [at which water is available], after that the design is standard...”(PMU staff)

“ There is also the practice of PHED giving materials instead of money...instead of giving the full 90%, they purchased hardware centrally and gave that in lieu of funds. People protested because it was of very poor quality and higher price...PHED enquiry is in motion now, regarding sector reforms³³⁵...They actually wanted to implement the projects fully so that they can keep the margin...”(District Co-ordinator, Samarthan)

A final observation by the district coordinator of Samarthan, however, was more hopeful of a change from the original institutional structure towards a more participatory process at the village level:

Normally, the Panchayat and PHED are only involved, the Village Health Committee not included... the Panchayat generally uses Sansad fund or the Vidhayak fund. With sector reform, at least the VWSC is consulted, they’re in the picture. And in a few villages where the Committee is getting active, they are getting fully involved...” (Sehore District Coordinator, Samarthan)

Has the situation really changed? This is discussed in the next section, by comparing water availability and accessibility in the study villages, and the extent of women’s involvement in the provisioning process before and after the sector reforms.

4.5. LIBERALIZED WATER PROVISION IN MADHYA PRADESH: EFFICACY, EFFECTIVENESS AND PARTICIPATION

The reforms instituted in the existing State-centered (PHED) system of water provision in MP were not inconsequential, with users and community-groups provided

³³⁵ This was also mentioned by a resident of Sehore in an informal conversation, but no details could be elicited from other interviewees.

with the authority to take on a number of decisive functions. The existence of hamlet-level Committees for Health and Construction activities also provided a ready structure for role-taking. That is, not only was the efficacy of the liberalized structure substantial, but the pre-reform structures already in place at the local level provided a conducive situation. However, the Panchayat-level VWSC, designed as a coordinating, enabling and funds-transfer mechanism; set in the reality of the socio-economic power-structures at the local level, afforded a convenient forum for capture of resources and authority by the Gram Panchayat-village elites, and eroded this efficacy to a large extent.

Despite, this, however, the involvement of groups at the hamlet and cluster level was substantial, approximating the designed structure, though it was a consequence of the design. The key factor in this positive modulation was clearly the involvement of a committed NGO with a historical presence and legitimacy in the area, a factor which had been bypassed in the designed arrangements.

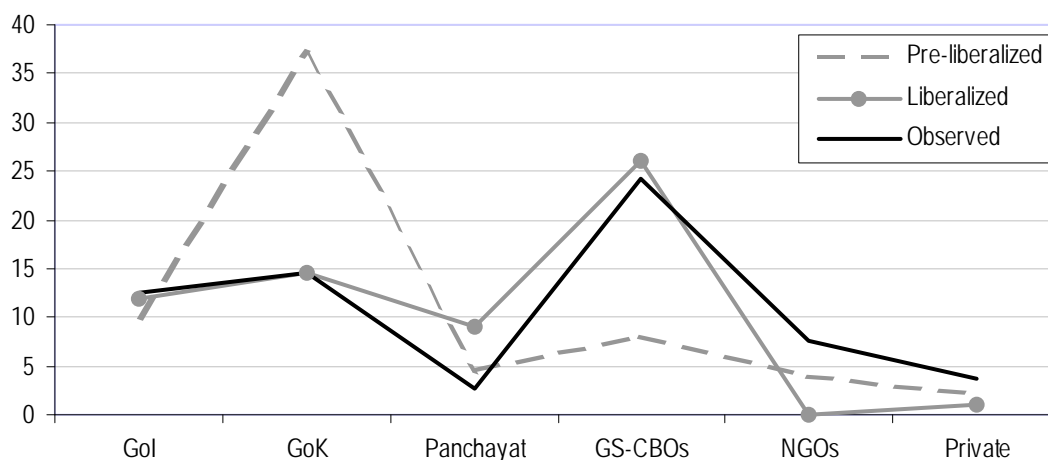


Figure 4.17: Shifts in the distribution of functions from State to liberalized water provision in Madhya Pradesh, from the Devolution Score Sheet (Table 2.6)

Comparison of the water availability and access in the study villages before and after the SR projects, along the five major indicators for effectiveness – per capita water availability, disparities in access, number of household connections, distance to source and extent of coverage – indicates that there was a definite change for the better in all villages (Figure 4.18). Almost all the parameters improved, though the extent of

Table 4.7
Effectiveness of SRP water supply projects in Madhya Pradesh

	Kharpa		Ramkhedi		Lasudiya Dhakad		Las khas		Manpura		MP-SR	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Per Capita Availability	34	45	29	39	22	32	49	55	43	65	35	47
Per Cap from HH Source	123	123	0	162	0	0	96	108	70	95	58	97
Per Capita from Public sources	32	76	29	52	22	51	60	78	42	98	37	71
Disparity	90.9	46.3	0.0	109.8	0.0	0.0	36.7	30.5	27.8	3.6	31	37
% Popn. With HH Source	3	6	0	2	0	0	1	5	3	18	1	6
% HH < 50 m from Public Source	52	94	79	100	48	87	87	100	100	100	73	96
% HH – Unprotected Srces	45	0	21	0	52	13	13	0	0	0	26	3

Calculated from records of Panchayat, CBOs and Samarthan

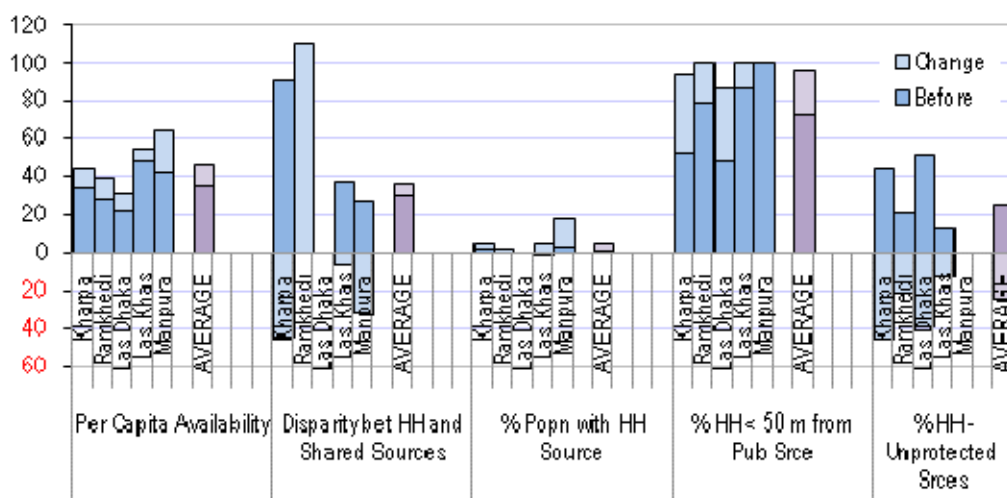


Figure 4.18: Changes in indicators of effectiveness in SRP projects in study villages in MP, from Table 4.7

change differed across villages. Water availability increased in all, and some households got household taps, where none existed previously. Where a few families already had (private) piped supply in the house, they got an additional tap from the public piped supply, and some others could get a household tap for the first time. Convenience increased greatly for most users, as the distance to the source decreased – substantially for some – and more important, the timing and duration of supply became predictable. Above all, households who had been dependant on unprotected wells, ponds or streams, got access to protected sources and safe water.

The overall change for the better, was however, marred by the differences in availability and access between the better off households and households in the lower-income groups in the villages – the per capita water availability of those with household connections and those without. The difference was sharp in all villages except in Lasudiya Dhakad (See Table 4.7 and Figure 4.18). The distribution was not only highly skewed, but the difference in the quantity of water available to the two groups was exacerbated by the difference in access – the elite had either got a household connection or the public tap was located one within a few meters of the house, whereas others had to walk much more to fetch water from the same tap. Interestingly, in Lasudiya Dhakad, which had a greater proportion of low-income households, the tap location was as fair as was possible, and there were no household connections.

The time-to-completion varied across villages, but all installations were completed within a year from the time that the effort was seriously begun, about the time taken for handpump installations by the PHED. The reformed process is no faster, but as a field staff of Samarthan pointed out,

“...[T]his is the first time that this process is being applied, we had to spend a lot of time to organize the community...to vitalize the committees that are there on paper, [or] help them form new ones with better representation...deal with the [often resentful] engineer...hopefully, if this reformed process continues, the people will be more proactive, so the project will be completed faster...”(field staff, Sehore Office, Samarthan)

Repairs took almost a week, sometimes more, for though repairmen were in the same or nearby villages, money had to be collected from all households, and required parts to be purchased from the nearest town. It was still shorter than in the case of PHED-installed handpumps, which took departmental staff weeks or even months to attend to.

Participation of community members or their elected representatives in the development processes, however, varied substantially across villages, in contrast to the reasonably consistent change in effectiveness³³⁶. In Lasudiya Khas, the Sarpanch and a small coterie took all decisions, including others in the community – the perceived leaders of various caste groups – only in the matter of collecting the user-contributions. At the other end of the spectrum, women not only spearheaded the demand for an installation in Manpura, but some of them – the Secretary and two members of a particularly active SHG – were fully involved, along with the village Treasurer and some youth leaders, at various stages. They participated fully in collecting contributions, deciding the tank location, and the location of public taps, and took their turn in supervising construction. At the same time, though the village Treasurer, the Health Committee which anchored the process, and the Construction Committee which helped to supervise the work were all involved, neither Committee had women members, despite the statutory reservation of a third of the membership.

³³⁶ Except that unlike the skewed distribution of benefits in other villages, residents of Lasudiya Dhakad were more equitably benefited.

The Treasurer explained that “there was so much demand for membership, so we filled [sic] the Committee without taking any women members”(Treasurer, Manpura). The highly variable participation of women, consistently meager in comparison to that of men, can be seen in Figure 4.19 below.

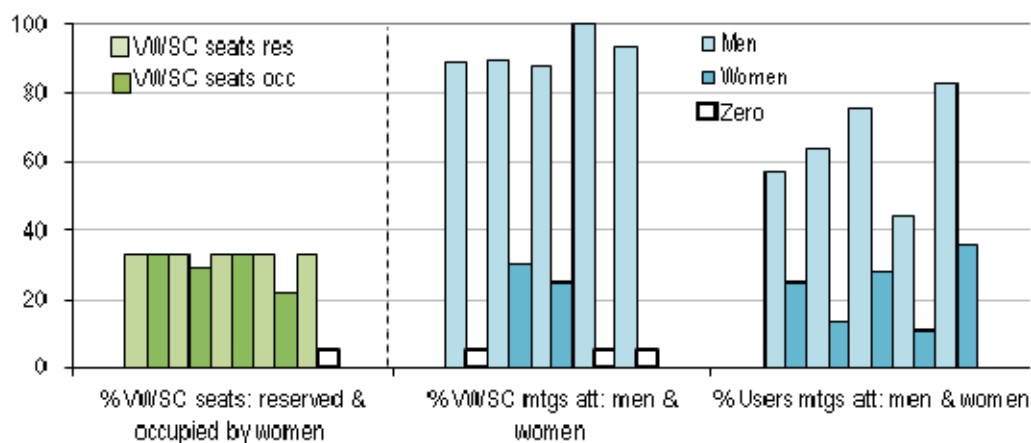


Figure 4.19: Participation of women and men in SR projects in MP study villages, from interviews and records of CBOs and Samarthan.

In Kharpa, the Youth Association spearheaded the entire effort, supported by one of Samarthan’s staff, but a group of women from the lower-caste neighborhood (where one tank was to be located) were “active” in the process (Samarthan field staff). The one women’s SHG in that neighborhood was responsible for coordinating operation and maintenance, and the Secretary was evidently very proactive in this regard. A women neighbor (admiringly) narrated how, on one of the two occasions when the tap needed repairs, the Secretary arranged for the new part to be delivered, through a complicated relay process – it arrived the next day. However, this, and the actively involved women of the SHG in Manpura appeared to be exceptions with regard to women’s participation. In other villages, women were made de-jure members of the Health Committee, but were not involved to any noticeable extent. In many instances the women were relatives of the male members, and one such interviewee – in

Lasudiya Dhakad – had definite and accurate information about the water supply project despite never having attended a committee meeting. One of the two others interviewed in Lasudiya Dhakad did not even know that she was a member, though her name was included in the Panchayat register.

Where the Panchayat was involved, as in Lasudiya Khas, primarily the GP Sarpanch and Secretary made the decisions, and occasionally, other significant men of the village were included in the discussion. Only once was the project discussed with the other members of the GP – when a resolution had to be passed approving its construction. Women Panchayat members therefore did not even have the opportunity to participate in their official capacity, though given their negligible participation in Panchayat affairs (described in Chapter III, section 4.5), it was unlikely these opportunities would have been utilized even if available.

An issue that was flagged by NGO staff was the role conflict between the VWSC and the habitation-level committees that in most instances anchored the projects. A large number of functions assigned to the VWSC in the reformed organizational configuration, was usually undertaken by habitation-level Committees, either the Health Committee, the Construction Committee or a specially constituted Implementation Committee (as discussed before and shown in Figure 4.14). This role conflict often was a hurdle in implementation (eg., Lasudiya Dhakad), for the Sector Reform funds were channeled through the VWSC.

Mostly, individual leadership and initiative, or continuous support of Samarthan staff explains the relatively higher level of participation, particularly that of women (where it existed). Active community-based women's organizations like the SHGs in

Manpura and Kharpa appear to be the backdrop for women's leadership, and higher caste and education appears to hinder participation. These women inevitably belong to upper-caste and richer households, where customary norms of seclusion remain strong.

5. LIBERALIZED WATER PROVISION IN THREE STATES

In sections 2, 3 and 4, I discussed (a) the ways in which the GoI-driven reform agenda to liberalize state provision of domestic water (through the SR-Swajaldhara program) have been applied to their existing system by the three study States, (b) how the reformed institutional arrangements actually played out at State, district and village levels, (c) to what extent the reformed arrangements in each State have been more or less effective than the previous system, and (d) to what extent women's participation was enabled in the reformed organizational set-up in the State and how women utilized the spaces earmarked for them. The objective was to compare how a centrally designed, liberalized system is assimilated in different State contexts and whether the emergent arrangements are more effective and participatory than the pre-reform State systems. In the previous three sections, I set out the answers to these questions as they pertain to Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh respectively.

It is clear that not only was the institutional design for liberalized governance of water provision specified by the GoI (in the SR-Swajaldhara Guidelines) modified in different ways in its adoption by the three States, but also that the State-instituted design was further modulated by the socio-economic and political variables of the locality. The relative efficacy of the State-devised governance arrangements and the

relationship with the patterns of effectiveness and participation that emerged in the respective localities can only be assessed through a comparative analysis of the three cases. Such an analysis is undertaken in the next chapter, to find answers to the larger research question of whether and where a liberalized governance arrangement was efficacious and democratic.



CHAPTER V
DEVOLUTION AND LIBERALIZATION IN WATER PROVISION: A
CONTEXTUAL COMPARISON

The question of the relative suitability of devolution and liberalization to different kinds of contexts has two sub-questions: how well *each type works in different contexts*, and how the two types of reform work *in comparison to each other in the same kind of context*. The patterns of water provision through devolved and liberalized governance configurations observed in the three study states have been described in Chapters III and IV respectively and provide the basis for answering both. First, to assess how devolution and liberalization work in different kinds of contexts, I compare the functioning of each type across the three States (sections 1 and 2 below). Then, to assess how devolved and liberalized systems work in the same context, I compare the patterns discerned in the two cases (PR and SR) in each State, and discuss which emerges as relatively more suitable in the three contexts respectively (section 3). To assess the relative performance, I use the scoring system described in Chapter II (section 5.1), to aggregate the outcomes observed along the various indicators for effectiveness and inclusion in each case.

From the two kinds of comparisons, a picture of the relative suitability of devolution and liberalization in different kinds of developing contexts emerges. The comparisons also provide an understanding of how the two types of reformed governance arrangements ‘fit’ in the context, and thereby, the relationship between the organizational configurations and the contextual variables in each case. However, these answers still remain disaggregated along the effectiveness, equity and inclusion

parameters. This understanding is analytically and theoretically important, but fails to provide an *overall* measure of the relative suitability of the two types of reform to the different contexts, which is more directly usable for policy-design. Therefore, I finally aggregate the findings into a composite ‘score’ for each case, to provide a final answer to the question a policy-designer faces – which type of reformed arrangements work better – and therefore, are most suitable – in the three kinds of contexts?

1. DEVOLUTION IN THREE DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

The substantial differences in the designs of the local governance architectures in the three study States that emerged in the encounter of the skeletal structure specified in the GoI Panchayat Act and the respective State level political-economic situations and its further mutation in practice by the local circumstances, described in Chapter III, is shown in Figure 5.1. In the organograms, the distribution of responsibilities among the organizations as observed in the processes of project development from the State to the local levels is depicted in the relative sizes of their boxes, estimated using the score sheet developed (Table 2.6)³³⁷. The pre-reformed situation is visible in the faded-out boxes and the reformed architecture specified by the State is outlined in broken lines. The relative extent of devolution as well as the successive shifts from the pre-reform distribution in each case is shown in Figure 5.2.³³⁸

³³⁷ Only the tasks devolved is considered here, and the *degree* of transfer – whether it is deconcentrated, delegated or truly devolved - has not been considered.

³³⁸ As explained in the previous chapter (section...) the efficacy of the reformed arrangements along the two dimensions of interest – effectiveness and inclusiveness – can be gauged from the extent to which the essential elements of the reform type are embodied in the institutional design – in devolution, the extent to which responsibilities, and the authority and resources to discharge them are actually transferred to the local government.

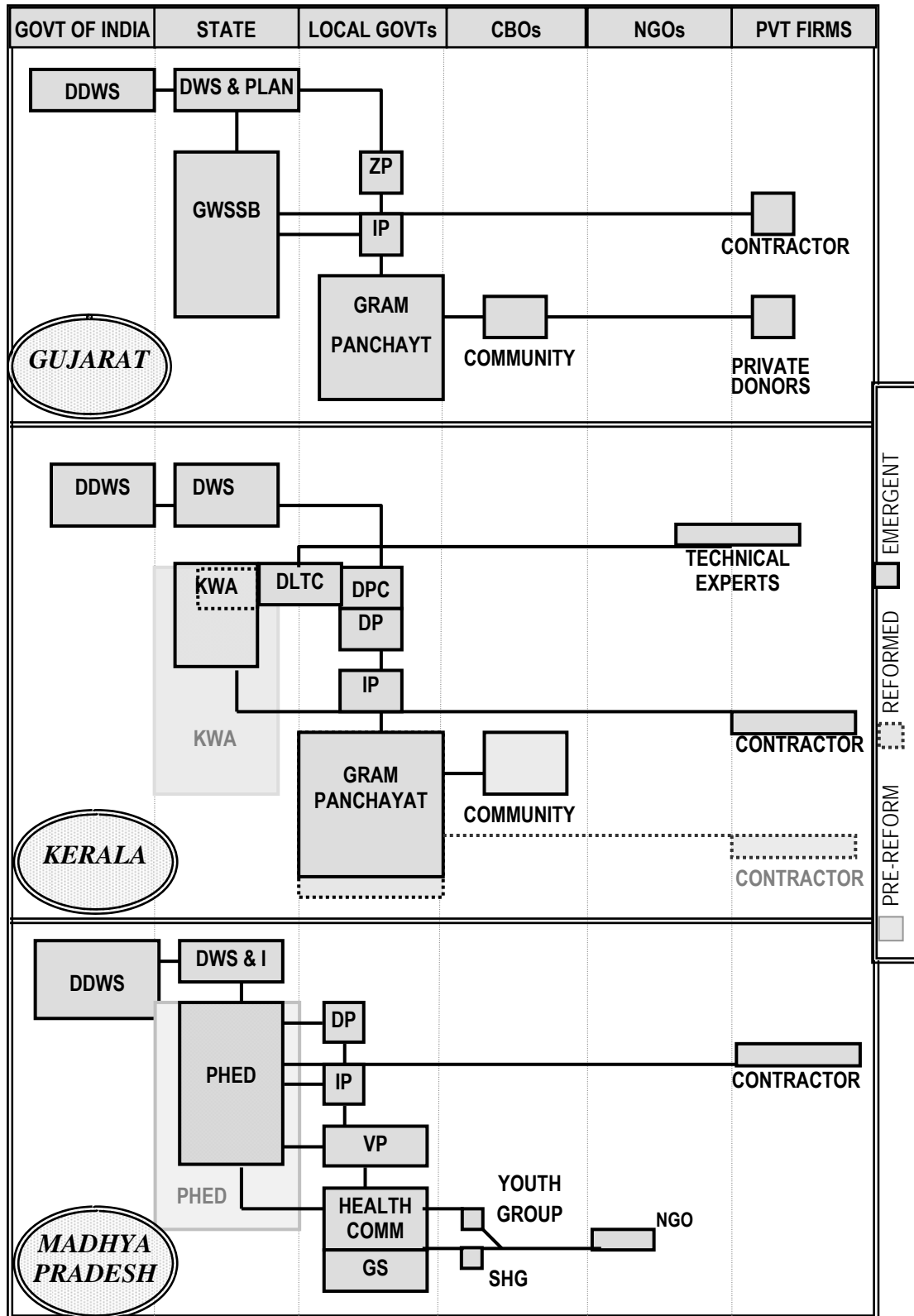


Figure 5.1: Post-devolution governance configurations for water provision in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh.

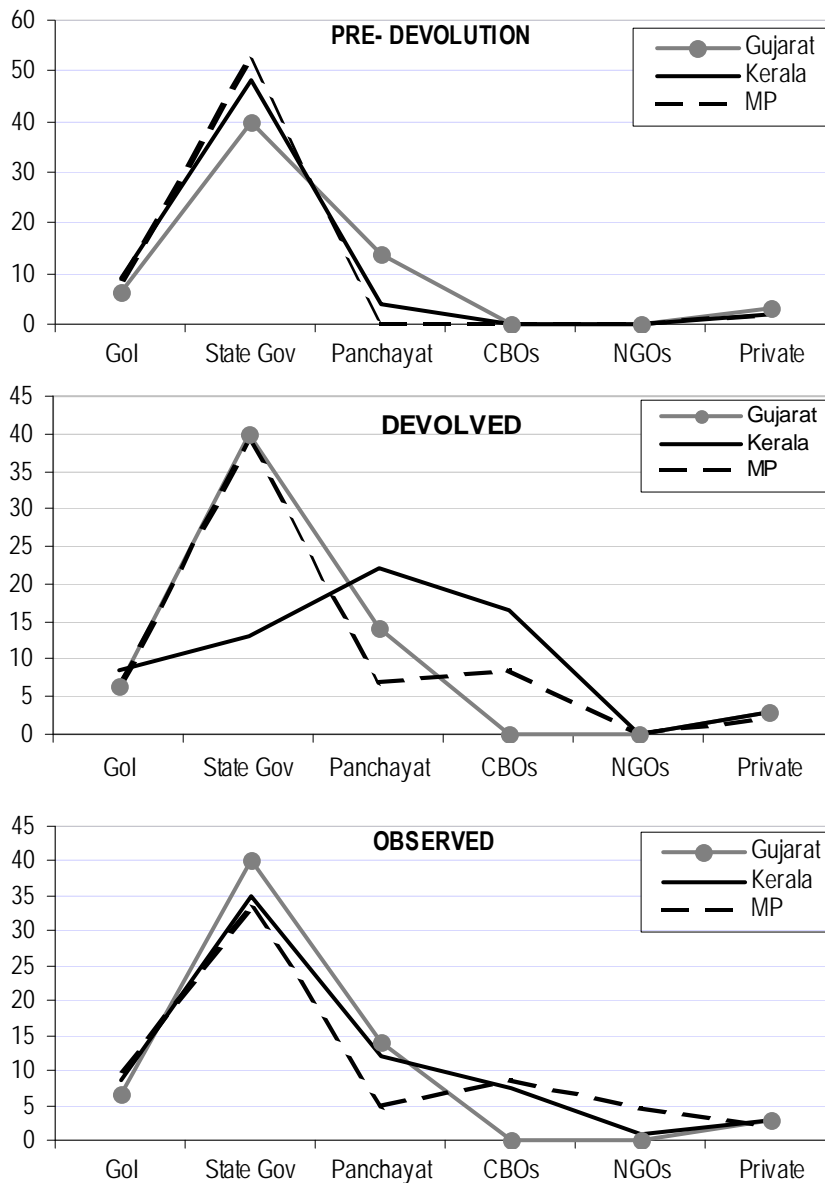


Figure 5.2: Distribution of functions for water provision in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, derived using Devolution Score Sheet (Table 2.6)

Among the three States, post-reform changes have visibly been the least in Gujarat, but the Panchayats already had a larger set of functions and resources than those in the other two States. Notably, the extent of tasks undertaken by the GWSSB *before* reforms is about the same as that of the MPPHED *after* local government reforms in

MP. Similarly, the relative extent of responsibility of the Gujarat GP is much larger than that of reformed GPs in MP, even if one includes the structures at the hamlet level such as the Health Committee. Devolution has clearly been the most substantial in Kerala, though in actual practice the KWA has more involvement and the GP less than was designed. Clearly, State-level socio-economic and political characteristics of Kerala were most favorable to devolution, and the extent of devolution was not reversed significantly by the village circumstances.

1.1. EFFECTIVENESS OF WATER PROVISION THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Is the relative potential of the different emergent configurations realized in the extent to which the arrangements are effective in actually improving water provision? From the comparison of the patterns of effectiveness in the three States (Table 5.1 and Figure 5.3 below) it evidently is in each case. In Kerala the reformed process yields the maximum increase in per-capita water availability, and complete elimination of the need to use unsafe sources, despite the fact that the proportion of village residents dependant on those before devolution was the highest among the three States. Even if it is small in absolute terms, the increase in the proportion of people with household connections is also best. Though it does not reduce disparity in the quantity of water available to those with private sources and those without very noticeably – as happens in Madhya Pradesh, there is no increase in disparities as in Gujarat.

The reformed institutional architecture in respect of water provision was least efficacious in MP, despite the innovation of taking the decision-making right into the hamlets, and its effectiveness follows suit. The establishment of the Gram Swaraj

Table 5.1
Relative Effectiveness of Water Provision through Devolved Governance
Arrangements in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh

Indicators of Effectiveness	GUJARAT-PR			KERALA-PR			MADHYA PRADESH-PR		
	Change	% Change	Score	Change	% Change	Score	Change	% Change	Score
Per Capita Availability	18.0	36.2	3.6	42.6	120.6	12.1	14.8	38.2	3.8
Per Cap from HH Source	40.2	128.1		19.0	20.8		0.0	0.0	
Per Cap from Public Sources	11.7	55.3		21.2	128.6		15.1	37.2	
Disparity (HH and Shared Sources)	23.0	147.3	14.7	2.2	3.0	0.3	11.4	29.5	3.0
% Popn with HH Source	19.6	19.6	2.0	28.3	28.3	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
% HH < 50 m from Pub Srce	24.3	24.3	2.4	42.5	42.5	4.2	10.9	10.9	1.1
% HH - Unprotected Srces	12.5	100.0	10.0	44.3	100.0	10.0	10.9	59.2	5.9
OVERALL (including Disparities)			3.3			29.4			13.8
W/O CONSIDERING DISPARITIES			18.0			29.1			10.8

Compiled fro Tables 3.3, 3.6 and 3.9; Scores derived using method in Table 2.7

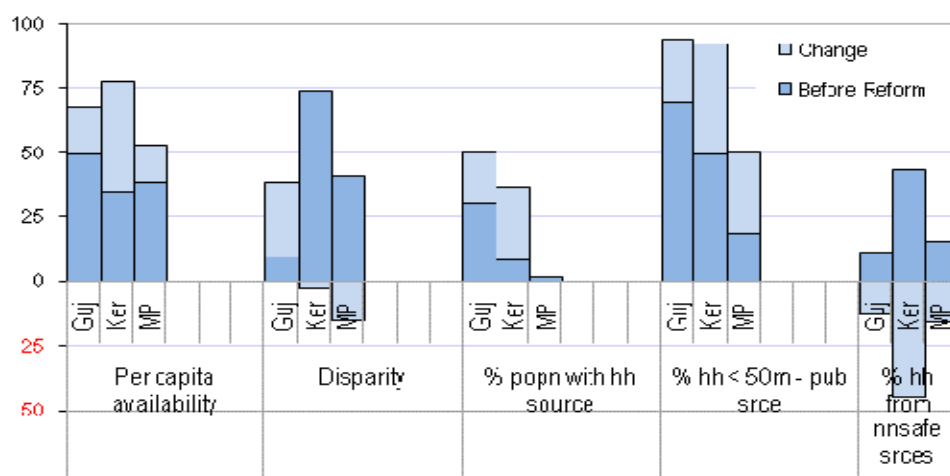


Figure 5.3: Relative effectiveness of water provision after devolution in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, from Table 5.1

system in Madhya Pradesh is a radical step, particularly in a State where Panchayats had virtually no presence immediately before 1994, but without the executive actions to implement the legislation, the local-level processes have remained comparatively the least effective. However, with reforms, the need for people to use unsafe sources is largely eliminated, and most remarkably, the disparity between those with and without

public sources is reduced. This could be an artifact of the technologies used by the MPPHED for village installations (public handpumps), but also emerge from other institutional reasons as discussed in the next chapter.

While the effectiveness of local government processes in Gujarat lies in between the two other States on most indicators, the sharp increase in disparity between those with and without private connections is highly problematic. On this basis alone one could question the devolution of powers to Gujarat Panchayats, for the fears of critics, that the higher income groups would corner devolved resources appears to be borne out to an extent. However, half the households have private piped connections, making the distribution flatter than elsewhere, and all households dependant on public sources are within 50m from one.

Here it must be noted that for the households who get water from a shared source at a distance from the house, both carrying the water and storage are constraints, and in instances where supply is for a limited duration (as in the Kerala villages), the volume that can actually be collected, in the brief time they get their turn, is limited. Therefore increase in the ease of access or duration of supply does not always lead to very high increases in consumption. What is important for such households is the reliability of the source, with water available throughout the year in a reasonably predictable pattern. Even more important is the control over the source, especially in the case of the Madhya Pradesh villages, where access of the poorer households was almost completely dependent on the permission of the big farmers with field tubewells.

For those who have a household piped supply (as in Gujarat villages) the main constraint is storage. People in those families try to complete ablutions while the water

is running, and women wash the clothes, but only after the storage vessels are topped up. They therefore actually use more water than the volume they collect and store, unlike the households in Kerala where the tap is shared. Similarly, households in the Madhya Pradesh villages wash clothes and sometimes, cooking vessels near the handpump or well, using more water than they actually carry home.

Was the process of improving and augmenting water supply systems easier, or gestation periods reduced? In Gujarat, there is little difference in any aspect. Though records of the process by which the pre-reform systems had been developed were not available, the new systems studied took between 1-5 years to be completed. Though long, the process required little input from the village residents or the Panchayat, as the tasks of getting the project developed, sanctioned and constructed were handled by the GWSSB staff. The village leaders (elected or social) only had to occasionally remind and request the GWSSB officials, and furnished the required no-objection certificate from the Panchayat. Clearly, users or village residents did not participate in the decision-making, except in providing some information such as which locations were thought to have good groundwater and the depth of existing private borewells.

In Madhya Pradesh too, there is little change in the degree of effort and time required to develop a new project, and it remains as taxing as before reforms. It still takes repeated visits to the Janpad offices by a significant person of the village, and at least between eight months to a year to install a handpump or small tank. Earlier, it was the DE at the PHED Sub-division who had to be petitioned; now it is the officer in the Janpad Panchayat, but the continuous effort and gestation time remain unchanged. What has changed is the degree of power of Sarpanches, who have a larger amount of

untied funds, greater information from and more ‘connections’³³⁹ at the Block office because of membership in the Janpad Panchayat. This enables them to initiate projects for their constituents and social groups. A small advance is the credibility gained by otherwise non-elites in the village due to their positions in Gram Sabha structures, such as the Health Committee President. In the words of the very active President of the Lasudiya Dhakad Health Committee,

“Now I can go to talk to someone in the Janpad, when I say I am Health Committee President, they at least talk to me that day, even if they make me wait. Earlier I had to go (for personal work) three-four times at least, waste so many days, before I could talk to the clerk.” (interview)

The process in Kerala seems to have changed to a much greater extent. Not all projects have to be sanctioned and funded by KWA Division Offices; for the projects planned by the GP are financed from the Panchayats funds and only executed by the KWA – this reduces the time-to-completion significantly. The differences begin with the greater familiarity of the residents with their Ward member, acquired in the course of the annual participatory planning exercises with NHGs and CDSs. This enables them to make demands on the member to push for community projects, and the opportunity to get their needs listed with the relevant Working Group. Also, once the project was included in the Annual Plan, the time to completion was only a few months, for funds were already allocated and had to be utilized within the year. This is in sharp contrast to the earlier process, when KWA staff were less accessible (the Sub-Division Office is located at the Block level) and were ‘experts’ with little time for ‘technically

³³⁹ Social contact and relationship with staff in government offices or their kin is so important as to be almost a pre-requisite to getting any ‘work done’ (in Hindi, ‘kaam karaana’) that the word ‘connection’, spoken with a local intonation (‘conecson’ or ‘conacson’), is part of the vocabulary of the male village residents who are more active or interested in civic/ development work. Another word is ‘politics’ (pronounced ‘pultics’) which is frequently used, in a negative connotation, as explanation for any government system, program, or process that doesn’t work as it is meant to, or as an euphemism for collusion and corruption.

ignorant' suggestions from 'ordinary' people.(focus group, Mallvattam). More, even if the needs were pointed out and requests made, it was for the officer to formulate the project, request funds and sanction and undertake implementation – a process that took between one to two years for a standpost or handpump. That is, if the project was approved at all, for smaller projects had less priority. In the KWA's focus on Comprehensive Water Supply Systems that were designed to cover large areas and populations in one stroke; the fact that such projects had a gestation period of more than five to ten years (sometimes even longer), and in the meantime people remained without access to water, was brushed aside. The reformed process is therefore quicker, more attuned to the immediate needs of small neighborhoods and most notably, participatory and transparent.

In sum, devolution seems to be most suited to the political and economic conditions of Kerala, followed by those in MP, despite the higher per capita increase in Gujarat and in MP.

1.2. PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE AFTER DEVOLUTION.

The relative efficacy of the reformed arrangements in respect of its propensity to include women resides in the kind of spaces and other provisions that are included. In this too, the three States differed sharply, for though the proportion of seats earmarked for women in the three-tier local government structure remained the same, additional spaces that were created in associated organizational structures differed. The thematic Panchayat Working Groups and area-based NHGs in Kerala and the seven committees of the Village Assembly in Madhya Pradesh added significantly to the number of assured opportunities to participate, for one-third of the seats in these bodies were also

earmarked. More, these were closer to home (rather than at block or district levels) making access easier.

Whether seats were earmarked in various Standing Committees of the of the Panchayat and if there was a specification of women's presence in the quorum for meetings were other enabling provisions that differed – and in this too, Kerala won out, on both counts. The situation was uneven in MP, with some provisions made such as the requirement for women's presence in the quorum for village assemblies and Panchayat meetings, but not for the meetings of the various committees. Gujarat was equally tardy in this respect, with provisions for quorum at meetings only in some Standing Committees.

Table 5.2 and Figure 5.4 show the extents to which women occupy the reserved positions provided and make use of the opportunities presented for participation, in comparison with men. It clearly emerges that women's involvement in local governance processes in both Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh compares very poorly with the situation in Kerala. In both places, few elected women attend Panchayat meetings, though in both states they fill the statutory quota of one-third of seats in Panchayats.

The pattern, however, does not mirror the relative efficacies of the institutional configurations in the three States discussed above. The relationship between efficacy and effect holds in the case of Kerala, where the potential of the reformed institutional architecture is best realized, and in Gujarat where the lack of extensive provisions is also visible in the low level of women's participation in the State. It is in MP where the pattern fails, for the greater extent of opportunities to participate presented by the Gram Swaraj arrangements is not utilized even to the (low) extent in Gujarat.

Table 5.2

Relative Inclusion in Devolved Governance Arrangements for Water Provision in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh

	GUJARAT-PR				KERALA -PR				MP-PR			
	Ear-marked	Occu-pied.	Propor-tion	Case Scores	Ear-marked	Occu-pied.	Propor-tion	Case Scores	Ear-marked	Occu-pied.	Propor-tion	Case Scores
% Elected seats: earmarked & occupied	33.0	33.5	100.5	10.1	33.0	36.5	103.5	10.4	33.0	28.6	95.6	9.6
	Men	Women			Men	Women			Men	Women		
% Attendance in Panchayat meetings: Men & women	78.3	30.9	39.4	3.9	76.0	69.0	90.8	9.1	88.3	13.5	15.3	1.5
% Attendance in Village Assembly: Men and women	36.2	19.7	54.5	5.4	77.0	66.0	85.7	8.6	49.5	22.8	46.0	4.6
	G-PR 19.4				K-PR 28.0				MP-PR 15.7			

Compiled from values in Fig. 3.6, 3.12 and 3.18; scores derived as described in Chapter 2 and Table 2.7

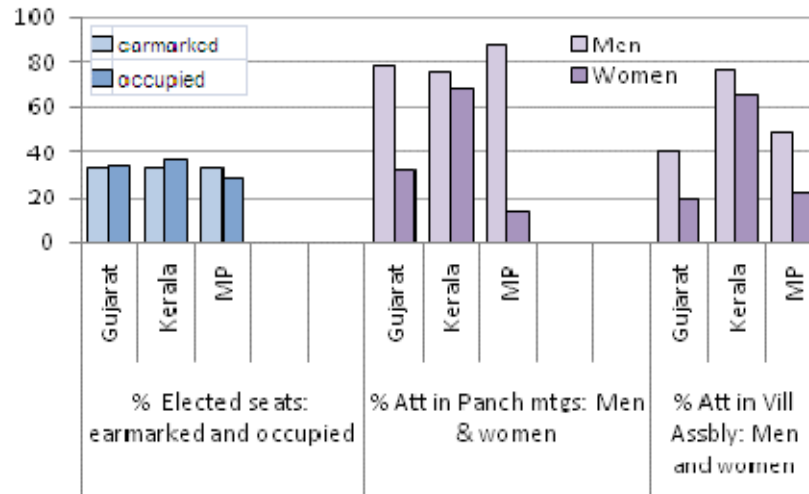


Figure 5.4: Comparative participation of women in the development of water supply projects in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, based on Table 5.2.

What explains this anomaly? The lack of effective implementation of the provisions of the Gram Swaraj system is no doubt one major reason, for it enabled the free

transformation of the reformed arrangements by the local political-economic and social conditions in the villages. As a result, the emergent institutional architecture is far less hospitable to women's involvement than designed, for even the requirement to include them in the Gram Sabha Committees is not always honored, and quorum conditions for meetings almost completely disregarded³⁴⁰. The complex of gendered and casteist social norms and practices in the MP villages that limit women's lives and actions is the other contributing factor, as discussed in section 4.

The pattern of extensive and decisive involvement of women in Kerala and its stark contrast with the lack of participation in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh is apparent. However, on closer interrogation, other interesting contours of similarity and difference emerge that complicate this ready observation. One is that the pattern of women's participation in the village-level processes is close *to that of men* in both Kerala and Madhya Pradesh. Kerala women are *as highly* involved as men are, though in smaller numbers, at the Panchayat level; but at the neighborhood level, where NHGs and a large number of SHGs have developed in tandem, often more women than men participate and more actively. The parity is also true of Madhya Pradesh, but in reverse: the participation of both men and women is almost *equally low* in village-level governance processes, with women's participation being only slightly lower than that of men. The low involvement of women is therefore not only a gendered phenomenon, but as much a product of the larger social relations in the village *which constrain men's involvement almost as much as women's*. Differences in the relative patterns of participation by men and women in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh therefore appear to be best explained by the respective pre-reform histories of local governance

³⁴⁰ The women members are usually asked to affix their signatures (or thumb prints) in the minutes book after the meetings.

and Panchayat functioning and the differences in the socio-economic contexts.

1.3. DEVOLUTION IN CONTEXT: EFFICACY AND DEMOCRACY

In which kind of context, from among those in the three study States, does devolution work best, and why? What emerges is that among the institutional architecture for devolution that emerged in the political-economic circumstances of the respective States that in Kerala was most efficacious, followed by those Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. The social, political and economic conditions at the local level in Kerala were also hospitable to the reformed structure and processes and therefore the potential of the substantially devolved governance arrangements to effect change was not reduced, and the uptake of opportunities presented for change was substantial. The (little) reformed institutional configuration in Gujarat was also not modified in its functioning, and the low-to-moderate efficacy of the designed structure was unaffected. There was substantially more devolution in Madhya Pradesh, but the local political economy and socio-cultural characteristics sharply reduced the efficacy of the reformed structures and processes to effect change.

However, all the three governance configurations were effective in improving the availability of water in relation to the previous situation, in quantity and ease of access. What differed was the extent of effort required by the users to improve the situation, the time taken for the installation of additional systems and the kind of participation in the decision-making process, either of users, or their elected representatives in the local government. In Kerala, the organizational arrangements and decision-making processes were most participatory, reduced the gestation period for new systems (or repairs) and the most user-friendly. The governance arrangements

had only minimal advantages over the pre-reform arrangements in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh for improved participation, both leading to a very slight positive change in the involvement of village residents. However, despite least change from the previous arrangements, the system in Gujarat perhaps could be said to be somewhat easier on village residents in that the process of developing new water supply systems requires much less effort and energy on their part than in Madhya Pradesh, where repeated petitioning, support of politically powerful individuals or credible NGOs and continuous follow-up by whoever in the village initiates the process, is inevitably required. Also, in the latter case, there is a very obvious capture of decision-making processes and resources by the Sarpanch, who is typically from among the local elites.

The comparative situation in regard to women's participation is more revealing, as it shows clear differences in the nature and extent of their involvement in the processes in the three States. There was almost no involvement of women in local governance structures in any State prior to the 1994 reforms and the introduction of a mandatory quota of elected positions. This has resulted in women constituting one-third of the elected members in local governments in all three States, but it is in the nature and extent of active involvement that the differences are glaring. In Kerala, elected women – both members and Presidents of Gram Panchayats – are most energetically involved – they attend meetings, voice opinions, engage in deliberations, and chair Committees and Working Groups. Women are much less actively involved in Gujarat, and very occasionally do attend meetings and sometimes, voice their opinions, though the involvement of women at both ends of the caste continuum – which coincided with income levels – is very minimal. In Madhya Pradesh the situation is least encouraging; often, women's membership in GS Committees itself is either not in the statutory proportion or only on paper, and very few attend meetings and even fewer speak up.

What is therefore the answer that emerges to the central question of this exercise – in which kind of context does devolution work best, and why? From the comparisons in the previous section, it can be safely concluded that it is most efficacious, effective and participatory in locations with high political and social development, and moderate economic development, such as in Kerala. These factors not only provide a reasonably hospitable State context in which the institutional architecture for local governance is that is devised is consistent with the objective of improving service provision and including citizens in governance, but the political will also exists for full implementation and institutionalization of the reformed arrangements. The level of human, social and political development also enables moderate-to-high uptake by citizens of the opportunities to participate, and yields substantial improvements in water provision. This bears out the relationship that is the corner-stone of the arguments for devolution – that the democratic inclusion of citizens in governance, while being an important end in itself, can also yield improvements in service provision.

A conducive political situation at the State level appears to be a requirement, for it was that which led to an efficacious design for decentralized governance in two cases – Kerala and MP – while in contrast, in Gujarat the presence of an Opposition party in government blocked any substantial reform. However, it is not a sufficient condition, for what emerges as more crucial is the level of human, social and political development in the State without which even efficacious and bold devolution initiatives are undermined and subverted at both State and local levels, as in MP. There, the extent of devolution itself swung between the bold initiatives of the reforming Chief Minister and the reluctance of the political-bureaucratic establishment to part with power, and devolution could be retracted without protest from citizens,

who lacked the extensive political awareness and engagement seen in Kerala. Then the same lack prevented a good off-take of the still-substantial opportunities presented at the local level, and the capture of state power and resources by local elites. The level of economic development does not appear to be a critical condition, and high economic development may actually constrain civic engagement of average citizens, as in Gujarat, where despite higher literacy and general awareness, there was no groundswell for devolution after the Panchayat Act that could have spurred reforms.

The relationships posited here between reform efficacy, effectiveness and participation appear the best explanations for the variations observed across States. Certainly it appears to be more than the design of the structure and processes, though the Kerala design is quite revolutionary (Heller 2001). But the Gram Swaraj design in Madhya Pradesh is a close contender, at least in its possibilities for participatory decision-making (Manor, 2003) and women's involvement. The alacrity of the Kerala government in kick-starting a participatory planning process and altering administrative arrangements to synchronise with decentralized governance appears another obvious explanation, for that is missing in the other two States, but that initiative is itself a function of a conducive political situation in the State, and a highly literate and aware population. In Gujarat there is little energy applied to devolution, with more attention and funds allocated to special programs initiated by the Chief Minister, but little protest, for it is precluded by the availability of economic opportunities and the characteristic market-rationality of citizens as discussed in section 2.5. In the case of Madhya Pradesh also the explanation is found in the political, economic and social dimensions of the context, which modulated received designs at both macro and micro levels.

In sum, devolution works best, in terms of both effectiveness and participation, in situations with high political, social and human development, though it may be effective to a degree in improving service provision in other contexts, as in Gujarat and MP. In both the latter cases, however, it was accompanied by undesirable consequences such as increased disparity (in Gujarat) and resource capture by elites (in both). The lack of widespread civic engagement is the key issue, for it is the primary mechanism that prevents perverse outcomes such as these, by increasing transparency and downward accountability. High economic development with a strong orientation to cultural traditions as in Gujarat appears to actually militate against participation, for by presenting economic opportunities on one hand and civic philanthropy on the other, there is little need or motivation to participate. Need, on the other hand, does spur some civic engagement in MP despite low political and social development.

It also emerges that institutional design in itself cannot increase effectiveness or even more, participation, for even the apparently enabling Gram Swaraj arrangements did neither. However, with the involvement of the NGOs - Samarthan in MP and KSSP in Kerala – a difference is visible in both cases. Even with a limited degree of political development, the information and organizational capacities provided by Samarthan were useful. Institutional mechanisms for such in the reformed arrangements – such as the wide-spread information dissemination in the PPC in Kerala – are very likely to improve effectiveness and participation. There are other indications, and an important task is to identify specific design features in the institutional arrangements for local governance that could make devolution effective in each kind of context. I return to this question in the last section, after considering how the other mode of decentralizing water provision – the Sector Reform program – works in the same three locations.

2. LIBERALIZATION IN THE THREE STATES

In Chapter IV (sections 2, 3 and 4), I discussed (a) the ways in which the GoI-driven reform agenda to liberalize state provision of domestic water (through the SR-Swajaldhara program) have been applied to their existing systems by the three study States, (b) how the reformed institutional arrangements actually played out at State, district and village levels, and (c) to what extent the reformed arrangements in each State have been more or less effective and participative than the previous system. Here I compare the situation in the three study States to assess how a centrally designed reform to liberalize State provision of domestic water is assimilated in the different State contexts and find an answer to the larger research question of the context-appropriateness of liberalized arrangements.

2.1. COMPARATIVE EFFICACY OF REFORMED INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE

In the Sector Reform and Swajaldhara programs, the DDWS (GoI) prescribed the design of the liberalized institutional configuration in substantial detail, though some organizational alternatives were made available for the States to tailor the overall design to their own institutional contexts. As elaborated in Chapter IV (section 1), these were not many, but the substantial differences that it permitted are visible with a graphic comparison of the organizational structures in the three States. Comparative analysis is possible at two levels –first, in the *de jure* structure and processes specified by the State, second, and in the *de facto* processes and emergent structure observed in this research.

Figure 5.5 shows the emergent organizational structures in the study States, with the

total number of functions, responsibilities or powers that are held by actors in different domains represented by the relative sizes of the organizational units in the diagrams. The extent of the functions and resources held by the State (includes departments and parastatals and their subsidiary or field offices), elected local governments at district or lower levels, NGOs, CBOs and private firms or individuals was derived using the relative weightages assigned to various functions (see Table 2.6 in Chapter II). The most faded-out boxes represent the pre-reform distribution of functions and resources, the darker ones outlined in dotted lines represent the extent of the functions and resources assigned to the units in the *de-jure* reformed structure delineated by the State. The shifts in the role and relative importance of various units can therefore be read in each case. Patterns of distribution of functions across organizational actors in the pre-reformed, designed and observed governance configuration is shown in Figure 5.6.

That the extent of transfer from the State institutions to other actors differs sharply across States is evident; Kerala appears to be, in design, the most ‘liberalized’, with CBOs³⁴¹ (Beneficiary Groups) intensively involved, though Gujarat is a close contender. In Madhya Pradesh the PHED (State) still remains the most significant actor, with the VWSC at the village level expected to take on a few responsibilities. While control of the GoI funds and formulation of policy remains with the State government in all three cases, there is greatest autonomy in the discharge of these functions in Gujarat, with the institution of WASMO, which by all accounts functioned with a great degree of autonomy since its inception till the time of this

³⁴¹ Moreover, State structures such as the SWSM, SWSC and DLTC in Kerala include a not insignificant number of members from outside the State – representatives of donors and NGOs, and experts and professionals. This is true at the State level in Gujarat, but much less so at the district level where NGOs are not included in the DWSM, though they are part of the village-level process as support agencies (SAs).

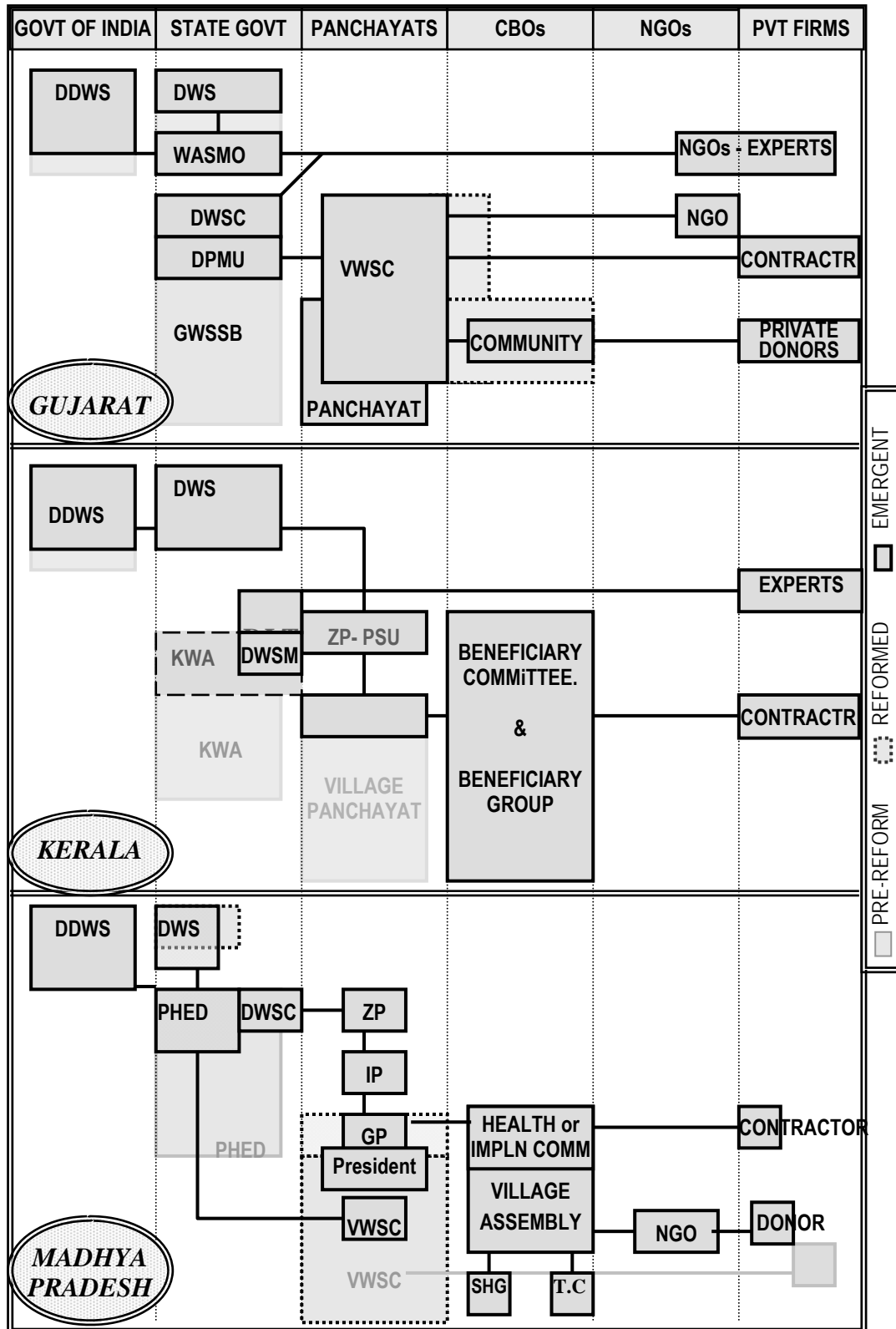


Figure 5.5: Post-liberalization governance configurations for water provision in study States.

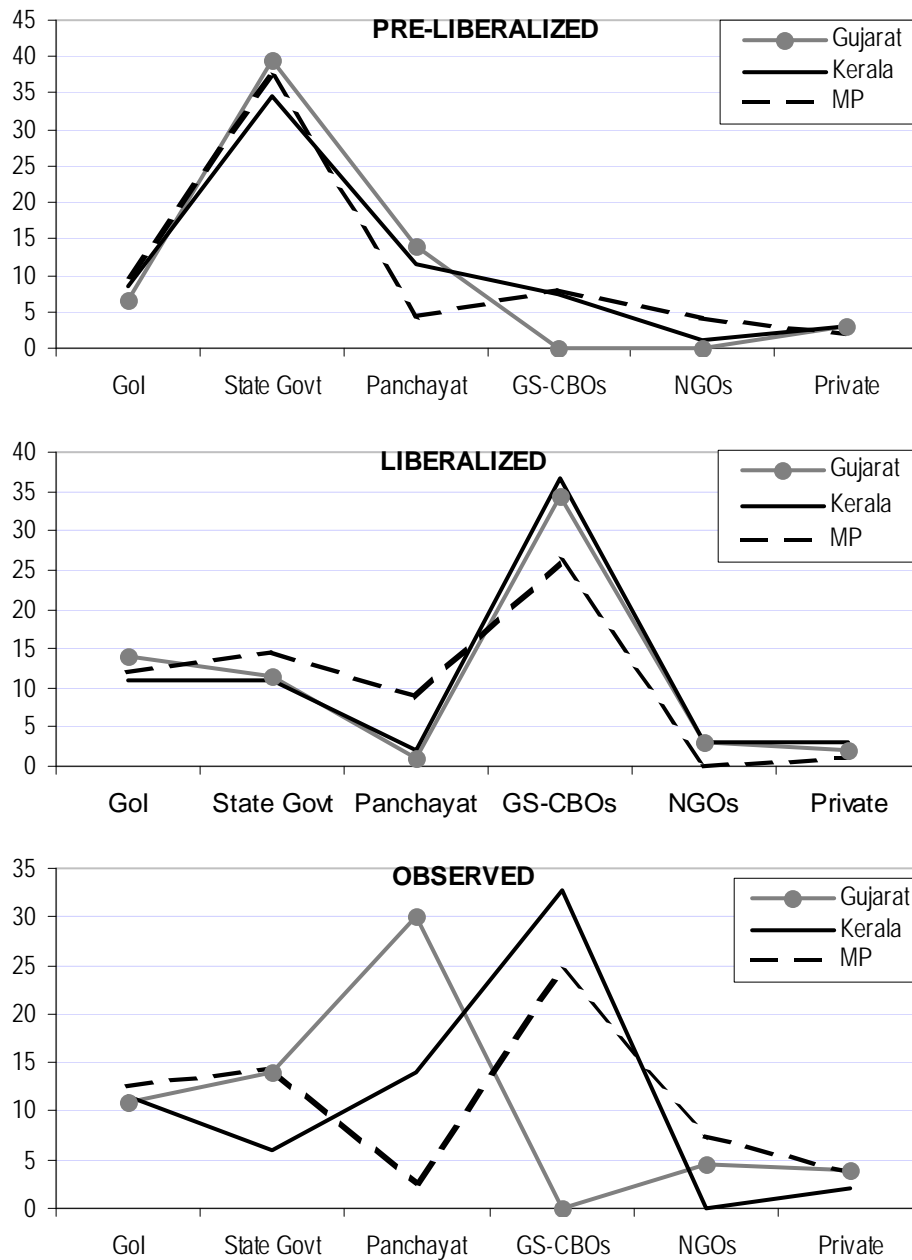


Figure 5.6: Shifts in the distribution of functions for water provision after liberalization in study States.

research. In Kerala and MP the State retained full control, with the SWSM and SWSC being under the KWA and PHED respectively, but in Kerala, from the district downward, elected local governments and the community-based beneficiary groups

made almost all decisions. In contrast, both in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, the state retained control even at the district level, through the Collector, who chaired the DWSSM. Moreover, the GWSSB in Gujarat and the PHED in MP continued to be important in the implementation process, though much more so in MP. In sum, Kerala is arguably the most liberalized, with the maximum number of decisions in the process taken by elected local governments and CBOs, followed by Gujarat.

The *de jure* institutional structure underwent little transformation in its functioning except in the case of Gujarat (see Figure 5.18). In Kerala and MP the designed structures observably function almost as set out in State Guidelines and the attendant government directives, though in the former, the Gram Panchayat (in the form of the GVRT) is more actively involved than envisaged. In Madhya Pradesh, at the village level the Panchayat takes on more than designed and the unplanned involvement of the NGO is significant. The most significant change in MP was in the availability of funds for new projects. With the villages in the area not being considered in the NC or PC category – though in reality the per-capita availability of water from protected sources within 200m of all households was below the 40 lpcd statutory minimum³⁴² – they were not eligible for funds from almost any program.³⁴³ In the SR-Swajaldhara program, however, funds were available wherever there was adequate ‘demand’, as attested by the users’ agreement to pay the 10% contribution and bear the operational expenses. In fact, MP’s off-take from the funds initially earmarked for the State was

³⁴² This was because the PHED records – and surveys – listed handpumps that did not actually work, or produced unpotable water, and wells that ran dry for more than half the year. Participatory mapping one during this research clearly indicated the number of perennial, functioning sources with potable yields to be less than the survey indicated in all villages.

³⁴³ Panchayat funds under various programs were allocated at the discretion, preference or influence of the controlling elites, which almost inevitably resulted in installations in the upper-caste and better-income neighborhoods. Strictly earmarked funds for marginalized and disadvantaged groups were available for their neighborhoods but without the pressure from connected elites, the priority accorded by the PHED engineers to implementing such projects was much less.

only a small proportion of the total, and the pressure on the DWSM to develop more projects “has made it almost like any other ‘target-driven program’.” (ZP Secretary, Sehore) This has made the implementing agency keen to install more sources even in the villages listed as FC.

What explains this variation among the States? Clearly, the institutional arrangement set in place by the State was a product of the State’s political willingness to reduce its functional domain, its need to retain legitimacy with the pro-liberalization forces and the relative influence of the existing bureaucracy. In Gujarat, a liberal approach to service provision and involvement of non-State actors has historically existed, and continues to survive in areas not completely overtaken by the State, in addition to a general positive orientation to market-based approaches. This definitively undergirded the more proximate reasons for naming the autonomous WASMO as the nodal agency, such as lobbying by the well-developed pro-community NGO sector and the need to retain credibility with international civil society organizations such as their Netherlands donor (CEO, WASMO).

A similar explanation is applicable in Kerala, where the political, administrative and financial devolution that preceded the SR arguably provided the socio-political underpinning to the more immediate pressures such as the influence of donor agencies, the issues plaguing the KWA and the success of various community-based models. Despite the KWA’s political weight, the nodal role in the SWSM implementation at the district level and below was entrusted to elected local governments, and despite the obstruction of the State bureaucracy at the district level, the State (SWSM) decisions weighed in favor of local governments.

In MP, none of these pro-liberalization factors appeared to exist in sufficient strength to counter the political weight of the PHED and the reluctance of the State government to reduce its functional domain. Neither a liberal orientation as in Gujarat, nor the local socio-political mobilization around the idea of decentralization existed in the State. An active and vocal NGO sector that could advocate pro-community policy was also absent, as were international donors in programs focused singularly on water provision. Local civil society was just emerging, and international donor presence in the area of drinking water was equally nascent.³⁴⁴

The functioning of the institutional structure and processes as intended in Gujarat and Kerala can also be attributed to the same reasons. In Gujarat, the existence of a strong local government system and the remarkable ability to mobilize and utilize all resources that is a hall-mark of the State as well as its residents meant that there was quick off-take of the program at the local levels. VWSCs were quickly formed, though without any social-organization process, and they capably utilized the opportunity for infrastructure creation offered by the program. Relative prosperity in the area made it easy for the community contributions to be mobilized. A remark by the Sarpanch of Laskana embodies this spirit “...When we are getting 90% of the funds by giving 10%, why should we let the opportunity go? We are not fools....”. In Kerala, the local organizational capacity and political awareness in the community furthered by the local government reforms created the same energy both in the local government system as well as in the communities. No doubt in both cases the water shortage was a significant driving force.

³⁴⁴ UNICEF had extended support to the SR program, but water supply was not its primary focus in the State, and WaterAid had started operating in the State only after 2000.

While the same kind of scarcity existed in Sehore, it was not sufficient to activate the formal structure at the local levels. The local government system at the village level remained embodied in the Sarpanch and Sachiv, except in a few places where unusually self-efficacious individuals energized in the Panchayat and/ or the community. This ensured the continuation of the patron-client relationships between the Village Sarpanch or other influential – and inevitably, higher-caste – persons and officials and elected representatives at block or district levels. VWSCs existed on paper, as Panchayat Committees, and funds were channeled through them, but they were used for projects decided by the Sarpanch and Sachiv or in the habitations where active leadership was taken by a community member or village functionary (like the Treasurer or Health Committee President). The local community – the village assembly (Gram Sabha) – which was envisaged as the main organ for accountability of elected members hardly functioned in this role, except where NGOs took on the task of organizing and making them politically active assemblies. In short, the conditions for active functioning of self-determining community organizations that was the fulcrum of the SR-Swajaldhara program did not exist to any extent in rural MP, precluding the functioning of the reformed arrangements at the local level. Therefore, even the minimally reformed structure set in place – or prescribed – by the State government, which in design was the least liberalized among those in the three States, was in practice overwhelmed by the existing power structures and the lack of either socio-political awareness or local organizational capacities, or both.

Is the extent of liberalization and the functioning of the reformed structures in each case related in any patterned way to the effectiveness of water provision and participation in the new governance arrangements in each State? I address these questions next.

2.2. EFFECTIVENESS OF LIBERALIZED ARRANGEMENTS IN THE THREE STATES

In all States, the overall availability of water to the community distinctly improved, as did the ease of access (Table 3 and Figure 5.7.). Assessing this in relation to other factors like time taken for project completion and for repair assures the conclusion that the reformed system was more effective in delivering water to the community. This virtue of the reformed systems in all States, however, covered some less encouraging aspects. The first, though perhaps less important, was the fact that while the per capita availability of water improved, there is a substantial gap in the average quantity available in each case, as well as in the extent of change. The situation in Gujarat by far exceeds that in Madhya Pradesh, though with the difference in the baselines, this is perhaps not surprising.

The second and less acceptable situation is that those with household connections benefit remarkably more from the installation of the new systems than those dependent on public sources, in two of the three States. The disparity is notably greater in Gujarat than in MP, where only a few households take private connections. In Gujarat, household connections are extended to larger segments of the village community though, inevitably, including the upper caste households. The rationale advanced was that the installation costs and monthly charges for household connections far exceeded the paying capacity of the poorer households; water was provided 'free' to them through the standposts. Also, that piped supply to the entire village would eventually be extended, but it would be accomplished in phases since the resources were limited. In MP, on the other hand, only a few households had private taps, by paying the cost of extending the pipeline to their houses. Their monthly rates, however, were only as much as was charged from those without

Table 5.3

Relative Effectiveness of Water Provision through Liberalized Governance Arrangements in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh

STATE COMPARISON: SR	G-SR			K-SR			MP-SR		
	Change	% Change	Score	Change	% Change	Score	Change	% Change	Score
Per Capita Availability	56.7	115.1	11.5	52.8	159.6	16.0	11.7	33	3.3
Per Cap from HH Source	79.5	176.1		1.3	1.7		39.7	69	
Per Cap from Public Sources	20.2	124.7		2.0	6.8		34.2	93	
Disparity (HH and Shared Sources)	59.3	205.0	20.5	45.1	100.0	10.0	5.5	18	1.8
% Popn with HH Source	28.2	28.2	2.8	93.5	93.5	9.3	4.7	5	0.5
% HH < 50 m from Pub Srce	33.9	33.9	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.0	23	2.3
% HH - Unprotected Srces	43.8	90.9	9.1	46.0	100.0	10.0	23.5	90	9.0
OVERALL (including Disparities)			6.3			45.3			13.3
W/O CONSIDERING DISPARITIES			26.8			35.3			15.1

Compiled from Tables 4.3, 4.5 and 4.7; Scores derived using method in Table 2.7

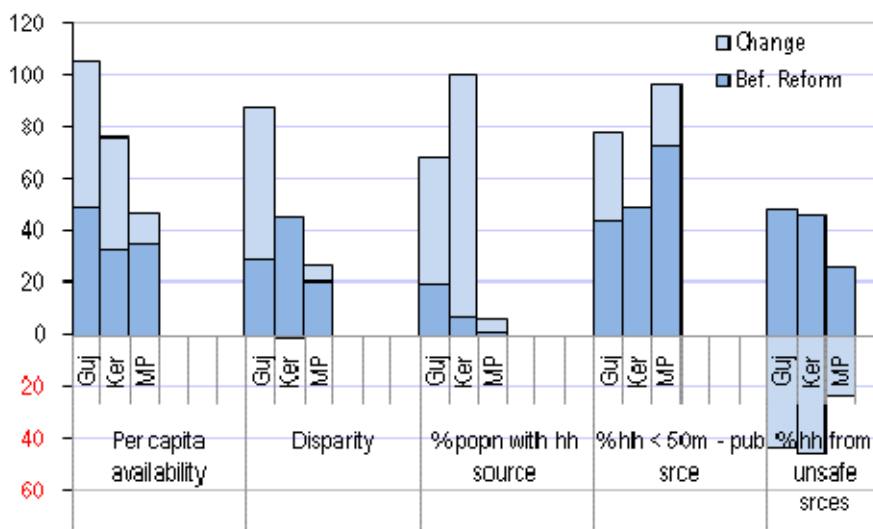


Figure 5.7: Comparison of the change in water availability after SR projects in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, from Table 5.3

household connections. Therein lay another difference – in Gujarat, those without a household connection paid no monthly rates, though they did contribute some amount towards the capital cost, according to their paying capacity, as was required by the SRP Guidelines. Water supply is fully egalitarian in Kerala, with all households who are members of the BGs connected to the distribution system. All member households

therefore have access to equal quantity of water from the new project, though those with private wells can use additional quantities from their own source.

The difference in the paying capacity of the households in the three States emerges as a significant issue. In Kerala, all households contributed an equal amount, and even interviewees of modest circumstances stated that it was not very difficult for them to pay (fdg Mayilladumkunnu, Ambalakonam). In Gujarat, despite very high differences in income and asset ownership within the community, all households contributed according to their capacity, with a few contributing very large amounts to make up the 10% of capital costs; collections exceeded the required amount in all but one of the study villages (Vadadla). It was in MP that raising the community contributions was difficult; according to the staff of Samarthan, the proportion of destitute families in some habitations made it almost impossible. For there were few who were sufficiently better-off to make up these deficits. Funds had to be cobbled together from elsewhere, including government funds from programs administered by the Panchayat and from donors outside the community (through Samarthan). In two instances, a proportion of the deficit was made up from the corpus held by the Temple Committee, a very large amount in the case of Lasudiya Khas.

This is qualitatively different from the more secular intra-community philanthropy in the Gujarat villages, for the Temple Committees are organizations of the majority religious group, in villages with socially heterogeneous populations including households from minority religious groups, notified tribes and lower castes.

Water quality remained a problem in all locations, though least so in Gujarat, where the projects were implemented through the GWSSB, and a quality test of the proposed water source in a certified laboratory had to be undertaken before funds could

be sanctioned. Though testing for quality was also required in the other two States, the engineers filled the requirement in most cases through physical examination, without insisting on the laboratory tests, since minimizing costs were a major concern.

Important sources of information about source quality were older residents perceived to have a good knowledge of local ecologies in both Madhya Pradesh and Kerala, though in two villages (Neelamootil in Kerala and Kharpa in MP), reportedly the engineer's suggestion prevailed. Even in the cases where the source water was fully tested, as in Neelamootil in Kerala, periodic testing was not a practice, even though the quality of the water perceptively changed in different seasons.

In sum, the water situation was much eased in all study villages by the projects implemented in the reformed process, and in a much shorter gestation period than previously. The effectiveness of the reformed arrangements did not therefore, appear to be related to the extent of reform, for even in the least reformed situation in MP, the new process yielded appreciable results.

2.3. PARTICIPATION IN LIBERALIZED GOVERNANCE IN THE THREE STATES

The first and most obvious observation in relation to the pattern of women's involvement in the reformed institutional processes (shown in Table 5.4 and Figure 5.8 below) is that it is as high and active as that of men in Kerala, in stark contrast to the picture in the other two States. This can no doubt be attributed directly to the levels of education and earlier mobilization and participation in the reformed local governance processes. Though the institutional architecture was most liberalized in Kerala among the three States, the active and equal participation of women and men may not be substantially attributable to this, as a similar pattern was visible in the case

Table 5.4

Relative Inclusion in Liberalized Governance Arrangements for Water Provision in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh

SR - ALL STATES	GUJARAT-SR				KERALA-SR				MP-SR			
	Ear-marked	Occu-pied.	Propor-tion	Case Scores	Ear-marked	Occu-pied	Propor-tion	Case Scores	Ear-marked	Occu-pied.	Propor-tion	Case Scores
% Elected seats: earmarked & occupied.	33.0	28.5	95.5	9.6	50.0	37.3	87.3	8.7	33.0	23.4	90.4	9.0
	Men	Women			Men	Women			Men	Women		
% Attendance in Panchayat meetings: Men & women	92.5	10.3	11.1	1.1	87.3	87.5	100.3	10.0	92.2	11.0	11.9	1.2
% Attendance in Village Assembly: Men & women	25.0	10.8	43.0	4.3	81.0	76.8	94.8	9.5	64.8	22.6	34.9	3.5
	GUJ-SR			15.0	KER-SR			28.2	MP-SR			13.7

Compiled from values in Figures 4.7, 4.13 and 4.18; Scores derived using method in Chapter 2, Table 2.7

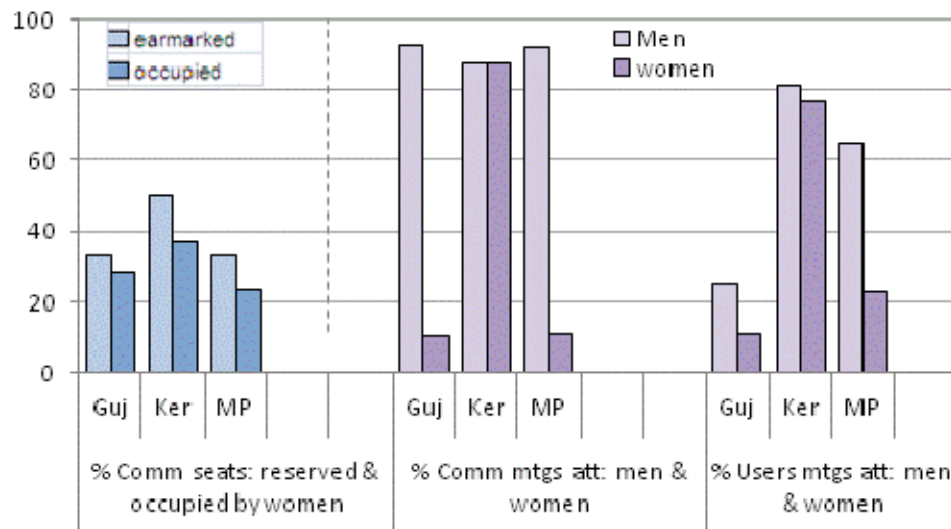


Figure 5.8: Relative participation of women in development of water supply projects after liberalization in the study States, from Table 5.4

of local governments (discussed in Chapter III, section 3). On the other hand, the similarity also indicates the high efficacy of the reformed institutional architecture, in

that it offered as substantial opportunity for participation as did the reformed local governments.

The situation was very different in the other two States, and the lower efficacy of the instituted arrangements was no doubt a contributing factor. Unlike the ‘non-official’, community and area-based BGs in Kerala, in Gujarat and MP, the organizational set-up remained tied to the ‘official’ structure of the Panchayats, for the VWSC became one more of its Standing Committees. Another important difference in the institutional designs across the study States was that the respective reformed institutional structures created different numbers and kinds of spaces for women. Though the DDWS guidelines earmarked only one-third of seats in the Panchayat VWSCs for women, the existing two-tier structure of the Village Panchayat led to the earmarking of a similar proportion in the habitation-level Health Committees in MP. But in Kerala, the State government did even better, earmarking 50% of the seats in the Beneficiary Committees (BCs) as well as in the constitution of the Beneficacry Groups (BGs)³⁴⁵. That is, the number of spaces and opportunities for women’s participation in an MP village was atleast double that in Gujarat, but still much lesser than in Kerala.

Moreover, while in all three States spaces were created village-level executive bodies – the VWSC in Gujarat, the Beneficiary Committee in Kerala and the VWSC and Health Committee in MP – there was no statutory requirement for their presence in the general assembly except in Kerala. There, women were required to constitute half the members of the assembly (the BG), but in the other two States, the Village Assembly (Gram Sabha) constituted the user-group, and no specification was made in this

³⁴⁵ By specifying that two adults – one man and one woman – from each household would be the members of the BG; that is, gender parity in representation of households was ensured.

respect. Also, in neither Gujarat nor MP were any spaces created for women in the District-level Water and Sanitation Missions or the Water and Sanitation Committees, unlike the provisions for the same in the counterpart entities in Kerala.

In all States, less than the proportion of seats earmarked in the respective executive committees are occupied by women – surprisingly, even in Kerala where women’s engagement was substantial and meaningful, as described in section 3.4. The explanation perhaps lies equally in the fact of women’s increasing engagement in income-earning activities in the Kudumbasree units, or the ubiquitous domestic responsibilities of women as well as the constraints posed by social or patriarchal norms. In the other two States, the proportion of positions occupied is about on par³⁴⁶, but different explanations were advanced in the two States for the not meeting the statutory requirement. In Gujarat, the answer from the Sarpanch in one village and VWSC members in another two was that “...they anyway don’t get involved, they don’t come to meetings...and other people are interested and active, there is so much work to be done and they actually do it...” (Sarpanch, Laskana; VWSC member, Ladvi, Tatijhagda). In Manpura in MP, where there were no women in the HC, the Treasurer of the village assembly explained that “...there is so much demand [for membership]...but it [absence of women members] doesn’t matter, they [women] are very active anyway...you know the SHG group started the whole project, they demanded it...”. But in Ramkhedi the HC President and in Lausudiya Khas the Sarpanch were equally surprised and offended when the discrepancy was pointed out – it appeared that by including two women (in committees of seven and nine respectively) they were satisfied that the statutory requirement was adequately met.

³⁴⁶ The proportion in MP appears lower than in Gujarat in the diagram due to the lowering of the average by the lack of any women in the Health Committee in Manpura village; the explanation received in the village is discussed in section 4.4.

Neither of the supportive factors – the preceding local government reforms nor the direct interest in augmenting domestic water supplies apparently counteracted the relatively less supportive institutional design and the socio-cultural norms of the context.

The additional space provided for women in the institutional design in Kerala was actively used, matching the high involvement of men. Women participated not only as members but also held executive and officer positions, including that of the BC President. Their attendance, and reportedly, active participation in discussions at BC and BG meetings was on par with that of men – the difference in the levels of attendance seen in Figure 5.8 is likely to be more an artifact of the small sample size rather than a reflection of any substantial difference.

Participation levels in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh surface an interesting dynamic, observed also in the case of participation in local government processes (Chapter III, section 5). While in both States the levels of women's involvement are very low, both in the executive committees and the user assemblies, it differs less from that of men in the case of attendance in user-assemblies than in committee meetings. Men are much less interested in assembly meetings in both States, though their attendance is far better in MP than in Gujarat. These patterns, as well as the somewhat higher attendance of women at user-assemblies in MP can perhaps be explained by the differences in the local socio-economic contexts, as well as the intervention of the NGO Samarthan in the MP villages. In Gujarat, atleast two interviewees mentioned that “the committee [VWSC] is doing good work, why should we interfere...” and another said “I have to work, where is the time...and I will know all the news from others who were there...”. It can be inferred that both the perception of adequate and

efficient functioning of the VWSC and the better employment opportunities in Gujarat resulted in lower involvement of the men in the community.

On the other hand, the much higher involvement of both men and women in MP – relative to Gujarat – can be attributed to the involvement of the NGO Samarthan, for a number of interviewees, both men and women, said they went to the assembly meetings because the “bhai” – literally, “brother”, referring to the Samarthan staff member most involved in the village – had organized it (the meeting), and wanted them to find out what was going on in the village (woman users- Kharpa, Lasudiya Dhakad; Panchayat member Kharpa). Three others were vocal about attending in order to claim their share of local government benefits; one user indignantly said,

“...there are so many projects coming to the village, a lot of money...but it is spent by the Sarpanch and Sachiv in their village...we have to demand more work in our village...in any case they have all the control, but atleast we should get something...” (user, Lasudiya Dhakad).

This latter motivation is also likely to be partly an artifact of Samarthan’s efforts at mobilizing the community to play an active civic role in the new local government arrangements.

In sum, the higher efficacy of the reformed institutional architecture in Kerala, which was clearly a result of the State-level political-economic dynamics and social characteristics like high literacy and awareness, and prior civic-political mobilization, contributed to the successful increase in involvement of women (and men). State-level political-economic situations did not result in very supportive - or efficacious - (reformed) governance arrangements in Gujarat or MP, and this was compounded by the prevailing socio-cultural characteristics in the study villages. Whether more

efficacious – or more liberalized – arrangements would have elicited higher levels of involvement is an open question, but the active involvement of the habitation-level Health Committees, which were *not* part of the reformed design in MP, does indicate the possibility. The point is that such an eventuality was largely precluded by the State context.

3. DEVOLUTION AND LIBERALIZATION IN THE SAME CONTEXT

The second sub-question contained in the question of the relative suitability of devolution and liberalization to different kinds of contexts is how the two types of reform work *in comparison to each other in the same context*, and I now explore answers to this. Two important points need to be considered in comparing the performance of the two kinds of reforms within each State. The first is that the two kinds of reform were not introduced at the same time, but with a gap of more than five years³⁴⁷. Though when the GoI introduced the respective reforms, they were applied simultaneously in all three study States, local government reforms (PR) that devolved responsibility for water provision to local governments in were applied in 1993-94, and reforms liberalizing the sector five years later, in 1999. This meant that prior to the introduction of the sector reforms, the idea – and some degree of practical experience – of formalized community involvement in local governance processes had already been planted. So had the idea of women’s participation in formal political processes and local governance structures. Spaces had already been created for women in local government, by earmarking one-third of the constituencies for women, and by

³⁴⁷ The local government reforms were introduced in 1992-93 by the GoI, but it was 1995 by the time the first elections to local governments were held in most States. The Sector Reform Program was introduced in 1999, but again, its actual implementation did not begin in most States till the next year.

1999 – when the sector reforms were introduced – women had been part of local governance structures for about 4-5 years and had had almost one full term³⁴⁸ in office. Despite their generally slim participation except in Kerala³⁴⁹, the *idea* had found roots in administrative arrangements and rules, as well as the mindscape of citizens. The question is, did this improve the performance of the SRP, or facilitate better patterns of women’s participation?

There is also another reason to expect better inclusion in the liberalized arrangements introduced than in the devolved set-up of local governments. Except in MP where Health Committees were among the eight Gram Sabha-level Committees statutorily constituted under the 2001 Gram Swaraj Adhiniyam, neither of the other States had any Panchayat-level groups directed primarily towards improving water supply, before the SR program. So with the initiation of the program, additional spaces were created for women in the organizational lattice of local governance in Gujarat and Kerala; moreover, these were in bodies specifically directed towards domestic water provision, a matter of direct interest to women in their roles as home-makers, but also to men in the light of the increasing scarcity. That is, in a number of ways, changes had been introduced in the ‘constitutive rules’ (Searle 1995, also Scott 2001) embedded in the local political-administrative and socio-cultural landscape in regard to decentralized local governance, prior to the SRP. Whether these had rendered the local context any more hospitable to the liberalization of water provision than its devolution to local governments is an open question, but the likelihood of this merits attention in comparing the relative performance of the two reforms. Therefore, in examining the comparative effectiveness and inclusion of the devolved and liberalized

³⁴⁸ A full term is five years (GoI 1992)

³⁴⁹ Buch (2000, 2000a) and others survey the pattern of women’s participation across a number of States and found nil to low participation in general. That did not exclude some individual women from being actively involved and displaying exceptional leadership qualities.

arrangements in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh respectively, as I do below, I not only examine effectiveness and inclusion in the two reformed arrangements and the relationship with features of the institutional design or context (or both), but also attempt to find if the sequential application of the two reforms had any effect.

3.1. COMPARING DEVOLUTION AND LIBERALIZATION IN GUJARAT

In response to the Constitutional mandate in 1992 for devolution to local governments, Gujarat had made almost no change to the existing structure, except earmarking one-third of the elected seats at all three Panchayat³⁵⁰ levels for women. Despite that, the institutional architecture for local governance was close to being the most decentralized among the three study States, rivaling the decentralization in Kerala (see Figure 5.2). In comparing this with the liberalized institutional structure after SR (Figures 5.9 and 5.10), it emerges as being almost as decentralized as the latter. For the VWSC, which plays a major role in the process, is also a Panchayat entity³⁵¹, though ordinary citizens are included as members. However, these tend to be the village elite (close associates of the Panchayat President or other important members)³⁵², except for the required representation of women and other marginalized groups³⁵³. The latter are also usually from among the elected Panchayat members, and the women relatives of Panchayat members, and in any case, tend to be little involved.

The most significant change was the increased involvement of the users, primarily by way of contributing to the capital, operation and maintenance costs. This increases the role of the users in the process, but without giving them a significantly greater role in

³⁵⁰ Gram (village), Taluka (intermediate) and District.

³⁵¹ This is explicitly directed in the SRP Guidelines (GoI DDWS 2003)

³⁵² See Chapter IV, section 2 for a more detailed discussion.

³⁵³ As observed in the study villages.

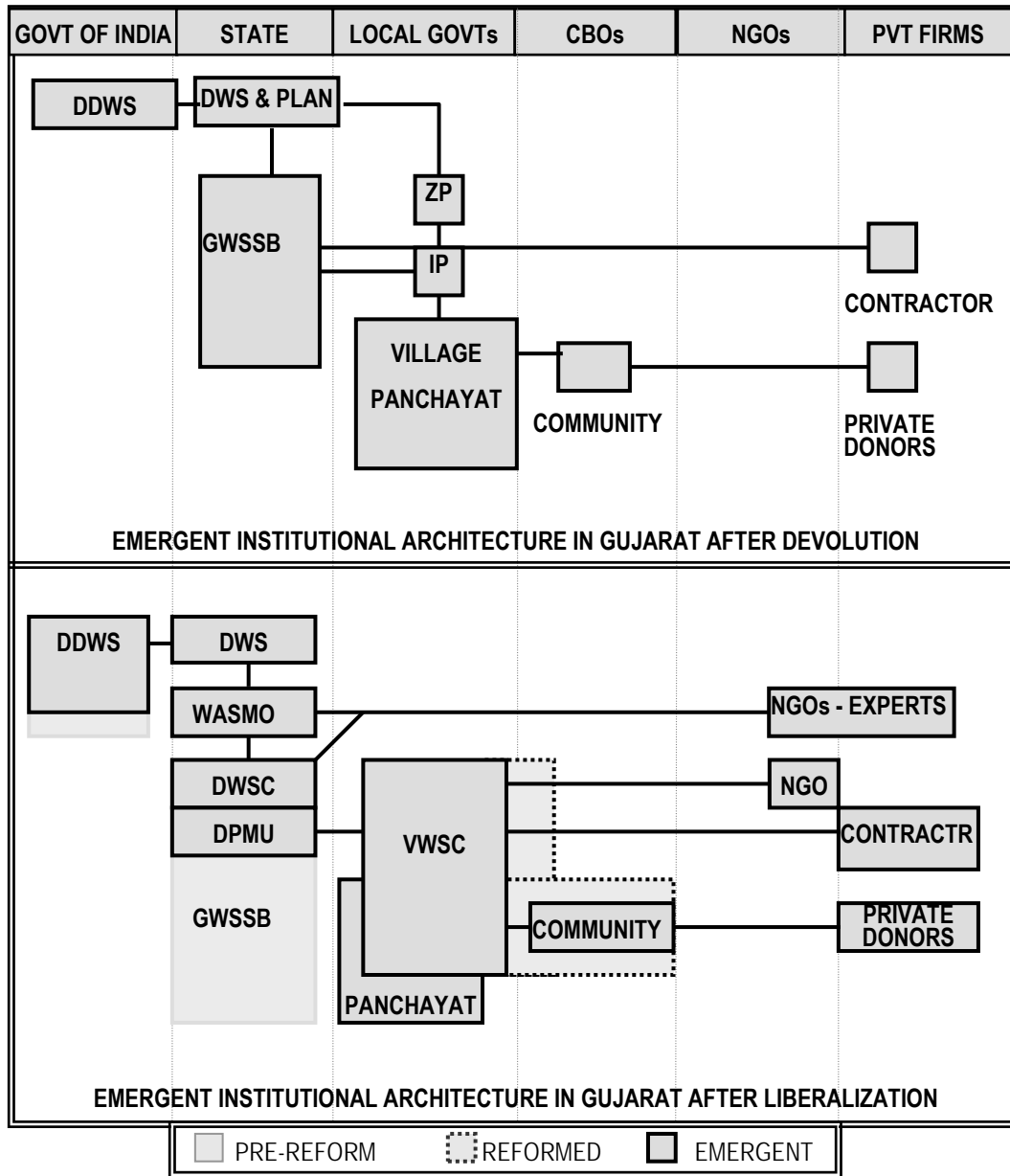


Figure 5.9: Comparative extent of decentralization in Gujarat after devolution to local governments and liberalization of State water provision

the decision-making³⁵⁴. However, even prior to the liberalized arrangements requiring users to pay, the upper-caste and upper-class elite with significantly higher incomes contributed in important ways and in substantial amounts to developing village

³⁵⁴Only a minimal role for a few people in the operations and maintenance, and in supervisory activities.

infrastructure, and the Panchayat was very active in raising such contributions (Panchayat records, Laskana, Ladvi; interview, AEE, Surat). In other words, community contributions were already part of the local governance resources, and not infrequently, for water supply projects³⁵⁵.

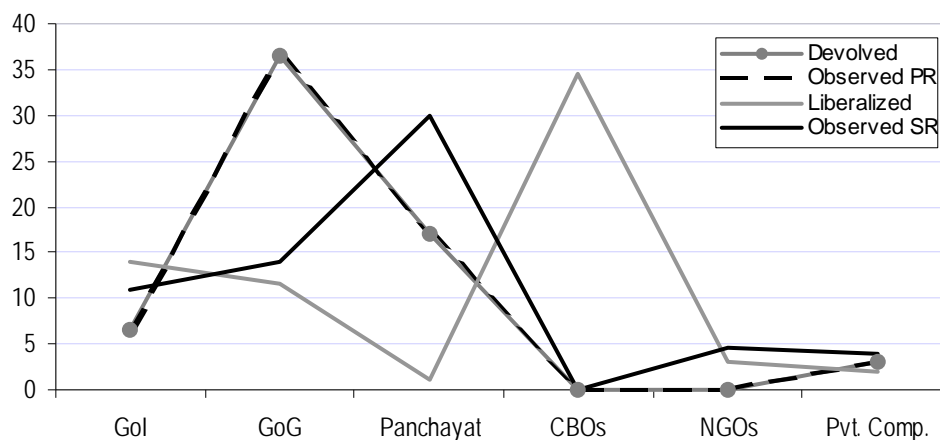


Figure 5.10: Relative pattern of decentralization in devolved and liberalized systems in Gujarat, using the Devolution Score Sheet (Table 2.6)

In sum, therefore, the shift in the *extent* of decentralization under devolution and liberalization, is limited to the Panchayat. The different and additional roles of the community envisaged in the Sector Reforms, such as pro-active organization and development of projects (the ‘demand’) and more participation in other decisions such as project location, design or tendering has not fully materialized. Nor do the users appear to wish more involvement, as discussed before³⁵⁶.

³⁵⁵ As evidenced by the two reverse-osmosis water purification plants in two of the study villages, and at least three old handpumps donated in other villages which had fallen into disuse after piped water supply was introduced.

³⁵⁶ In chapter IV, section 2.5.

3.1.1. EFFECTIVENESS OF DEVOLVED AND LIBERALIZED SYSTEMS IN GUJARAT

The effectiveness of the two kinds of reforms also appears to differ little, as seen in Figure 5.2, with the projects in both cases increasing the per capita quantity of safe water available, and the proportion of people with household connections as well as the access of others to public sources. This apparent similarity of effect, however, masks some important differences. On one hand, the liberalized process seems much more capable of substantially raising the quantity of water available, possibly because in practice there is no ceiling on the size of the project – though there is one implied in the design³⁵⁷ – as long as users are willing to contribute their share. On the other, this increased availability is unfairly distributed between those with and without household connections. That is, though the SR projects increase per capita availability to a greater extent, there is *also a greater disparity* in the quantity available to those with household taps and those dependant on public sources. This appears to bear out the concerns of those worried about the regressive propensities of liberalization; in comparison, the effect of devolution appears to be relatively more egalitarian.

The alacrity with which the Village Panchayats utilized the opportunity offered by the SR program to form VWSCs and implement the projects is arguably a result of the long history of fairly robust Panchayats in Gujarat. It certainly cannot be attributed to the fact that local government reforms preceded sector reforms, since there was little change in the existing architecture as a consequence of the Panchayat Act.

³⁵⁷ In an administrative sleight-of-hand, in designing the project the capacities of the existing sources are not included, resulting in the actual available quantity being higher than that designed. In any case, the Guidelines of the GoI and the States do not actually prescribe a ceiling, but require the users to pay a greater proportion of the capital costs (20%) for projects providing more than 40 lpcd, upto 55 lpcd. However, projects of even larger capacity can be constructed if users are willing to bear all the additional costs beyond 55 lpcd. Since the marginal cost of increasing capacities is much less than the initial cost, users are willing to pay; but in Gujarat the State government bears this additional cost, upto 55 lpcd.

Table 5.5
Comparative Effectiveness of Water Provision after Devolution and Liberalization in Gujarat.

GUJARAT: PR-SR	G-PR			G-SR		
	Change	% Change	Score	Change	% Change	Score
Per Capita Availability	18.0	36.2	3.6	56.7	115.1	11.5
Per Cap from HH Source	40.2	128.1		79.5	176.1	
Per Cap from Public Sources	11.7	55.3		20.2	124.7	
Disparity (HH and Shared Sources)	23.0	147.3	14.7	59.3	205.0	20.5
% Popn with HH Source	19.6	19.6	2.0	28.2	28.2	2.8
% HH < 50 m from Pub Srce	24.3	24.3	2.4	33.9	33.9	3.4
% HH - Unprotected Srces	12.5	100.0	10.0	43.8	90.9	9.1
OVERALL (including Disparities)			3.3			6.3
Without Considering Disparities			18.0			26.8

Compiled from Tables 3.3 and 4.3; Scores derived by method explained in Table 2.7

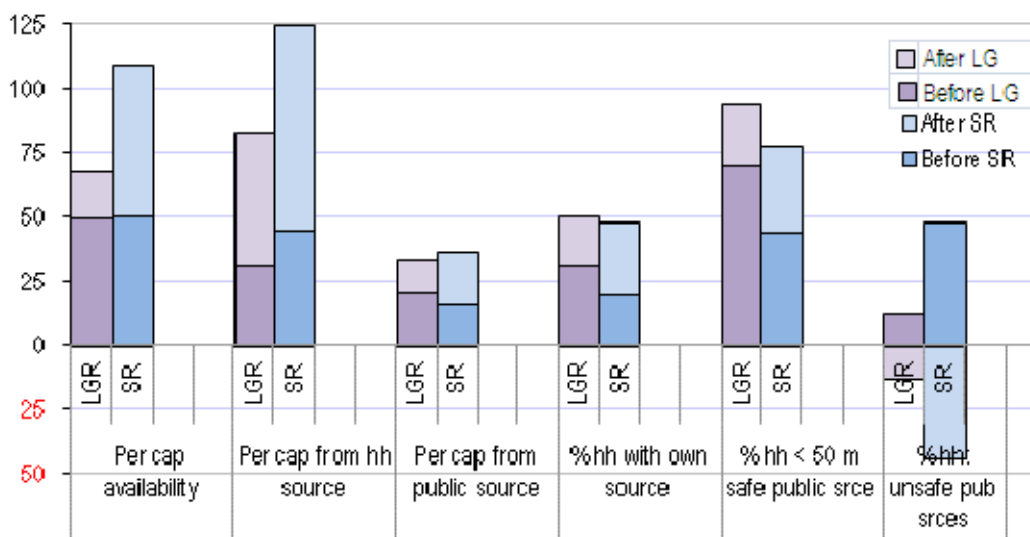


Figure 5.11: Effectiveness of water provision after devolution and liberalization in Gujarat, from Table 5.5

3.1.2. GUJARAT: INCLUSION IN DEVOLVED AND LIBERALIZED GOVERNANCE

The sequence of devolution and liberalization does not also seem to be related to the pattern of women's participation in the respective emergent processes (see Table 5.6 and Figure 5.12 below). In fact, their involvement, low as it is, is relatively better in

local government processes than in the sector reform projects. Neither women VWSC members nor users take advantage of the additional opportunities offered for participation in local governance, in stark contrast to the greater involvement of male VWSC members in the SR project than in the Village Panchayat.

The reasons could lie in their non-representative status, for women VWSC members are not elected and therefore do not have a constituency to answer to; or in the fact that they were mostly relatives of local government representatives or members of the VWSC, included for the statutory requirements rather than any real involvement. Social norms of seclusion and practices of exclusion would be faced by both women Panchayat and VWSC members, but the very fact that their participation in the two processes differs indicates that those are perhaps not the only factors responsible for the difference.

The small difference in occupancy of the earmarked seats could be also due to the difference in the level of statutory oversight of the State over the local government and of WASMO over the VWSC. Panchayat functioning is overseen by the State Department of Panchayats and the State Election Commission, through intricate and well-established procedures, whereas the WASMO's only check on the actual constitution and functioning of the VWSC is that members be listed in the project proposal. It could be inferred that dilution of the statutory provisions in respect of women is more possible under liberalized arrangements, when the community is provided with greater space for un-monitored functioning.

Table 5.6
Relative Inclusion in Devolved and Liberalized Governance Configurations in Gujarat

Gujarat- PR-SR	GUJARAT – PR			GUJARAT-SR		
Indicators	Earmarked	Occupied	SCORES	Earmarked	Occupied	SCORES
% Elected seats: earmarked & occupied	33.0	33.5	10.1	33.0	28.5	9.6
	Men	women		Men	Women	
% Att in Panch mtgs: Men & women	78.3	30.9	3.9	92.5	10.3	1.1
% Att in Vill Assembly: Men and women	36.2	19.7	5.4	25.0	10.8	4.3
OVERALL SCORE			19.4			15.0

From values in Figures 3.6 and 4.7; Scores derived by method in Table 2.7

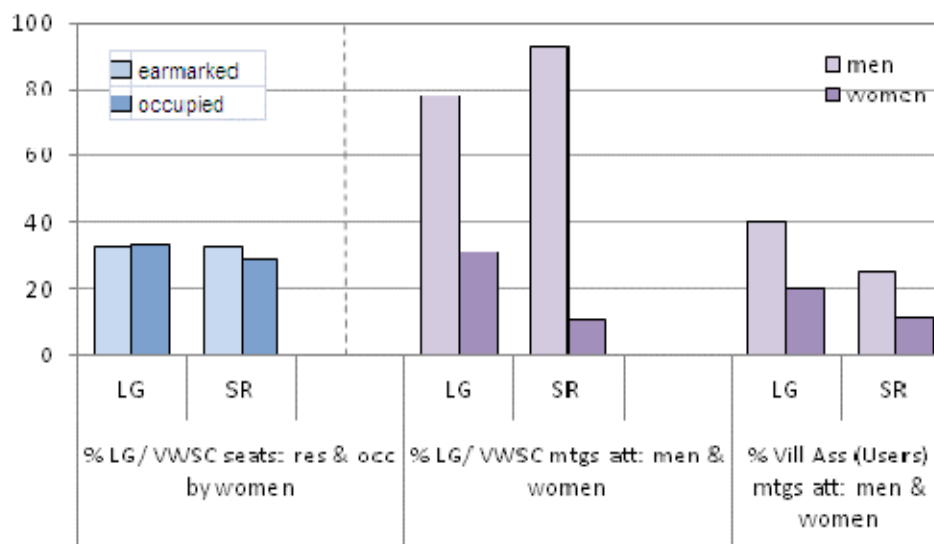


Figure 5.12: Women's participation in Panchayat and Sector Reform projects, relative to men's, in Gujarat from Table 5.6

In sum, therefore, in the economic, political and socio-cultural conditions that characterized the study region in Gujarat, both devolution and liberalization were apparently effective, with liberalized arrangements performing better. But both were marred by increased disparities in water availability between those with household connections and those dependent on public sources. Liberalized systems were more inequitable in the distribution of benefits. Moreover, in the provisions for the inclusion of women could be more easily diluted, and were less used.

3.2. REFORMS IN KERALA: EFFICACY, EFFECTIVENESS AND PARTICIPATION

In Kerala, the Sector Reform program was preceded not only by the statutory devolution to local governments that had been Constitutionally mandated, but also by the State-initiated People’s Plan Campaign to mobilize and institutionalize civic participation in the local planning process³⁵⁸. Communities were therefore not only aware and active, but structures for participatory local governance had been institutionalized to an extent. The implementation of the Sector Reform program, when it was introduced, was therefore centered in the local government structures from the district level and below (see Figure 5.13 and 5.14). Moreover, at the village level, while the local government remained the support agency, the process was centered in the area-level Beneficiary Groups, moving the locus of participation even further into the community than after devolution. In effect, there was greater decentralization through liberalization than with devolution.

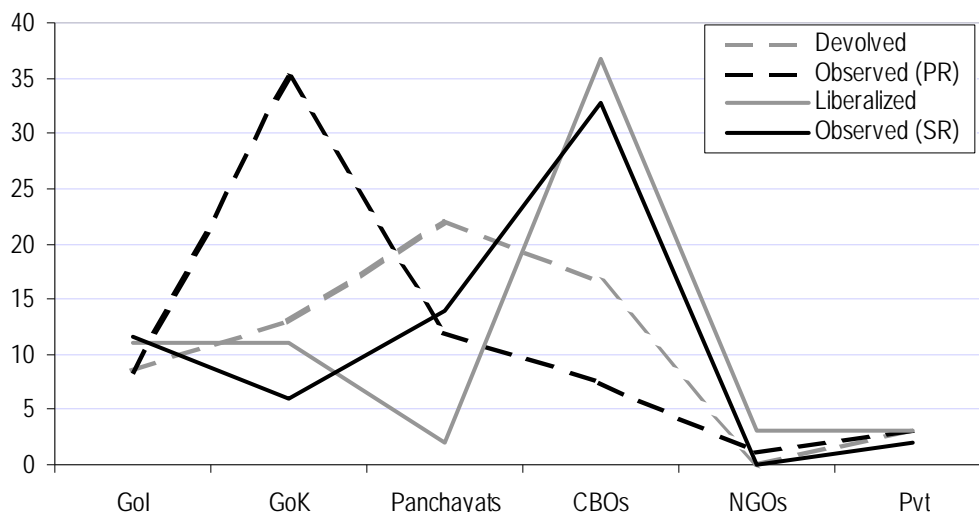


Figure 5.13: Relative extent of decentralization in devolved and liberalized systems in Kerala, using the Devolution Score Sheet (Table 2.6)

³⁵⁸ See section 3, Chapter III for a description of the People’s Plan Campaign.

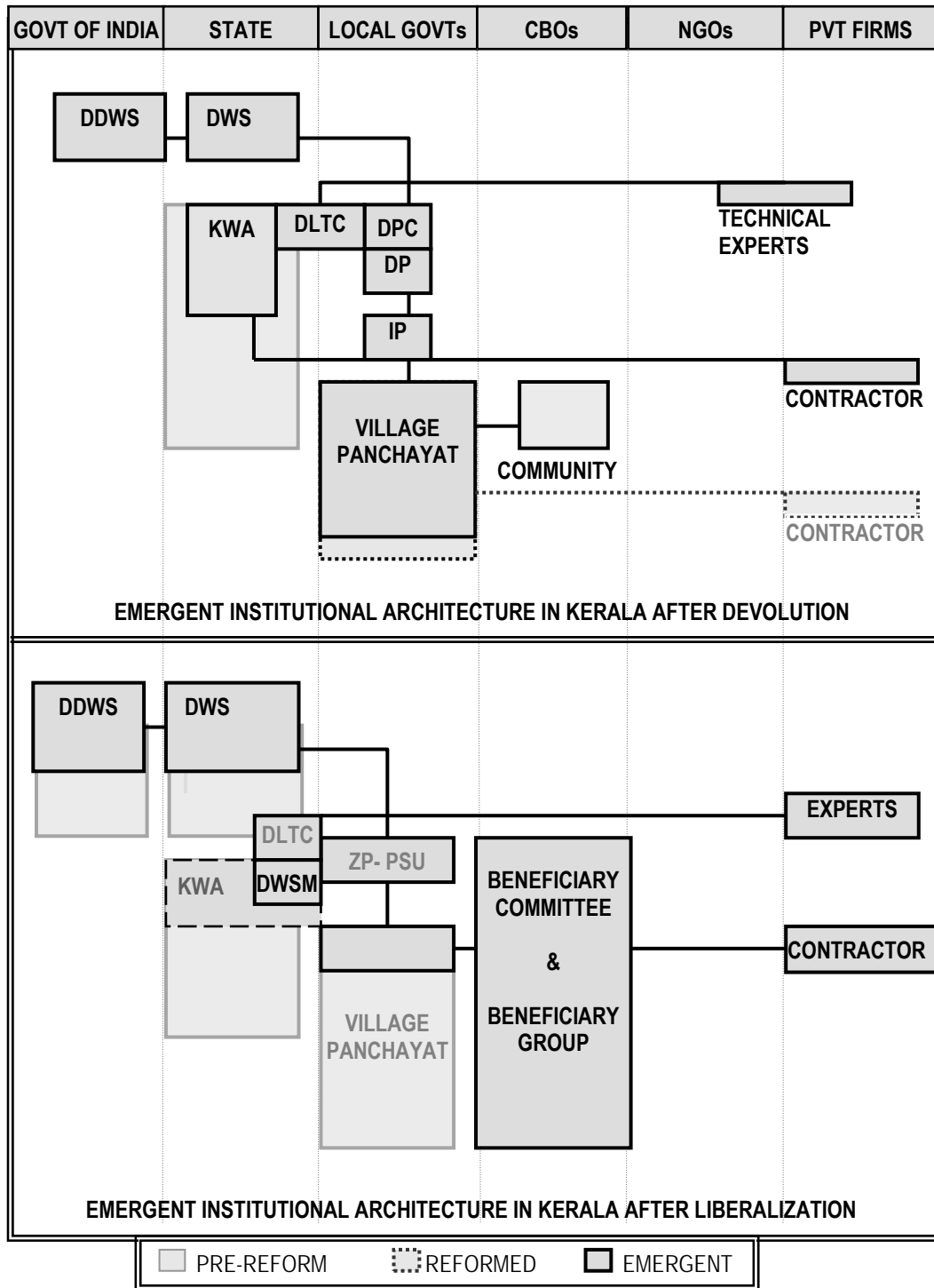


Figure 5.14: Comparative extent of decentralization in Kerala after devolution to local governments and liberalization of State water provision

3.2.1. KERALA: COMPARATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF DEVOLUTION AND LIBERALIZATION

In Kerala, both Panchayat and SR processes were equally effective in increasing the quantity of water available to households, reduce distance to source and ensure supply throughout the year, though seasonal contamination undermined the latter gain in both

Table 5.7
Comparative Effectiveness of Water Provision after Devolution and Liberalization in Kerala.

KERALA: PR-SR	K-PR			K-SR		
	Change	% Change	Score	Change	% Change	Score
Per Capita Availability	42.6	120.6	12.1	53	159.6	16.0
Per Cap from HH Source	19.0	20.8		1	1.7	
Per Cap from Public Sources	21.2	128.6		2	6.8	
Disparity (HH and Shared Sources)	2.2	3.0	0.3	45	100.0	10.0
% Popn with HH Source	28.3	28.3	2.8	93	93.5	9.3
% HH < 50 m from Public Source	42.5	42.5	4.2	0	0.0	0.0
% HH - Unprotected Sources	44.3	100.0	10.0	46	100.0	10.0
OVERALL (including Disparities)			29.4			45.3
Without considering disparities			29.1			35.3

Compiled from Tables 3.6 and 4.5; Scores derived using Devolution Score Sheet (Table 2.6)

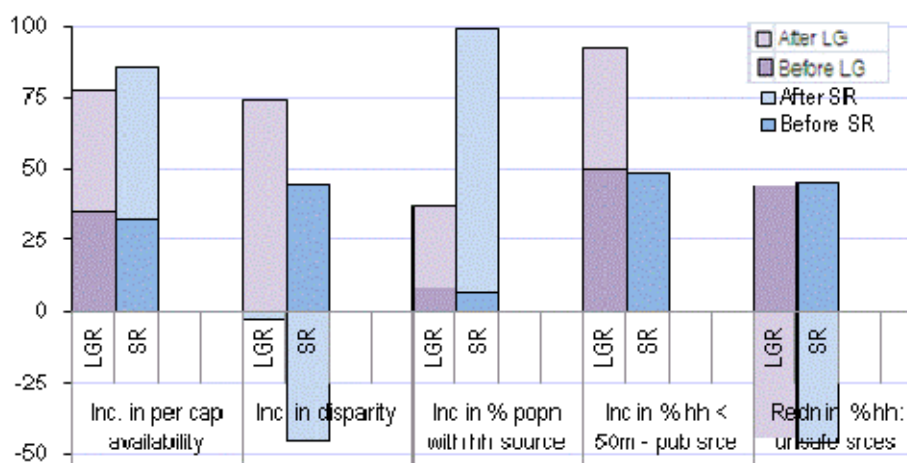


Figure 5.15: Effectiveness of water provision after devolution and liberalization in Kerala, based on Table 5.7 above.

cases. SR-Swajaldhara projects were however, *fully egalitarian* in that all households were connected to the system, and had access to an equal amount of water from the project³⁵⁹ (see Table 5.7 and Figure 5.15). Panchayat projects, typically small and comprising handpumps, wells or small tanks with public taps, could not substantially alter the differences in availability between those who had private wells and those who were dependant on public sources or neighbors. Overall, therefore, the liberalized arrangements yielded *both more effective and more egalitarian* outcomes.

3.2.2. KERALA: INCLUSION IN DEVOLVED AND LIBERALIZED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Participation was also better in the liberalized processes, as can be seen in Table 5.8 and Figure 5.16 below. The institutional structure was clearly more efficacious in this respect, as the quantum of statutory earmarked spaces for women both in the executive committee as well as the general assembly of users was higher (50%) than that in the local government (33%). This not only set the tone with regard to the constitution and functioning of the user groups, but as the (woman) President of Aanchal Panchayat remarked, questioning the 33% reservation in local governments,

“reserving 30% seats looks like a favor, after all we are 50% of the population...saying there has to be equal numbers (sic) makes it clear that there has to be equality in everything, equal involvement, equal responsibility, equal power.....because we are all equal...” (President, Aanchal Panchayat).

The additional spaces created by the higher reservation were also fully used by women, rivalling the involvement of men, as has been described before (chapter IV, section 3).As has also been discussed, the preceding local government reforms and the

³⁵⁹ Those with private wells of course had access to more, but the project benefits were equally distributed.

subsequent proliferation of community-based organizations, both civic (neighborhood groups, community development societies) and economic (*Kudumbasree* units) had also created practices of community involvement. The acute water shortage and the women's need to find more convenient sources was ofcourse also a major contributing factor.

Table 5.8
Relative Inclusion in Devolved and Liberalized Governance Configurations in Kerala

Kerala PR -SR	KERALA-PR			KERALA-SR		
	Earmarked	Occupied	SCORES	Earmarked	Occupied	SCORES
% Elected seats: earmarked & occupied	33.0	36.5	10.4	50.0	37.3	8.7
	Men	women		Men	Women	
% Att in Panch mtgs: Men & women	76.0	69.0	9.1	87.3	87.5	10.0
% Att in Vill Assbly: Men and women	77.0	66.0	8.6	81.0	76.8	9.5
		K-PR	28.0		K-SR	28.2

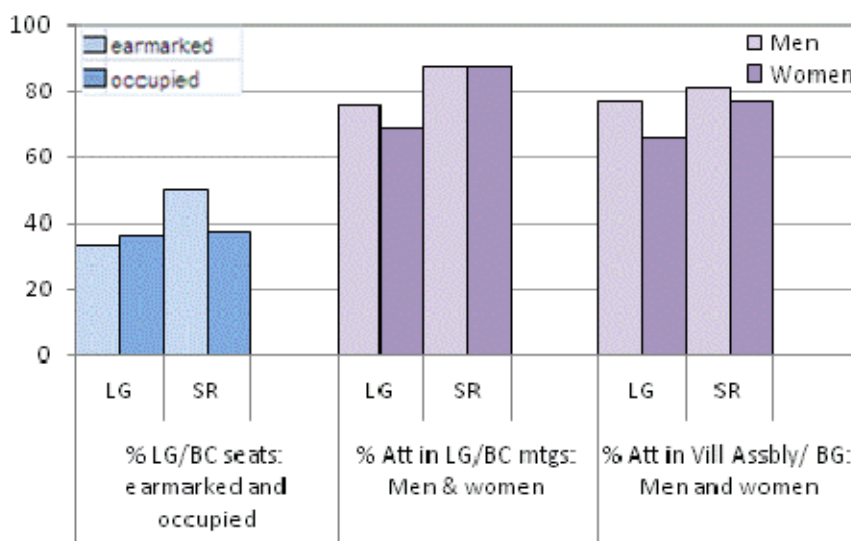


Figure 5.16: Women's participation in Panchayat and Sector Reform projects, relative to men's, in Kerala; based on Table 5.8 above

Under the prevailing socio-cultural, political and economic conditions in Kerala, therefore, not only did liberalized arrangements yield better results, but were also

fully egalitarian in the distribution of beneficiaries. They also supported full engagement by women in all decision-making processes, unlike in the case of Gujarat. Whether that would have been the situation without the prior devolution and institutionalization of participatory planning that had occurred between 1995 and 1999 is an open question, but the research does provide some indication of the answer. I discuss this in the last section, after examining the performance of the two reforms in Madhya Pradesh in the next.

3.3. DEVOLUTION AND LIBERALIZATION IN MADHYA PRADESH

Comparison of the institutional architectures for water provision after devolution and liberalization in Madhya Pradesh, as in Figures 5.17 and 5.18 below, shows that the emergent institutional architecture is clearly more decentralized in the latter. This is however, only true of the processes as they play out in the reality of the villages; the *de-jure* institutional architecture for the SRP, as actually designed, remains as centered in the State and local government arenas as are the local government processes. This is because almost all the functions of the VWSC are actually taken on by either the habitation-level Health Committees or other groups – such as Implementation Committees formed for the purpose – leaving the VWSC to act only as the designated channel for funds. Health Committees are creations of the local government reforms, and part of the architecture of local government, but in this instance, *they act more as community-based organizations rather than arms of the local government.* That is the reason why they are (more appropriately) categorised as CBOs in the organizational diagram, and by that characteristic, create a greater degree of decentralization than actually designed. Moreover, if one were to categorize them as local government

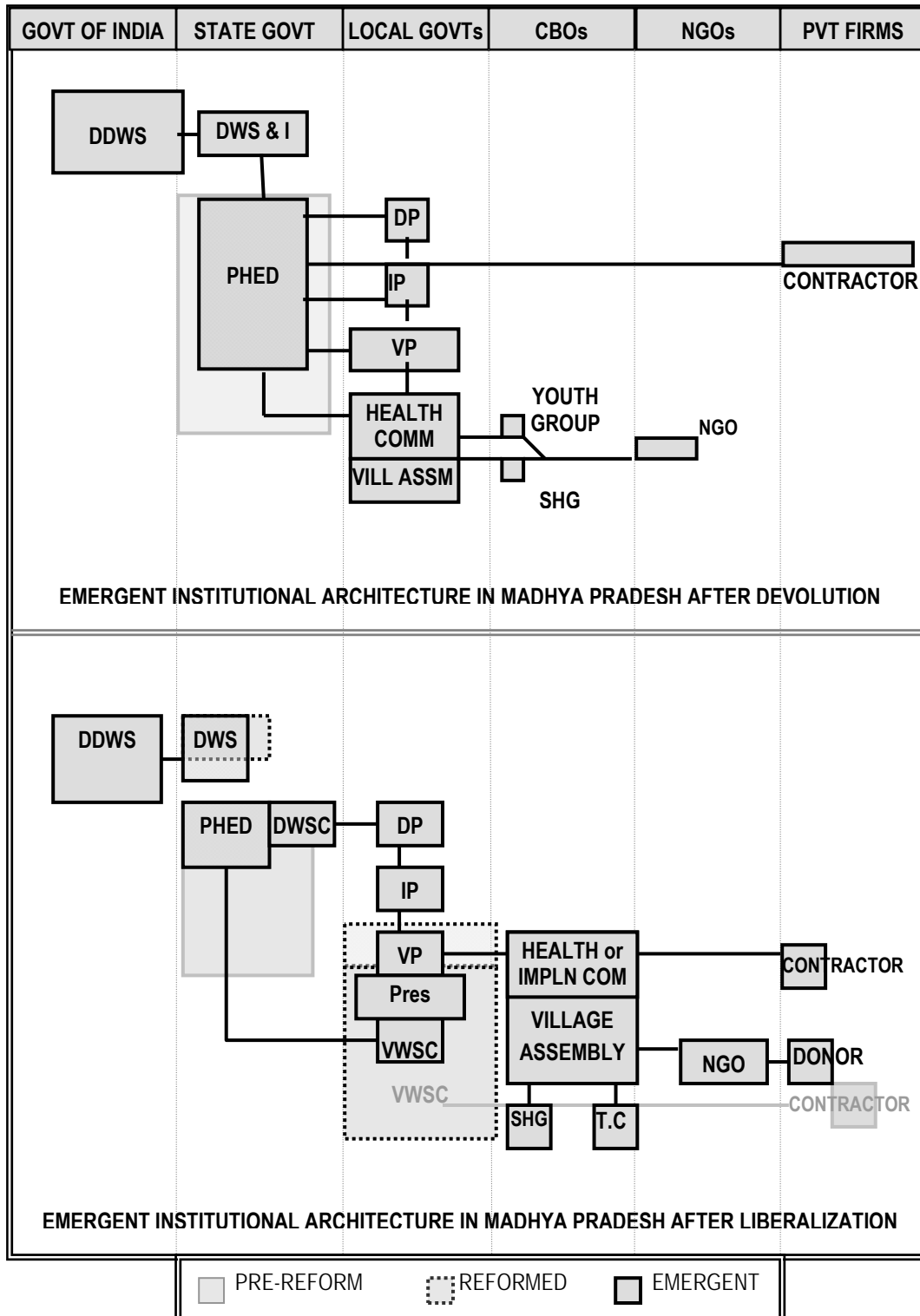


Figure 5.17: Comparative extent of decentralization in Madhya Pradesh after devolution to local governments and liberalization of State water provision.

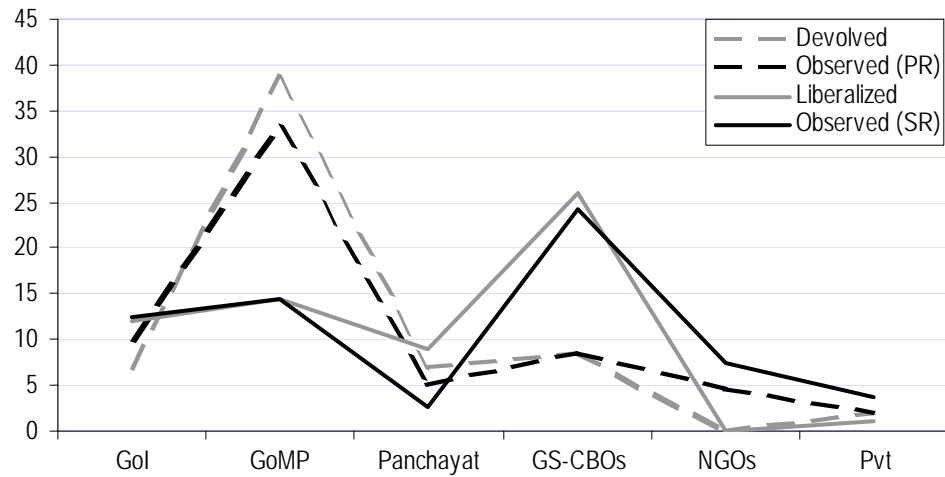


Figure 5.18: Relative pattern of decentralization in devolved and liberalized systems in Madhya Pradesh

structures – as they technically are – then the extent of decentralization by devolution and by liberalization would be almost identical in Madhya Pradesh.

The important dimension here is that the structure of the Sector Reforms project itself enables this opening up of the role of the Health Committee. In other words, *the liberalized arrangements appear to be more efficacious in enabling active civic role-taking by community-based organizations* than does devolution. That is true in the case of individuals also, for in some study villages, it was individuals with civic inclinations who initiated and anchored the project processes, as discussed in Chapter IV (section 4). Local government processes, as they stand, appear to allow little space for such role-taking by ordinary citizens; captured as they are by the President, the Secretary and their associates, such initiative even by elected members who are non-elites is, reportedly, severely inhibited³⁶⁰. The prevailing inter-class *economic dependencies* and feudal relationships within villages no doubt perpetuate this dynamic.

³⁶⁰ From the experience of Samarthan staff, shared during interview.

3.3.1. MADHYA PRADESH: EFFECTIVENESS OF DEVOLUTION AND LIBERALIZATION

How effective are the two kinds of reformed arrangements? From Table 5.9 and Figure 5.19 below, it is clear that both arrangements yield almost the same results, but with important caveats. Both are effective in raising per-capita availability, increasing

Table 5.9
Comparative Effectiveness of Water Provision after Devolution and Liberalization in Madhya Pradesh.

MP: PR-SR	MP-PR			MP-SR		
	Change	% Change	Score	Change	% Change	Score
Per Capita Availability	14.8	38.2	3.8	12	33.0	3.3
Per Cap from HH Source	0.0	0.0		40	68.8	
Per Cap from Public Sources	15.1	37.2		34	92.7	
Disparity (HH and Shared Sources)	11.4	29.5	3.0	6	17.8	1.8
% Popn with HH Source	0.0	0.0	0.0	5	4.7	0.5
% HH < 50 m from Pub Srce	10.9	10.9	1.1	23	23.0	2.3
% HH - Unprotected Srces	10.9	59.2	5.9	23	90.1	9.0
OVERALL (including Disparities)			13.8			13.3
Without considering disparities			10.8			15.1

From Tables 3.9 and 4.7

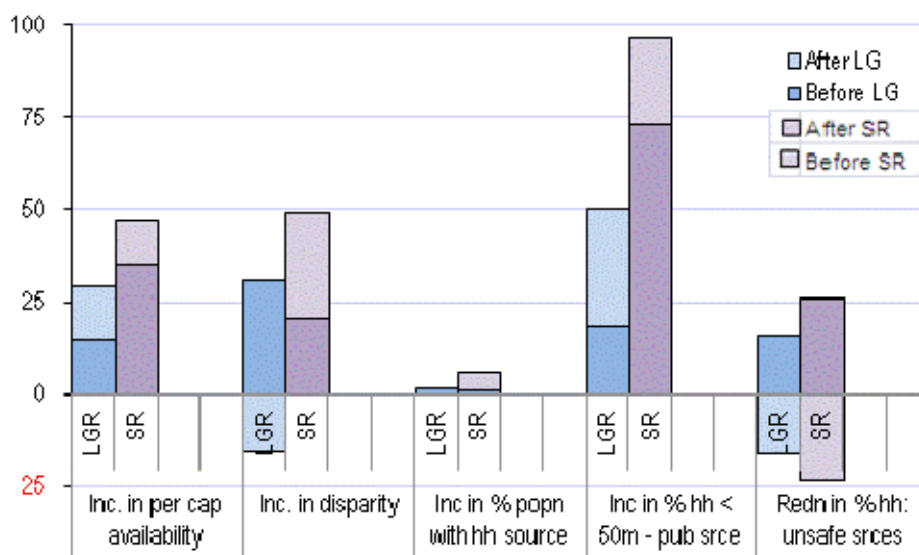


Figure 5.19: Comparative effectiveness of devolution and liberalization in Madhya Pradesh from Table 5.9

access and reducing the number of people dependant on public sources. The SRP however, is much better at increasing access, likely because of the technology – with piped water, multiple taps or standposts can be installed radiating from one point source, unlike the handpumps typically installed in local government projects. But in a less conclusive way³⁶¹, there is an echo of the disparities in availability between those with household connections and those without. The number of households in the former category is extremely small, and the extension of the pipeline to the houses paid for by themselves. That is, those with greater paying capacities are able to buy superior benefits that far surpass that received by others, and they are very few in a sea of households with far lower income levels.

This is unlike in Gujarat, where the benefits were not linked to initial investment – for a few paid very large amounts towards the capital cost, completely unrelated to the costs of their household connection, for which they paid the same tariffs as others. This dynamic of intra-village philanthropy makes the social implications of the differential benefits very different.

3.3.2. MADHYA PRADESH: COMPARATIVE INCLUSION

Participation of women in either local government processes or the Sector Reform projects is notable for its near-absence in both cases as can be seen in Table 5.10 and Figure 5.20, though their attendance at village assemblies is a little higher. This is again, like in Gujarat, in sharp contrast to the active and extensive involvement of men in both kinds of arrangements. Also, in keeping with the pattern in both Gujarat and

³⁶¹ Since the discrepancy is not as large as in Gujarat, and those dependant on public sources do get more than the minimum norm of 40 lpcd, which even after the new projects, is not the case in Gujarat.

Kerala, their involvement is higher in the Sector Reforms projects than in local government projects. Another parallel with Gujarat is that women occupy less than the statutory proportion of seats in the VWSC and Health Committees, organizational components of the institutional architecture that are located in the habitations or hamlets and which are therefore not subject to as much oversight by the State Panchayat department as the Gram Panchayat.

Table 5.10
Relative Inclusion in Devolved and Liberalized Governance Configurations in Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh PR-SR	MP-PR			MP-SR		
	Earmarked	Occupied	SCORES	Reserved	Occupied	SCORES
% Elected seats: earmarked & occupied	33.0	28.6	9.6	33.0	23.4	9.0
	Men	women		Men	Women	
% Att in Panch mtgs: Men & women	88.3	13.5	1.5	92.2	11.0	1.2
% Att in Vill Assembly: Men and women	49.5	22.8	4.6	64.8	22.6	3.5
OVERALL SCORES		MP-PR	15.7		MP-SR	13.7

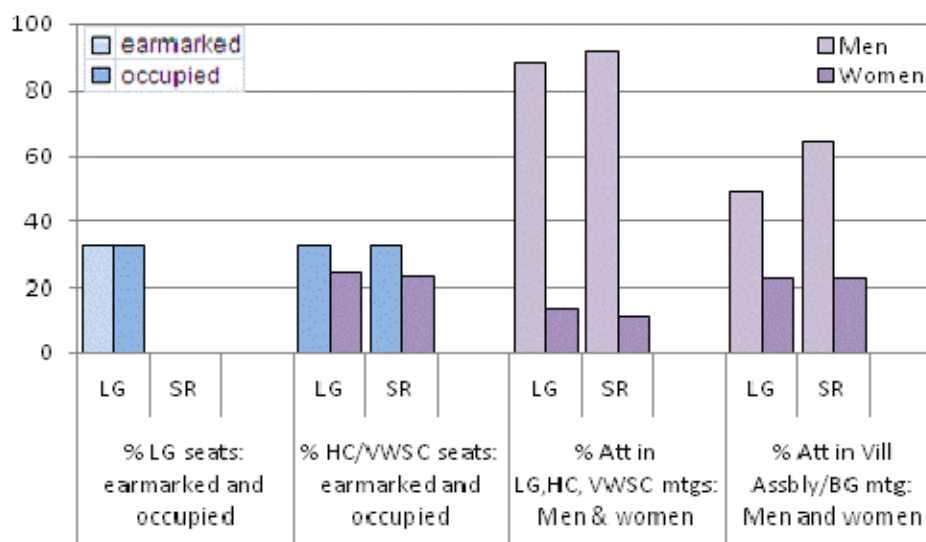


Figure 5.20: Comparative participation of men and women in local government and Sector Reform projects in Madhya Pradesh, from Table 5.10

The relatively better attendance of women at village assemblies than at meetings of executive bodies is linked both to the fact that they can attend in groups and the efforts of the NGO Samarthan to engender civic participation, as discussed in chapter IV (section 4). The reduced visibility – or greater anonymity – in a larger crowd also helped. Four village assemblies are statutory requirements in the local government procedures, but more can be convened if the community requires. A number of such ‘extraordinary’ meetings were convened in the case of projects that affected whole villages – such as the one in Manpura – but since most others were smaller and benefitted only segments of the village, smaller community meetings were held. These were usually near the project site, and attendance at such meetings, held in a familiar neighborhood where a project of direct interest was discussed, “was easier and more interesting to attend” (Kharpa, two women users).

Clearly, within the economic, political and socio-cultural milieu of the region, *both kinds of reforms were effective in MP, but liberalized arrangements were more conducive both to a degree of resource capture as well as dilution of statutory provisions for inclusion of women.* On the other hand, the flexibility in the SR program design, particularly the group-specificity that is possible, also enables relatively more involvement of women.

3.4. CONTEXT-APPROPRIATENESS OF DEVOLUTION AND LIBERALIZATION

In comparing devolved and liberalized arrangements for water provision in the three study States, the most notable finding is that *there is little difference in the performance of the two kinds of reform, in improving water availability and access, in the same context.* There are, however, differences in how they perform along the five

indicators, most significantly, in the accompanying levels of disparity between those with household supply and those without, in the three States.³⁶² Also, patterns of participation vary, in ways not always consonant with effectiveness. While on one hand the similar performance of both types of decentralization in each State indicates that some kinds of contexts are more hospitable to decentralized governance *per se*, on the other, the differences in participation and equity indicate that the *nature* of the outcomes is linked to the fit between reform design and context. Conversely, the two types of reforms clearly yield different patterns of outcomes in different contexts. To assess how these patterns differ, and understand why, a comparison of the performance of each type in the three State contexts is necessary, and is discussed in the next two sections.

4. DEVOLUTION OR LIBERALIZATION?

While the disaggregated understanding of the relative efficacy, effectiveness and inclusion in devolved and liberalized governance arrangements along multiple indicators serves analytical and theoretical purposes well, it is less useful in a policy context, where a synthesized (or composite) estimation of the outcomes is necessary to make policy choices. The performance of the reformed systems in different contexts were therefore aggregated across the two parameters, effectiveness and inclusion, to assess which type of reform is more suitable in each State context, and this is set out below. However, the disparity indicator was found to substantially alter the

³⁶² The disparity in the average quantity of water available in the three States is another noteworthy dimension, though it is not related to the questions asked in this research. Though some of the variation can be explained by the levels of water available in the respective geo-ecological regions, a greater explanation clearly lies in the relative levels of development in the three States and the nature of the pre-reform governance structures.

effectiveness of the reformed systems when assessed in terms of simply improving the level of water availability, access and coverage, and therefore it has also been shown separately to illustrate this.

4.1. REFORMS IN GUJARAT, KERALA AND MP: AN OVERALL COMPARISON

Bringing together the scores for relative performance of devolution and liberalization in different contexts as in Table 5.11 illustrates the substantial differences that emerge when the same reforms are applied in different economic, political and socio-cultural contexts. Further, the divergences between effectiveness, equity and participation become clearer when the performance of each case on these parameters is so juxtaposed. The scores also highlight the issue of disparities in the distribution of water that surfaced in the study. In the table, increase in disparities are shown as negatives, and in italics.

The patterns of effectiveness, equity and inclusion that have emerged are not only interesting in themselves and useful for policy-design, but illustrate the startlingly strong effect of *context* in shaping outcomes. In all three States liberalized (SR) systems consistently deliver more water to more people, but the disparities in the amount of water made available to households with individual connections and private taps and those without complicate this picture. When equity in the distribution of benefits is included as an indicator of effectiveness, however, liberalized systems perform worse than devolved systems in the least-developed State, Madhya Pradesh. Even in economically well-developed Gujarat, effectiveness of liberalized arrangements is sharply reduced to a level not much above Panchayat provision, by the sharp exacerbation of existing inequities in water availability and access. Moreover,

the extent of disparities produced by liberalized systems is, among all cases studied, highest in this context (Gujarat), as evident in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11
Devolution and Liberalization - Effectiveness and Inclusion in Gujarat, Kerala and MP

Type of Reform	Parameters	Gujarat	Kerala	M. P
Devolved (Panchayat) provision	Effectiveness (excluding disparity score)	18.0	29.1	10.8
	Disparity **	<i>-14.7</i>	0.3	3.0
	Effectiveness	3.3	29.4	13.8
	Inclusion	19.4	28	15.7
	Overall Case Score	22.7	57.4	29.5
Liberalized (SR-Swajaldhara) provision	Effectiveness (excluding disparity score)	26.8	35.3	15.1
	Disparity **	<i>-20.5</i>	10.0	<i>-1.8</i>
	Effectiveness	6.3	45.3	13.3
	Inclusion	15	28.2	13.7
	Overall Case Score	21.3	73.5	27

** Increase in the extent of disparities is assigned a negative value.

In MP, on the other hand, provision of water by local governments, despite being much less effective than provision through liberalized arrangements, actually *reduces* disparities in availability and access to the resource between those with household sources – that is, the few high-income households in the village - and those dependant on shared public sources. Because of this, it is preferable to liberalization in MP, and even more so when considered along with participation, for that is also higher in local government processes.

A consideration of the extent of inclusion that is enabled by the two types of reformed arrangements further reverses the apparent success of liberalized systems. Devolved

governance arrangements are either equally or consistently more participatory in all three States, the slightly greater score of liberalized systems in Kerala notwithstanding. The marginal difference between the inclusiveness scores of Panchayat and SR systems in Kerala is interesting in this respect, for it could be interpreted in two ways. The first, and more probable, is that it is an artifact of the methodological approach taken, with selected cases and an indicative rather than exact scoring method. On the other hand, it could also signal that in a context with a high degree of social capital and civic and political engagement as in Kerala, liberalized arrangements can potentially be much more inclusive.

Consequences of liberalizing water provision are remarkable in their negative effects, for the increase in disparities is greatest and the propensity to include women in the processes the lowest, as can be seen in the cases of the SRP in Gujarat and MP. This is neither surprising nor inconsistent with the theoretical expectations (Chapter I: Section 3) and empirical observations (Chapter I: Section 4). The increased scope for resource capture and the perpetuation of regressive traditions and practices, which was feared by some authors, has been observed to be misused. *What is startling, however, is that the same arrangements also reduced disparity tremendously, and enabled (marginally) higher participation of women in Kerala.* This indicates that in enabling more autonomous functioning, liberalization can yield highly desirable outcomes, since it removes provisioning from the monopolistic government and bureaucratic control that is typical of developing locations. But this happens only in a context with high social and political development resulting from high literacy, widespread unionization, and organizational involvement, that is not quite the same as Putnam's 'social capital'. I will elaborate on this, but here the point is that without a citizenry with such characteristics, which constantly demands information from and imposes

accountability on those in executive positions, and an institutional structure³⁶³ that enables them to do so, liberalization can have highly perverse outcomes. In the absence of such conditions, devolution to local governments could be a safer, if less dramatically effective option, for elected representatives are at least subject to electoral accountability, however imperfectly.

The high degree of civic and political engagement in Kerala is a little different (or more than) Putnam's 'social capital' (Putnam 1993) though the latter is also significantly present in Kerala. The difference lies in the nature of the engagement, for in Kerala, it is the widespread unionization of the sixties and seventies, and the grassroots political recruitment into (Left) Party cadres that undergirds the organizational base and not the network of primarily recreational or social organizations that Putnam discusses. Though libraries, sports clubs and such other organizations have a significant presence in the civic-organizational landscape, it is the active grassroots mobilization of the political parties that underpins and pervades these, and imparts a distinctly political dimension to social organization; the activities and influence of the KSSP (also called the People's Science Movement) is emblematic of this dynamic. As such, the civic-organizational landscape is more accurately seen as a well-developed 'political society' in Ndegwa's (1996) terms, with close ties with political parties and organizations, that generally exhibits a civic-social character, but which actively and overtly becomes political when required (for example, during elections).

³⁶³ Such as the egalitarian associational structure of the BG prescribed in the SRP guidelines in Kerala.

CONCLUSION

This research was aimed at finding answers to an important question in decentralizing local governance: which type of community-focussed governance reform – the ‘revised neo-liberal’ type or the ‘progressive-communitarian’ type – is more appropriate, in that it delivers better outcomes, in various kinds of developing contexts? Located in the context of reforms in the governance configurations for domestic water provision in India, where the two types of communitarian approaches (neo-liberal and progressive) have been applied in devolving and liberalizing water provision, this larger question was translated to a more specific one –

What is the relative efficacy, effectiveness and inclusiveness of devolved (Panchayat) and liberalized (Sector Reform-Swajaldhara) arrangements for water provision, (a) in the same type of context, and (b) in three contexts with different degrees of economic, political and social development?

The comparative study of the functioning of devolved and liberalized arrangements for water provision in Gujarat, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh set out in the last three chapters has provided clear answers to these questions. Also, the point of departure was a practical question of policy-design, and aggregating the performance of the reformed arrangements in each case provides the answers in a form that is useful for policy decisions. Beyond these immediate and aggregated answers to the research questions, however, lies a more revealing tapestry of findings about *why* and *how* the decentralized governance arrangements that emerged from the two types of reform yielded the outcomes they did in the three different kinds of economic, political and

socio-cultural contexts. More, by surfacing the intricate relationships between the reform design (which emerges from specific underlying political-economic visions as much as the prevailing political-economic circumstances), the context characteristics and the outcomes, the six cases shed some light on important theoretical questions that remain undecided. These include the relationship between degree of decentralization³⁶⁴ and effective and participatory governance, between extent of participation and nature of outcomes, and most importantly, in the three-way relationship between the institutional-organizational design, the contextual conditions and the outcomes.

A different set of questions relate to the conditions that facilitate (or militate against) women's participation, at two levels. At the first level, the question is of the relative importance of three different sets of variables: women's personal attributes (such as literacy, employment or public experience), the institutional design for governance (the kind of spaces and procedures instituted) and contextual conditions (such as socio-cultural norms and the division of labour). At the second level, the questions pertain to the relative importance of specific variables within each set (for example, is literacy more important or economic empowerment?). While the case studies do not speak to all these questions with equal strength or reliability – for not all of them were questions that this study was directed at answering – the findings provide valuable insights into some of them.

³⁶⁴ The question is most frequently couched in terms of the relative merits of centralized versus decentralized governance, such as in the fiscal decentralization literature (Oates 2005, 2006, Seabright 1996 and others). The underlying binary assumption of only two alternatives is faulty, for there are clearly different degrees and designs of decentralization; that is, centralization – decentralization is a continuum and the distribution of different government functions across actors and levels can be varied, and therefore, the question is more appropriately asked in terms of degree (or extent) of decentralization.

In this concluding chapter, therefore, I not only summarize and present the answers that emerged to the research questions, but bring together the insights gained from the six case studies to discuss what is indicated in regard to some of these other important questions. Before that, however, I first draw together the main findings in relation to the specific research questions that were investigated and state the answers that emerge from this study. Next I summarize the explanations that are found in the case studies for these answers. In the third section, I examine the specific attributes of the State contexts that modulated identical institutional designs in completely different ways to yield dramatically different outcomes, and in the fourth discuss the findings in relation to the important theoretical questions in governance that still remain open. In the fifth section I engage with some of the questions that preoccupy authors on women's participation in governance, on the basis of the insights gained in this study, and also point to the limitations in the study that qualify some of the observations.

The findings from the study, and the intricate relationship between context variables and the functioning of the reformed institutional arrangements that they indicate, however, problematizes the notion of 'context-appropriateness' and the (apparent) desirability of tailoring of reforms to the context, which is argued by many authors to be important for effective governance. The necessity for 'institutional fit' is also axiomatic from the understanding of institutions and organizational functioning that is offered by sociologists and organization theorists as much as in the development literature, but in the context of instituting societal change – as decentralizing and democratizing governance implies – important conceptual and practical issues surface. In conclusion, therefore, I discuss these issues that qualify the notion of institutional 'fit', when applied to questions of 'appropriate' governance reform, and discuss the directions that are therefore indicated for future research.

1. ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS: ‘CONTEXT-APPROPRIATE’ REFORM

Which type of reform – devolution or liberalization – is more appropriate in the three kinds of State contexts included in this study? The consolidated answers to this question that emerge from this study are clear: overall, devolution is more suitable, in that it yields relatively better governance outcomes, except where political and social development are high, as in Kerala. Decentralization of the neo-liberal type (in partnership models) to communities, that enables the participation of other actors in delivery of services that were till recently provided primarily by the State, emerges as the preferable option *only in these kinds of locations*. In conditions of low or moderate political and social development as in Gujarat and MP, devolution appears to be more appropriate. These conclusions can be directly used to select reforms for locations with characteristics similar to those in the study States.

These consolidated conclusions, however, conceal a number of important aspects, some of which are problematic from a developmental perspective but all of which can be theoretically revealing. The first discovery, surprising in the light of the discussions in the literature, *is that both types worked best and liberalization yielded the most impressive results in Kerala*, which has the highest degrees of *political and human development* (see Table 2.2). This counters the fears of some authors that reforms premised on neo-liberal assumptions, since they emerge in relation to conditions in industrialized countries, are inappropriate in developing contexts (for example, Litvack 1998, Turner and Hulme 1997). No doubt Kerala compares favorably with many developed countries on human development indicators such as literacy, health, mortality and life expectancy, but Kerala’s low-to-moderate level of economic development is typical of the developing South (see Dreze and Sen 1995). On the

other hand, following the reasoning of authors who question the application of neo-liberal reforms to developing countries, the performance of liberalized governance arrangements should be best in Gujarat³⁶⁵, which has about the highest levels of industrialization and economic development in India, much above that in Kerala. Contrary to these expectations, however, liberalization works best in Kerala, significantly surpassing even the gains from devolution.

Liberalization in Kerala also yielded the most equitable distribution of benefits, among all the six cases studied. This is also startling, for disparities in distribution of benefits have been found to be almost endemic to neo-liberal communitarian models based on partnerships with community organizations and user-groups in many studies reviewed by Mansuri and Rao (2004) and Pozzoni and Kumar (2005), and neo-liberal reforms in general (Birdsall and Nellis 2002, Sheahan 1997). In fact, the equal distribution of benefits through household connections to *all families* in the project area, and thereby, the complete removal of disparities (100%) in access to water, make liberalization in Kerala even more successful than devolution in terms of effective water provision.

The fears of the critics of the various communitarian approaches and the findings in many studies,³⁶⁶ that devolution in the face of entrenched inequities within local communities is subject to elite capture of local decision-making bodies and resources, and therefore can exacerbate inequities, is also completely countered in the case of Kerala. Not only is devolution almost as effective as liberalization in Kerala, but participation is also equally extensive, particularly of the poorer sections of the

³⁶⁵ In comparison with other States, see Table 2.2

³⁶⁶ In the reviews by Pozzoni and Kumar 2005, Mansuri and Rao 2004 mentioned before.

community³⁶⁷. With the greatest degree of devolution among the three States, in both functions and resources (see Fig 5.2, also in Mahipal 2004) it also has the highest level of participation in the devolved local governance arrangements. The same pattern is mirrored in liberalized governance arrangements (Fig 5.6): the thin and elite-biased participation widely observed in the neo-liberal communitarian models of decentralization, involving partnerships with interest-groups are certainly not the pattern observed in Kerala.

The second dynamic that is equally interesting theoretically, but extremely problematic from a development perspective, is that *both types of decentralization in Gujarat exacerbate disparities in access* between families with household connections and those dependent on shared public sources, to the greatest extent among the three States. Predictably, liberalization works better than devolution in Gujarat in improving water availability, but it also accentuates existing disparities in access to a notably greater extent than devolution. In fact, despite the SRP and Panchayat provision actually performing better than in much-less-developed MP, the increased disparities in water access that result from decentralizing the governance arrangements in Gujarat erode both these outcomes very substantially. Inequitous outcomes pulls the successful performance of decentralized systems to a lower level than that in MP, and most notably, makes Panchayat provision in Gujarat by far the least effective among all six cases. Though the fact remains that in absolute terms the quantity and convenience of water supply was better in Gujarat villages to start with, and the post-reform situation remains far better in Gujarat than in MP (see Figs 5.3 and 5.7), the extent to which existing inequities in resource access are exacerbated by

³⁶⁷ In all mini-cases, of both devolved and liberalized arrangements, the beneficiary groups as well as the executive officers of the group were *not* from the elite, as described in sections 3.3 and 4.3 in Chapters III and IV respectively. The only exception was in Neelamootil, where the primary office-bearers were from the more affluent and connected families in the neighborhood.

both types of governance decentralization in the former is a major issue. The inequitous outcomes of neo-liberal reforms in general have been often reported as mentioned before, including in neo-liberal communitarian approaches such as in the SRP. Expectations of the same affliction in devolved systems, in situations of inequality and resource scarcity are equally common (Bardhan 1996³⁶⁸, 2006; Leftwich 2005). Gujarat therefore emerges, apparently, as a ‘text-book’ case of the *problems* of decentralized governance, but the successes of decentralization in Kerala, and the mixed outcomes in MP obviate such a conclusion. I return to this situation of exceptional ‘institutional’ and resource capture’ in economically developed Gujarat later in this chapter.

The third interesting pattern that emerges is the lack of any obvious relationship between participation and effectiveness. With the most inclusive arrangements delivering the best outcomes (in Kerala), support emerges for the positive relationship between the two, which is the primary theoretical argument for decentralization to communities and participatory governance.³⁶⁹ This positive link, however, does not hold in the other four cases, for the next highest level of participation (among the other four cases) is in Panchayat functioning in Gujarat, the outcomes of which are the worst among all cases. The extent of women’s involvement in the two types of reformed governance arrangements in Gujarat is not remarkable, but participation in

³⁶⁸ However, see Bardhan and Mookherjee (1999), where they conclude that “[s]imple generalizations about relative capture are therefore hazardous on the basis of theory alone; empirical research is necessary to identify the nature and degree of local capture. In particular, it is unlikely that local governments are universally prone to greater capture, as many influential thinkers have commonly presupposed. Recent empirical studies also cast doubt on the traditional presumption. To the extent that this presumption is mistaken, decentralization of authority to lower levels of government can potentially combine the advantages of greater utilization of local information without sacrificing accountability.” (p.33) The contrasting findings in Gujarat and Kerala clearly illustrate the importance of local characteristics in determining capture; human and political development appear to be more important than economic development, from the cases in this research.

³⁶⁹ In both neo-liberal and communitarian arguments, as reviewed in Chapter I.

Panchayat processes is relatively higher, as it is in MP. This however does not correspond with the pattern of effectiveness in any predictable manner, and this is where the theoretically posited relationship between participation and effectiveness breaks down. I return to this important finding later, but here the notable point is that the trade-offs between participation and effectiveness in a context such as in Gujarat poses a quandary for the conscientious policy-designer. For on one hand the structures and processes of local governance after devolution are relatively more successful in actually including women, but perform very poorly and inequitously despite this (scant)³⁷⁰ virtue. The combined performance on both parameters indicates that devolution is more appropriate to the Gujarat context, despite its inequitable propensities in the local circumstances.

Disparities in the access to the water supplied by new systems is also the prime issue that mars liberalized governance arrangements in MP, despite the relatively higher effectiveness in actually improving provision. Again, this reaffirms the findings in the literature on inequitous outcomes of neo-liberal reforms, but surprisingly, Panchayat provision in the resource-poor MP actually reduces disparities, countering fears of resource capture expressed in the literature (for example in Bardhan 1996, 2006) and in complete contravention of the case in Gujarat. More, the reduction in existing disparities in access to water is to an extent that not only offsets the gains in terms of better provision through the SRP, but makes Panchayat provision far more appropriate from a combined consideration. In addition, it is also more inclusive of women, even if by a moderate margin – a moderate reinforcement of theoretical arguments of the positive link between participation and equitable outcomes, but again, contrary to the

³⁷⁰ For as the scores show, the difference between levels of participation in SRP and Panchayat processes is not very large.

findings in Gujarat. *Devolving governance therefore appears to be decisively more appropriate in the prevailing conditions in MP, but raises the question of what counters the potential for resource capture.*

In sum, while clear indications of the relative suitability of devolved and liberalized arrangements to the three kinds of State contexts emerge from the study, the unexpected success of liberalization in Kerala, the increase in disparities in resource access in both kinds of decentralization in Gujarat, and the relative success of Panchayat provision in MP bears further scrutiny and analyses. How can these counter-intuitive findings, for which there is little expectation or evidence in the literature, be explained? To find possible answers, in the next section, I explore further the patterns in the findings and the relationships between the design characteristics of both types of reforms, specific variables in the context and the nature of the outcomes that could provide explanations for these anomalous observations.

2. EXPLAINING ANOMALOUS OUTCOMES

The comparative analyses of the functioning of the SRP and Panchayat provision across the three different State contexts that was undertaken in this study and is set out in Chapter V, provides clues that can help find explanations for the unexpected findings in this study. Two anomalies need explanation. One is the completely opposite outcomes of liberalization in Gujarat and Kerala. The other is the less obvious, but no less important, question of why devolution consistently performs worse than liberalization in providing water in all three contexts, though the extent of disparity that is produced and inclusion that is enabled differs and therefore alters the final outcomes very dramatically.

Clearly, level of economic development is not the determining factor in the success of liberalized local governance, for, if disparity in the distribution of benefits is not included, SRP initiatives provided water more effectively than Panchayat systems in locations with sharply differing levels of economic development. Nor is the relationship linear, for though effectiveness was lowest in the poorest State (MP), it was most effective in a State that was only a little better off (Kerala) and not in the most-developed³⁷¹ (Gujarat). Political and social development in the three States are more consistently related to the effectiveness, though the remarkable extent of disparities in the distribution of benefits in a relatively more socially developed, literate and media-exposed³⁷² context (as Gujarat is in relation to MP) again indicates a more complex relationship.

This lack of a predictable relationship between the type of reform and economic, political and social characteristics of the context directs the search for explanations to the nature and design of the reformed governance arrangements. In reform design, both the technology involved and the organizational design are implicated. The non-negotiable design of the SRP specified by the GoI includes an insistence on piped water supply, though it leaves the option of individual or shared connections open. More, details of project design – size, storage capacity and form, duration of supply, extent of coverage – are left to the users/ beneficiaries,³⁷³ without a cap except in terms of the per-capita maximum, which can also be revised upwards if the users pay the difference. Therefore, the maximum capacity that is affordable by the user group is designed in each case, and as many users as are willing to pay the beneficiary

³⁷¹ Among the study States, see Table 2.2.

³⁷² See Table 2.2 and the discussion on Gujarat in section 4.2 (Chapter II)

³⁷³ Though in practice they may be decided by others such as State officers, Panchayat leaders or support organizations (eg., NGOs).

contribution can be included. This results in consistently more effective provision than by Panchayats irrespective of the context, since the latter is limited by the (limited) resources granted by the State or Central government, through the State agency, which therefore installs smaller and shared systems. This also explains the greater capacity of the systems in the Gujarat SRP, a large proportion of the cost of which is borne by wealthy residents and the (much better resourced) State government than in MP³⁷⁴. The different amounts contributed by households in the village, however, also undergirds the disparity in the quantum of water provided to different segments of the population.

These design features also explain the success of liberalized arrangements in Kerala, where it performs even better than in Gujarat, despite the lower capacities to pay and no additional funding from the State government. Analysis of the relative scores along the specific indicators for effectiveness shows that the substantial difference between the two State cases (39 points) accrues only little from the difference in per-capita average availability (3.7 points) after reforms. Liberalized systems in Kerala score additional points from the fact that they raise the per-capita availability to almost that of Gujarat, from a much lower pre-reform situation, but most substantially from the much better performance on equity indicators. One, the disparities in water access are completely removed in Kerala (100%, which is 10 points), while in Gujarat, disparities are *increased* by about 200% (that is, 20 *negative* points). Another source of difference is that *all households are provided private connections* to the supply network (an increase in coverage from 6.5% of households to 100%, that is, 9.35

³⁷⁴ As explained in Chapter IV:Section 2, the system of contribution in Gujarat is ‘according to the ability to pay’, and the State government pays for an additional capacity of 15 lpcd over the 40 lpcd for which the beneficiaries contribute 10% of the cost. This, by enabling provision of a higher per-capita average quantity than in MP, results in a better score for effectiveness. Neither in MP nor Kerala do the State governments contribute funds to the SRP.

points). In effect, what makes the SRP score better on effectiveness in Kerala, is not the higher-capacity systems that are constructed, *but the fully egalitarian distribution of benefits*. In Kerala, all users pay an equal contribution and all are provided household connections.³⁷⁵ This kind of all-inclusive distribution is potentially possible in the GoI program design, but it is the use of this potential in practice that is radically different in Gujarat and Kerala. This diametrically opposite design of the project is therefore clearly a function of the State context, either at the State or local levels, or both, and merits detailed attention. I return to this a little later.

While the provision for user-specification of design details makes the SRP perform better than devolution in all locations, it is precisely this that allows for greater disparity in provision in both MP and Gujarat. However, in the former, the low economic development means that even the capacity of the elite is not as high as in Gujarat, nor can piped supply systems to all (or a large number of) houses be developed. Instead, shared public taps supplied from small above-ground tanks are installed, and though the more powerful can influence its location to improve convenient access and increase the quantity of water collected, a relatively lower degree of disparity results than in Gujarat.

Why devolution fares worse than liberalization is explained above, but why does the former actually *reduce disparities in MP while exacerbating them very sharply in Gujarat?* The technology variable is again the answer, for by design the Panchayat (actually State) installations in MP³⁷⁶ are shared point systems and mandatorily

³⁷⁵ Except where geography or geology makes it infeasible, as in Ambalakonam where public standposts are provided, at no cost, for the users in a contiguous neighborhood who were water-starved but were unable to join the beneficiary group because extending the network to these 18 families would have involved a non-proportional increase in the cost of the project (interview: Ambalakonam President)

³⁷⁶ Such as through the ARWSP.

located in the poorer areas of the village. By increasing access of the disadvantaged groups while those with household sources (typically, wells) continue to have the same, disparities are noticeably reduced. In better-resourced Gujarat, on the other hand, Panchayat or State installations are most often piped systems, and since households do not contribute to the costs at all, those on the margins can be largely ignored or provided the bare minimum while the better-off with household connections retain much greater access. With comparatively less resources flowing through such programs, the gains from such installations are, however, less than from SRP projects, though not negligible at all. However, from a policy perspective, these gains are more than offset by the extent of disparity.

Technology alone, however, cannot explain the anomalies fully, and neither can design features as evident from the different use of the designed potential of GoI reforms in Kerala and Gujarat discussed above. This leaves the effect of contextual variables, and another indication of their importance emerges from the fact that both types of decentralized arrangements work best in Kerala, while disparities caused by both types are the highest in Gujarat. Clearly, a large part of the explanation lies in the contextual variables and the successive modulations of the received institutional configurations in both types of reform (which are identical across States) by variables in the State and local contexts. To explore these connections, I examine the reformed arrangements as they emerged at the State level and as observed in the local mini-cases, and consider the specific contextual variables that were implicated in shaping both, in the next section. Such an exploration also draws out the relationships between the extent and nature of decentralization (the efficacy), the context and the outcomes, which bear on a number of questions raised in the governance literature.

3. CONTEXT CHARACTERISTICS, REFORM DESIGN, AND OUTCOMES

One of the most striking patterns that partly explains the unusual capture of resources by the better-off in Gujarat villages emerges in the comparison of the pre-reform, reformed and observed governance patterns in the three States, (Figures 5.2 and 5.6). These figures show that the actual *decentralization of functions (and roles) in the provision of water in Gujarat extends to only the Panchayats, in both devolved and liberalized configurations*. This is in clear contrast to the *non-negligible involvement of lay citizens, the community or their (civic) organizations in both types of decentralized arrangements in the two other States*. This pattern can explain the unusual capture of decision-making bodies and thereby, project benefits by the elite in Gujarat villages both in devolved and liberalized arrangements. For there is little scope for either articulation of demands, or ‘downward’ accountability, though it was found in the case studies that there is sufficient circulation of information.

This explanation still leaves the question of *why* this pattern obtains in Gujarat, and the features of the context which support its maintenance. An allied question is the lack of protest, mobilization or demand from the less privileged sections, despite the greater degree of social development and the relatively free flow of information. To understand the dynamic interplay of context and institutional design variables that could yield some answers, the conceptual understanding of institutions, organizations and institutional change offered by Scott (2001), is useful. This is explained in Chapter I (section 1.2) but briefly, as Scott explains, organizations (and organizational structures) become institutionalized when they are valued beyond their immediate functions, and such institutions persist when regulative, normative and cognitive elements associated with their functioning *cohere*. Institutional change therefore

involves not only a change in the *regulative* structures and elements (as in governance reforms) but also in the normative and cognitive structures and elements in the context which are the *constitutive* elements that are implicated in the institutionalization of the new structures. Put another way, the functioning of newly-instituted regulative structures (organizational and procedural) in any context would be a function of the intersection of the reformed arrangements and the existing normative and cognitive (together, the constitutive) elements in that context.³⁷⁷

What are therefore the constitutive elements in the Gujarat polity, economy or socio-cultural milieu, or even general behavioural and cognitive characteristics, that shaped the GoI designs in the ways that were observed? As found in the two case studies in the State (and discussed in Chapter III: section 2), the (lack of) Panchayat reforms was a product of both the historical existence of functional and active Panchayats and the oppositional political dynamic between the Central and State government. This meant that a key component of the Panchayat Act, the activation of plebiscitary decision-making in the Gram Sabha, was bypassed. However, the existing status of water provision in the State had made it a politically sensitive issue, and together with the noted *Gujarati characteristic of rational, self-interested action and entrepreneurial accumulation*,³⁷⁸ the Sector Reform Program was efficiently and quickly instituted to tap the Central government resources that were made available to ‘reforming’ States. The Program design closely followed the GoI SRP Guidelines, and did accord full centrality to user-groups to the process (see Fig 5.6). However, it was the the *already*

³⁷⁷ These can ofcourse be altered purposively – as was done through the People’s Plan Campaign in Kerala – or cter organically over time as the effect of non-purposive changes in the wider context.

³⁷⁸ Joshi (2000) sums up the business orientation and entrepreneurial characteristics of Gujaratis: “Gujaratis are also known as best the entrepreneurs in India, and next only to Jews in the world. One will find Gujaratis in any corner of the world doing some business. Gujarat and Gujaratis are also known as more westernised and modernised than the rest of India and Indians.”(pp G-61). However, as he also points out, this is most true of only parts of Gujarat, including the central belt where this study is located.

institutionalized role of the Panchayat as service providers that reshaped the State-designed functional distribution, and by excluding users from the actual decision-making process, provided the scope for inequitous project design.

The legitimacy, efficiency and generally effective functioning of the Gram Panchayats, the paternalistic investments in village development by the wealthier residents, the higher level of development and service availability than is characteristic of Indian villages, a buoyant economy, low levels of unemployment, the image of village leaders as genuinely interested in improving village facilities, are other constitutive elements in the local context that served to quickly institutionalize the patterns of 'liberalized' functioning that were developed at the district and village levels. The general *market rationality* (see Joshi 2000) of residents also served to make the inequitous distribution of water appear 'fair', since user contributions to the capital costs were according to the ability to pay, and those provided with shared public sources did not have to pay the monthly tariffs. Water, close to the amounts that were needed, was provided 'free' for the less privileged, and without any investment of effort in development of the project³⁷⁹. This perception precluded contestation or dissatisfaction, and the moderate level of political development and mobilization in the State³⁸⁰ (as compared to Kerala) also militated against that possibility. In sum, this mutually reinforcing combination of State political predilections and compulsions, local perceptions, norms, values, practices and historical patterns all contributed to quickly center and institutionalise the implementation of the SRP in Panchayats instead of user-groups. In Andrades's words, the existing pattern of elite-directed

³⁷⁹ Though those who could not pay a cash contribution could contribute in labor, no one had chosen that option, since the minimum contributions could be as low as Rs 51 (about \$ 1), which is about one-third of the agricultural wages per day in the area.

³⁸⁰ The 'low level' of political development is in relation to that of the two other study States, and based on the variables

Panchayat functioning was ‘over-determined in the sense that social sanctions, plus pressure for conformity, plus intrinsic direct reward, plus values...all...act[ed] together.’ (Andrade 1984:98)

In the Kerala context, the same reform designs (of the GoI), took on a very different shape because of the existence of very different normative and cognitive structures and elements at both State and local levels. The high political development differed not only in degree from that of Gujarat, but also in its nature, centered as it was on a socialist framework of egalitarian provision of social services by the State. This *ideological framing of the local policy discourses on decentralization* made the State-instituted design for both devolved and liberalized governance citizen-centered and structured for direct-democratic decision-making³⁸¹. Though the heavy and politically formidable bureaucratic apparatus that was the accompaniment to the socialistic polity could effect a certain degree of ‘rollback’ from the designed levels of devolution, particularly in relation to ‘technical’ tasks such as water provision, the decades of *grassroots mobilization* had produced *high political and civic engagement*, perceptions of the *State bureaucracies as ‘corrupt’ and ‘rent-seeking’*, which, together with the high levels of literacy and low levels of employment served to institutionalize participatory functioning of both types of reformed arrangements to a much greater degree than in other States. The *orientation to ‘egalitarianism’ and awareness of ‘rights’* of citizens were characteristics that produced highly effective water provision in both devolved and liberalized governance systems.³⁸² This however, did not happen *suo-moto*, and the interventions of the more progressive parts of the bureaucracy to de-institutionalize historical patterns of centralized and non-participatory governance,

³⁸¹ In the Ward-Sabha centered participatory planning process and the extensive roles for the Beneficiary groups.

³⁸² As explained in the previous section, the high effectiveness score is less because of greater amount of water provided and to a much larger extent due to the egalitarian distribution of benefits.

through the People's Plan Campaign and systematic changes in the regulatory frameworks pertaining to local governance, was an important factor,³⁸³ but one that also emerged from the ideological predilections of the State government. In other words, though a number of constitutive features that cohered with the instituted reforms existed in the context, a continuous re-calibration of the regulatory and constitutive elements by the State government³⁸⁴ has also been an important factor in the institutionalization of more effective decentralized governance than in other States.

In MP, neither the effective Panchayats as in Gujarat nor the ideological orientation to citizen-centered governance existed. Despite that, however, a fair degree of decentralized functioning is observed in both devolved and liberalized arrangements, for the State commitment to the GoI initiative in Panchayat reform yielded a design for devolved governance that provided substantial space for direct involvement of citizens and community-based organizations, and an active role for the Gram Sabha. Though the State bureaucratic structure was resistant to both devolution and liberalization, this feature, combined with the (fortuitous) presence of a committed NGO in the area resulted in sufficient 'role-taking' by the community groups for the actual functioning of decentralized arrangements to approximate the designed distribution of functions. Liberalization did not have even the moderate measure of progressive elements that devolution did, for implementation of the SRP was vested in the PHED, but the hamlet-level governance structures instituted earlier had already created spaces for citizen involvement that could be used. The opportunities for initiatives from the community that was inherent in the SRP design, reinforced by *the*

³⁸³ Without such active de-institutionalization of constitutive elements that cohered with the previous governance arrangements, the tendency to fall back into established patterns could have eroded reform success.

³⁸⁴ Particularly in the two terms that the LEFT democratic front (LDF) has been in office since the initiation of governance reforms (1996-2001 and again since 2006)

general distrust of both the State structure (PHED) and local elites who occupy Panchayat positions, a perception that both are corrupt, and the acute water scarcity in the area led to community action. However, most of the normative, cognitive, behavioral and other elements required for *institutionalization* of even reasonably participatory functioning at the village level, for example literacy or political awareness and mobilization, were missing. Governance effectiveness is also low because neither the capital nor the philanthropic orientation that could produce a higher service level exist among the community elites, and the low levels of participation cannot counter diversion of available public resources by local government leaders. Moreover, even the measure of participation that exists is precarious and requires the continuous engagement of the NGO staff. It is precisely their efforts at awareness-raising, information dissemination, political and administrative education, community-organizing and mobilization, all of which are directed at *creating the constitutive elements* that could provide a hospitable context to decentralized governance, that makes possible the current levels of involvement at the community level.

What does this analysis of the reasons for the anomalous patterns of effectiveness and disparity that emerge in the case studies, or the findings themselves, indicate for questions that engage decentralization theorists? A number of them remain unresolved, including the relationships between decentralized governance, effective outcomes and participation, and the relative merits of different types of decentralization, and I discuss the study findings in relation to these questions next.

4. DECENTRALIZATION, PARTICIPATION AND EFFECTIVE SERVICE PROVISION.

The prime theoretical argument for decentralizing water provision to communities, in either neo-liberal or more progressive ways, is that the increased involvement of citizens would result in more effective provision. The latter includes a range of virtuous outcomes, starting with, in the context of domestic water provision in developing countries, providing currently unserved populations with at least the minimum quantum of safe water required for life. Others are cost-recovery (or reduction), alignment of user-preferences and patterns of provision, better operation and maintenance, better conservation (or at least, less waste) and sustainable management of installed systems. To assess the relationship between decentralized governance and these various dimensions of effectiveness, both the extent of decentralization as well as its design (that is, the type) must be considered.

The findings from the case studies indicate that decentralization, of both types, has indeed increased the availability of safe water to at least the required minimum in all cases, and increased coverage. The number of households with individual connections and those within 50m of a public source have also increased, and the number of households dependant on non-safe sources has been reduced to zero in almost all cases. Since all systems studied in the mini-cases are less than five years old, major repair or maintenance has not been required, though in the few instances when the pump broke down, repair has been very quick instead of the weeks taken by State personnel before reforms, and the costs minimal. There were also no issues about regular and responsible operation reported in any project. The amounts of water supplied are so small and practices of water use in these areas where supply is limited

are prudent enough that the issue of waste and conservation is not very relevant here.³⁸⁵

Decentralizing water provision has therefore been effective on all the indicators that have been used in this study, bearing out the arguments and expectations of its proponents.

The question of cost-recovery cannot be fully explored here, but the small proportion of the capital investment that is expected from users in the SRP (10%) have been forthcoming, and generally without hardship, in Gujarat and Kerala. In the much poorer State of Madhya Pradesh, however, even the small amount to be paid by beneficiaries has been a problem in all villages studied. In every project, funds had to be marshalled from other sources to make up the deficit, and only a very minimal contribution towards the salary of the pump-operator is collected from users every month (as low as Rs. 10 or US \$ 0.20). Collection of the small funds required for repairs (when required) has also been difficult, and in one village, the pump operator complained that he had had to invest his own money which had yet to be paid back by users.

The alignment of preferences and provision is also not a pertinent question to ask in the context of MP where even after additions to the supply systems, barely the specified minimum quantity of water is available, and that, only in the SR projects. In the somewhat better situation in Kerala and the even better one in Gujarat, the question is pertinent, and the answer resoundingly affirmative, particularly in the SRP.

Panchayat provision in Kerala, however, is still determined by the State, both in

³⁸⁵ Amounts of water available to those with household connections are relatively, very high (in excess of 100lpcd in some instances) that increase in consumption before and after installation of new systems can definitely be questioned, but in most households, the traditional 'water-conserving' attitudes and practices, from the historical inaccessibility, are strongly entrenched. This is particularly characteristic of water-scarce Gujarat where customary practices have been built around conservation, sharing and respect for water.

choice of technology and design of project details, though there is little complaint about the extent of effort made after the People's Planning system was introduced.

In sum, decentralization has been found to consistently improve provision. However, no patterned relationship can be discerned between the aggregated extent of effectiveness (across all indicators) with the extent or type of decentralization. The governance arrangements for implementation of the SRP in Kerala are, visibly, the most decentralized among all cases, and the Panchayat system in Gujarat the least. These cases also earn the highest and lowest scores for effectiveness respectively, in this study. But beyond this, there appears to be little correspondence between the decentralization degree and type and extent of effectiveness in the other four cases.³⁸⁶

Participation in the governance processes also displays no particular relationship with degree and type of decentralization. In fact, variation in levels of participation are consistent across both devolved and liberalized governance arrangements, in that it is best by far in Kerala, and lowest in Madhya Pradesh in both types, indicating that it has less to do with the design of decentralization than with the local context, and broadly correlates with the level of social development in the area. The *extent of decentralization itself* (in both devolved and liberalized types of reform) appears to be correlated to the level of political development in the State, as does the effectiveness of Panchayat provision. Most notably, the extent of disparities characterising the two types of reformed systems also parallel the level of political development in the context. In sum, therefore, there emerges little conclusive evidence of any patterned links between design of decentralization and participation, but the indication that inclusion (in terms of the spaces and opportunities provided) and participation (the

³⁸⁶ SRP in Gujarat, Panchayat provision in Kerala and both types in MP.

extent to which the opportunities are used) are both functions of the level of social and political development in the context.

The third relationship of theoretical interest is that between participation and effectiveness, and here levels of participation and extent of effectiveness do appear to be consistent in the three cases of liberalized governance, but only if the disparities produced are not considered. When the latter is also considered, this regularity breaks down. In fact, when effectiveness includes a consideration of inequities, it appears to be closely related to the level of political development in the context, as mentioned above. The discussion in the previous sections also highlight this relationship, and it has been discussed in detail. The findings of this study therefore seriously challenge the association between (increased) levels of participation and governance effectiveness on which communitarian arguments for decentralization are premised. I expand on this further in the last section to show how the notion of ‘contextual fit’ of decentralization arrangements is therefore problematized, but before that, I explore how the study findings relate to questions of women’s participation in governance.

5. WOMEN’S INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION IN DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE

The barriers to women’s participation in governance, and the enabling elements that can help women counter these, are among the central questions that preoccupy scholars of governance and democracy as well as feminist theorists. In this study, I had focussed on the enabling organizational provisions instituted for women’s inclusion in reformed governance arrangements, that is, the extent and kind of spaces created, rather than the barriers to their participation, though the importance of understanding the latter cannot be overstated. The case studies, however, in exploring

the patterns of inclusion and participation have also provided important insights into the latter. Here I discuss some of these insights and how they relate to the discussions in the literature.

To analyse the ‘women and governance’ problematic, the distinction made in this study between inclusion and participation is an useful one, but two other kinds of distinctions are also analytically helpful. One is to distinguish between barriers and enabling features, but both can be in turn grouped into three sets of variables based on their location – one, those in the socio-cultural, political and economic context, the second in the institutional configurations for governance and third, the personal characteristics of women.³⁸⁷ Also, barriers and enabling factors (or elements) are intersecting sets, for many are mirror images.³⁸⁸ Investigations – both theoretical and empirical – in the area of ‘women and governance’, reviewed in Chapter II, (section 2.3) have identified a number of barriers, the most formidable, entrenched and universal being gendered patriarchal norms and practices and the gendered division of labor, both characteristics of the socio-cultural context. Personal attributes such as (lack of) education, economic strength (through employment, for example), public experience and leadership capacities are another set of factors. The third set of variables, to do with the institutional arrangements for governance, have, however, drawn less attention (Kudva and Misra 2008, Cornwall and Goetz 2005). It is this last that was the focus of this study, but I also discuss the implications of the findings for the two other sets of variables.

³⁸⁷ This is not to imply that these are non-intersecting sets; many variables are clearly interrelated, as for example, education of women and patriarchal social norms. Nevertheless, it is analytically useful to distinguish between, and consider where they are located, for emancipatory policy and strategy.

³⁸⁸ For example, the *lack* of education can be a barrier, as can the *lack* of economic independence or strength, but education is an enabling feature as is economic independence. Patriarchal socio-cultural norms, that are major barriers, however, do not have ‘mirror-image’ enabling features, and provision of earmarked spaces for women in governance structures does not have a counterpart barrier.

In the case studies, socio-cultural norms did emerge as the prime barriers to participation, constraining women in both Gujarat and MP, but barely noticed in Kerala where traditional gendered norms had eroded substantially. *The gendered division of labour, however, did not emerge as a significant barrier except in MP, for modernization, women's economic employment outside the house³⁸⁹ and nuclearisation of families have all altered the time required for housework as well as perceptions of the appropriate division of labour.³⁹⁰ Even in MP, time constraints or burden of housework were not among the reasons most often cited for non-participation.³⁹¹ In fact, the most frequently offered reasons for non-participation differed across States. In Kerala, the main obstacle was "men's misbehavior...they are always suspicious" and "they don't want us to take important positions", "they don't listen to us...", but this was offset by "they are now getting used to it", "we have shown them we are actually better in this kind of work". In Gujarat and MP, predictably, social norms were most often cited, but *the lack of personal capacity (such as literacy, familiarity with governmental processes) to participate meaningfully was an equally frequent reason, particularly in MP.**

It is this last set of variables which is worth scrutiny, particularly the importance of education, for some authors have found that literacy or education is not correlated to

³⁸⁹ In Kerala, with generally low employment levels, women's participation in the workforce has been even lower than the State average (Kodoth 2004, Kodoth and Eappen 2005) but because of their requirement in specific niches (such as cashew-processing) and their increasing involvement in the 'Kudumbasree' units that have proliferated, employment of women – albeit in informal activities – is reportedly becoming higher than that of men (interviews, GVRT members, Aanchal).

³⁹⁰ Women reported having "the time, because we have a small family and there is not much housework" and "because we have a mixie, 'fridge, all the gadgets [labour saving appliances], so work gets over in the morning"; also, in Kerala, that "I go for work in the morning, so my husband helps in the cooking" and "he does the children's work, because I have to go to the factory [cashew processing unit]".

³⁹¹ The most frequent reasons given were "feeling shy", "I don't understand anything they talk about", "how can I go alone?", "I can't read and write, what will I do there?", "they are big [important] people, I don't belong there, what is the use?"

women's participation in governance, and this is, apparently, true in very different contexts (Sapiro, 1981, Jayal 2008). In all cases, however, these two factors emerged as either an important barrier or enabling condition, as discussed in Chapters II and III. In MP, the lack of ability to "read and write" was cited by all women interviewees (who were barely literate or non-literate) as the most important barrier (after social norms). In Gujarat, the women interviewed were mostly all literate, but some felt inadequate for involvement in public meetings because they were "not more educated", and three of the four non-literate (dalit) women interviewed said illiteracy was a prime barrier. In Kerala, education was cited as the most significant *enabling* factor, imparting "confidence and personality", and the ability to "quickly understand the system and learn what to do". Also, notably, the woman GP President interviewed saw it as the most important factor in learning to "control' the male Secretary and counter his obfuscations.³⁹²

These self-reports put a large question-mark on the findings by the authors who observe no correlation between literacy/education and participation in their analysis of large-scale survey data. The findings in this study are consistent with the observations of development professionals and NGOs who work closely with elected women representatives (EWRs) to develop their capacities to participate meaningfully (CEO, Unnati; CEO and staff, Samarthan). Though developing literacy *per se* is not part of their training and capacity-building efforts for EWRs, their efforts are all implicitly or explicitly based on assessments of the importance of at least functional literacy, information about and understanding of governance systems and confidence-building (Kudva 2003, SEARCH 1993, 1994). If elected women as well as others report that

³⁹² "[T]he Secretary can't fool me, I read all the papers, I understand everything", "Now he knows that I am the boss" were her revealing statements.

literacy or higher education builds both their competencies and confidence, the importance of these variables cannot be discounted.

In the little attention given to institutional variables in the literature, the importance of time and location of meetings as determinants of women's participation has been noted (Misra and Kudva 2008). These do emerge as important variables – in some cases, decisive ones – from the experience in Madhya Pradesh, where the constitution of the Gram Sabha at the hamlet level is felt to be an enabling factor by those who did attend some meetings, and has elicited somewhat higher participation than in the Panchayat meetings. Women elected to the Panchayat from villages other than where the Panchayat office is located often do not attend meetings because of the barriers to inter-village travel, and the suggestion of one NGO (Samarthan) staff that meetings should be statutorily required to be held in rotation in all hamlets within the Panchayat jurisdiction merits serious attention.

In India, the reservation of one-third of elected positions in local governments for women and the opportunities it has opened up for participation appears to have diverted attention from identifying accompanying provisions that are required to make this reservation effective. Elsewhere (Kudva and Mishra 2008, Misra and Kudva 2008) the point has been made at length, that sufficient evidence of the critical importance of institutional design emerges from the quota experience in India, which has been missed in the disconnect between the institution-focussed feminist theorizing and the 'identity-focussed' examinations of the quota experiment. Enabling features of the institutional design that emerge from this study include the mandatory reservation of seats for women in Committees and their inclusion in the quorums specified for all meetings. The importance of increasing the number of spaces and mandating their

presence in decisive fora such as Executive and Standing Committees is clearly illustrated in the active and decisive involvement of women in the Beneficiary Groups in Kerala, where equal representation of both men and women is mandated both in the general assembly and the Executive Committee, and in the quorum for meetings. While this is clearly not the only, or even the most important factor in the active participation of women in Kerala, or the lack of a similar pattern in Gujarat and MP, it was pointed out as an enabling feature by interviewees in Kerala.

Statutory oversight by the State over the functioning of local governments as well as reform programs such as the SRP emerges as another key institutional variable in all three States. While the presence of such oversight in Kerala for both devolved and liberalized governance has contributed substantially to the active participation that was observed, the higher levels of participation in Panchayat processes in comparison to that in the SRP in the two other States also illustrates its importance.³⁹³ For there are statutory requirements for functional and procedural audit of Panchayats by State Panchayat Departments, in addition to financial audit, while the latter is the only real check applied on the functioning of the SRP.

The findings of this study definitely suggest positive relationships between extent of decentralization (whether it extends into localities and neighborhoods) and participation, as well as between the design of decentralization and participation. Though both these aspects are largely dependant on the overall contours of the reform, which are politically determined, they are determined by the specifics of

³⁹³There are critics of such close monitoring of reformed arrangements who contend that it erodes local autonomy, and leaves little space for local innovation and context-specific action. Moreover, the detailed directions from the State can frustrate and hamstring local functionaries. As one elected representative of a Gram Panchayat in Kerala reportedly remarked, “they give us one lakh (hundred thousand Indian rupees, about \$2000) and 50 pages of guidelines on how we are allowed to spend it!” (interview, Professor, IRMA)

organizational design, and are therefore given full shape in the design details. A greater focus on institutional variables and further research in this area is therefore strongly indicated.

6. THE ISSUE OF INSTITUTIONAL FIT AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this research reaffirm the effectiveness of decentralization in improving delivery of water per se, and also point to the crucial importance of commitment to the process and monitoring by higher echelons of government, or external counter-elites as pointed out by a number of authors (Mahal 2000, Heller 2001, Fiszbein 1997, Robinson 2003, Johnson 2001). However the findings regarding the accentuation of disparities in Gujarat, in both devolved and liberalized arrangements, problematize these conclusions in a fundamental way, for they occur despite the comparatively high degree of decentralization and little reluctance on the part of the Government of Gujarat to enable community provisioning as in the SRP. Moreover, there was historically a greater degree of devolution and stronger local governments, affording an 'institutional fit' which enabled an efficient uptake of both devolution and liberalization of water provision. Yet there is by far the greatest inequity in distribution of benefits among the three States, and low participation of citizens in the process of developing new projects.

I suggest that the Gujarat cases question the desirability of 'institutional fit' itself and the intuitively appealing and theoretically argued notion of tailoring reforms to the context. For it was the fit between the notion of increased autonomy in local governance that underpinned the reforms, and the presence of relatively strong and effective local governments, local-elite initiative and community philanthropy, which

enabled the inequitable design and functioning of the water supply projects. Moreover, the elision of the progressive element of direct user-participation in the decision-making processes was not considered material or objectionable by community-members, for the VWSC-centered functioning fitted the historically prevalent pattern of Panchayat governance. That is, *the good fit of the reformed arrangements and context characteristics enabled the continuation of elite-centered local governance and inequitable access to public services, and the non-implementation of progressive institutional changes*. This clearly indicates that in the case of progressive governance reforms aimed at changing institutionalized patterns of local governance, *contextual fit may actually be undesirable*. This is also borne out by the Kerala experience where the citizen participation envisaged in the reformed arrangements did not actually fit prevalent patterns of public engagement, and had to be deliberately and systematically engendered and institutionalized by the State government. At the same time, some characteristics of the context such as the high literacy, human development and political and organizational involvement, were important constitutive elements that enabled the success of such efforts.

Clearly, reformed arrangements need to fit some aspects of the context while deliberately countering others. What *kind* of ‘contextual fit’ is therefore necessary for successful institutionalization of reformed arrangements, which elements or aspects of the reform design and of the context must necessarily *not fit*, and how the latter kind of reform elements can be implemented and institutionalized, then emerge as important questions that require further investigation. Within-case comparisons (across the mini-cases, for example) can yield further understanding in this respect. Also, while this research has provided some important findings in relation to the appropriateness of liberalization and devolution in different contexts, these are in terms of the *relative*

degrees of development. Further specification of the *threshold levels* of economic, political and social development that enable successful decentralized governance (of any type, as in Kerala) is necessary. This can be obtained through comparative studies across these and other locations, using measures that enable both disaggregation and graduation of 'political' 'economic' and 'socio-cultural' characteristics. Finally, replication across other locations and with larger number of 'mini-cases' would be useful to reinforce the findings of this study.

APPENDICES

ANNEXURE I

MULTIPLE DEFINITIONS OF DECENTRALIZATION

Author(s)	(Most widely used) definitions of decentralization
UN (1962), quoted in Oyugi (2000:3)	"The transfer of <i>authority</i> on a geographic basis whether by deconcentration (i.e., delegation) of administrative authority to field units of the same department or level of government, or by the political devolution of authority to local government units or special statutory bodies." (italics mine)
Cheema and Rondinelli (1983:18)	"Decentralization isthe <i>transfer</i> of planning, decision-making or administrative <i>authority</i> from the central government to its field organizations, local administrative units, semi-autonomous and parastatal organizations, local governments or non-governmental organizations" (italics mine)
Rondinelli et al. (1984:9)	"Decentralization can be defined as the <i>transfer of responsibility</i> for planning, management, resource-raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to (a) field units of central government ministries or agencies, (b) subordinate units or levels of government, (c) semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations, (d) area-wide regional or functional authorities or (e) non-governmental private or voluntary organizations." (italics mine).
Mawhood (1983) and Smith (1985)	"Decentralization is any act that formally <i>cedes powers</i> to actors and institutions within a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy" (italics mine).

ANNEXURE II A

PROFILES OF STUDY VILLAGES IN GUJARAT

(District: SURAT)

Village Characteristics		Study villages						
Location	Sub-district	Kamrej			Palsana		Choriasi	
	Panchayat	Laskana	Ladvi	Umbhel	Vadadla	Tatijhagda	Bhatia	Vaktana
	Village	Laskana	Ladvi	Umbhel	Vadadla	Tatijhagda	Bhatia	Vaktana
Village Area (in Hectares)		388	401	834	317	217.57	453	431.42
Number of Households	Total	1,749	280	1,102	193	148	186	951
	Scheduled Castes			-			-	-
	Scheduled Tribes			-			-	-
Panchayat	Total members			-			-	-
	From village – M			-			-	-
	From village – F			-			-	-
Village Income Expenditure	Total Income	1059	214		4350	1395	173	1020**
	Total expenditure	933	218		2810	1243	83	981
Landuse	Agriculture (Irr)	235.93	349		206.78	162.27	383	139.92
	Non-Irrigated	67.50	2.31		65.51	30.41	5.40	127.34
	Forest	0	0		0	0	0	0
	Cultivable Waste	45.90	16.63		22.66	10.18	19.66	36.69
	Uncultivable	38.98	33.02		21.94	14.71	45.54	127.47
Total Population	Persons	8,452	1,546	5,117	897	800	882	4743
	Male	4,517	928	2,732	456	404	442	2543
	Female	3,935	618	2,385	441	396	440	2200
Scheduled Castes	Persons	426	139	935	41	17	34	77
	Male	222	310	486	19	9	18	38

	Female	204	259	449	22	8	16	39
Scheduled Tribe	Persons	985	569	1,912	526	299	505	629
	Male	511	310	971	267	156	252	341
	Female	474	259	941	259	143	253	288
Literacy	Total	4226	872	2673	636	677	456	2169
	Male	2653	605	1575	352	344	259	1449
	Female	1573	267	1098	284	333	206	747
Main Workers: (Cultivators)	Persons	3871	649		488	369	403	41
	Male	2667	413		302	262	258	40
	Female	1204	236		186	107	145	1
Main Workers: (Agri. Labor)	Persons						111	297
	Male						104	165
	Female						7	132
Marginal Workers: (Cultivators)	Persons						292	0
	Male						154	0
	Female						138	0
Marginal workers: (Agri. Labor)	Persons	818					276	76
	Male	422					147	34
	Female	396					129	42
Non-Workers	Persons	4467	897		409	431	479	3072
	Male	1806	515		154	142	184	1156
	Female	-	-			-	-	1916
Primary Commodities produced	1	Sugarcane	Sugarcane	Sugarcane		Paddy	Sugarcane	Sugarcane
	2	Banana	Paddy	Bajri		Sugarcane	Paddy	-
	3	Vegetables	Bajri	Banana		Jowar	Banana	-
Drinking Water Supply	Piped/ Taps	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Standposts	No	No	No	No	-	-	No
	Handpumps/ Tubewells	No	No	No	Tubewell	Yes	Yes	No
	Other-well, pond, river	Well, Tank	Well, Tank	Well water	No	Yes/river, well, canal	Well water	Well water

Electricity	Agricultural	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Domestic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Schools/ Colleges	Primary School	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
	Middle school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	High School	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medical Facilitie s	Primary Health Center or Dispensary	0	0	1-sub centre	1 sub cen/f,w ,c.	0	0	0
	Hospital	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medical Expertise	Registered Doctors	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
	Comm. Health workers	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
Communica tion facilities	Post Office	Yes-1	1	1	1	0	0	0
	Telephone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes
	No. of tel. conn	50	10	-	3	8	15	18
Accessibility	Nearest town and distance	Surat/15 km	Kado dara/ 8km	Kadod ara/3 km	Chalth an/10k m	Chalthan/ 10 km	Sachi n8KM	Utran 4 km
	Roads (mud/ paved/ motorable	Yes/pav ed rd.	Yes/p aved	Yes/pa ved rd.	Mud/P aved rd.	Paved rd.	YES	Paved road
	Public transport (Bus/ auto/ train)	Bus	Bus	Bus	Bus	Bus	Bus	Bus, Train
Banking Facilities	Banks	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
	Credit Societies	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Public and Recreation facilities	Community Hall	-	0	0	0	0	-	-
	Cinema/ video hall	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	-	0	0	0	0	0	-
	Newspapers	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

ANNEXURE II B

PROFILES OF STUDY VILLAGES IN KERALA

(District : KOLLAM)

Village Characteristics		Study Neighborhoods/ Hamlets	
Location	Sub-district	Pathanapuram	
	Panchayat	Aanchal	Yerroor
	Hamlets/ Neighborhoods		
Village Area (in Hectares)		2455	2224
Number of Households	Total	7575	4586
	Scheduled Castes		
	Scheduled Tribes		
Panchayat	Total members		
	From village – M		
	From village – F		
Village Income Expenditure	Total Income	4770500	1946050
	Total expenditure	4571300	1946050
Landuse	Agriculture (Irr)	425	21.05
	Non-Irrigated	1924	1749.49
	Forest	0	428.34
	Cultivable Waste	0	0
	Uncultivable	106	25.12
Total Population	Persons	31543	18680
	Male	15227	9023
	Female	16316	9657
Scheduled Castes	Persons	3089	1690
	Male	1479	831
	Female	1610	859
Scheduled Tribe	Persons	9	38
	Male	5	20
	Female	4	18
Literacy	Total		
	Male		
	Female		

Main Workers: (Cultivators)	Persons		
	Male		
	Female		
Main Workers: (Agri. Labor)	Persons		
	Male		
	Female		
Marginal Workers: (Cultivators)	Persons		
	Male		
	Female		
Marginal workers: (Agri. Labor)	Persons		
	Male		
	Female		
Non-Workers	Persons		
	Male		
	Female		
Primary Commodities produced	1	Burnt Bricks	Rubber
	2		
	3		
Drinking Water Supply	Piped/ Taps	No information	No information
	Standposts	--	
	Handpumps/ Tubewells	Available	Available
	Other-well. pond, river	Available	Available
Electricity	Agricultural	Available	Available
	Domestic	Available	Available
Schools/ Colleges	Primary School	12	6
	Middle school	6	3
	High School	6	2
	College	1	0
Medical Facilities	Primary Health Center or Dispensary	1	1
	Hospital	--	
Medical Expertise	Registered Doctors	0	0
	Comm. Health workers	1	0
Communication facilities	Post Office	4	2
	Telephone	Available	Available
	No. of tel. conn	1800	850
Accessibility	Nearest town and distance	Punalur, 12 KM	Punalur, 15 KM

	Roads (mud/ paved/ motorable)	Available	Available
	Public transport (Bus/ auto/ train)	Bus (yes) Train (no)	Bus (yes) Train (no)
Banking Facilities	Banks	3	2
	Credit Societies	3	0
Public and Recreation facilities	Community Hall		
	Cinema/ video hall	1	1
	Other		
	Newspapers	Available	Available

ANNEXURE II C

PROFILES OF STUDY VILLAGES IN MADHYA PRADESH

(District: SEHORE)

Village Characteristic		Study villages / hamlets				
Location	Sub-district	Sehore Taluka				
	Panchayat	Kharpa		Lasudiya Dhakad		Rola
	Village	Kharpa	Ramkhe di	Lasudiya Dhakad	Lasudiya Khas	Manpura
Village Area (in Hectares)		304	248	389	314	198
Number of Households	Total	143	133	155	156	92
	Scheduled Castes					
	Scheduled Tribes					
Panchayat	Total members					
	From village – M					
	From village – F					
Village Income Expenditure	Total Income	-	-	-	ni	ni
	Total expenditure	-	-	-	ni	ni
Landuse	Agriculture (Irr)	121	186	138	196	79
	Non-Irrigated	139	31	206	56	102
	Forest	0	0	0	0	0
	Cultivable Waste	22	17	24	26	9
	Uncultivable	22	14	21	36	8
Total Population	Persons	583	823	818	810	446
	Male	311	429	435	410	217
	Female	272	394	383	400	229
Scheduled Castes	Persons	226	20	359	124	52
	Male	121	11	193	58	26
	Female	105	9	166	66	26
Scheduled Tribe	Persons	46	0	44	0	0
	Male	27	0	25	0	0

	Female	19	0	19	0	0
Literacy	Total	186	254	354	356	215
	Male	143	172	253	262	137
	Female	43	82	101	94	78
Main Workers: (Cultivators)	Persons	76	53	99	127	58
	Male	69	44	91	108	42
	Female	7	9	8	19	16
Main Workers: (Agri. Labor)	Persons	182	104	43	35	8
	Male	71	52	34	28	8
	Female	111	52	9	7	0
Marginal Workers: (Cultivators)	Persons	0	2	2	61	22
	Male	0	1	2	6	12
	Female	0	1	0	55	10
Marginal workers: (Agri. Labor)	Persons	14	25	228	29	144
	Male	2	3	64	8	55
	Female	12	22	164	21	89
Non-Workers	Persons	296	245	430	500	210
	Male	157	115	229	206	97
	Female	139	130	201	294	113
Primary Commodities produced	1	-	Jaggery	-	-	-
	2	-	-	-	-	-
	3	-	-	-	-	-
Drinking Water Supply	Piped/ Taps	na	na	na	-	-
	Standposts	na	na	na	-	-
	Handpumps/ Tubewells	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available
	Other-well. pond, river	Available (well)	-	Available (well)	Available (well)	Available (well)
Electricity	Agricultural	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available
	Domestic	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available
Schools/ Colleges	Primary School	1	1	1	1	1
	Middle school	0	0	0	0	0
	High School	0	0	0	0	0
	College	0	0	0	0	0
Medical Facilities	Primary Health Center or Dispensary	0	0	0	0	0
	Hospital	0	0	0	0	0

Medical Expertise	Registered Doctors	0	0	0	0	0
	Comm. Health workers	0	0	0	0	0
Communication facilities	Post Office	0	0	0	0	0
	Telephone	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available
	No. of tel. conn	1	1	1	1	1
Accessibility	Nearest town and distance	Sehore 20km	Sehore 19km	Sehore 16km	Sehore 16km	Sehore 11km
	Roads (mud/ paved/ motorable)	Mud road	Mud road	na	Paved road	Mud road
	Public transport (Bus/ auto/ train)	no	no	no	bus - yes	no
Banking Facilities	Banks	0	0	0	0	0
	Credit Societies	0	0	0	0	0
Public and Recreation facilities	Community Hall	0	0	0	0	0
	Cinema/ video hall	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0
	Newspapers	na	Available	na	na	na

ANNEXURE III A
LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED IN GUJARAT

STATE LEVEL

Water and Sanitation Management Organization (WASMO)

Director (CEO)

Project Director, Sector Reforms

Information and Monitoring Consultant

Field Coordinator (Surat)

Project Consultant

Gujarat State Water Supply and Sewerage Board (GWSSB)

Ex-Chief Engineer (Retired), GWSSB

Executive Engineers (2), GWSSB Head Office

Managing Director, Gujarat Infrastructure Development Corporation (GIDC)

Managing Director, Gujarat Urban Development Corporation (GUDC)

Sector Reform Cell, Gujarat Jalseva Training Institute (GJTI)

Executive Engineer (Training)

Assistant Engineer (Training)

Project Director, PRAVAH (Multi-State Network of NGOs)

Independent Researchers: 3

DISTRICT LEVEL

GWSSB, Surat Division (Public Health Works)

Executive Engineer (Head of DPMU, Sector Reform

(Also Secretary, District Water and Sanitation Committee (DWSC).

District Project Management Unit (WASMO-GWSSB)

Additional Assistant Engineer, DPMU, Surat

Deputy Engineer, DPMU, GWSSB Division Office, Surat

Social Mobilizer, DPMU, GWSSB Division Office, Surat

Head, Aadesh Charitable Trust (NGO)

VILLAGE/ PANCHAYAT LEVEL

Villages	Panchayat	VWSC	Users	Additional
Laskana	Sarpanch Women members – 1 Men members – 3	President Secretary Men members – 2 men	Women – 4 Men – 2	Focus Group Survey (18)
Ladvi	Sarpanch Women members – 2 Men members – 2	Secretary, Women members – 2 Men members – 2 Pump Operator	Women – 5 Men – 3	Focua Group Survey (18)
Tatijhagada	Members – Men 2	Women members – 2 Men members – 2 Pump Operator	Women – 4 Men – 4	Focus Group Survey (15)
Vadadla	Sarpanch Deputy Sarpanch Women members – 2 Men members – 1	President (Sarpanch) Secretary (Dy.Sarpanch) Women members – 2 Men member – 1	Women – 4 Men – 3	Focus Group Survey (16)
Umbhel	Sarpanch Women members – 3 Men members – 2 Pump Operator	No Sector Reform Project	Women – 4 Men – 4	Survey (18)
Bhatia	Sarpanch Talati (Secretary) Women members – 3 Men members – 2	No Sector Reform Project	Women – 5 Men – 3	Survey (15)
Vaktana	Sarpanch Women members – 2 Men members – 2 Pump Operator	No Sector Reform Project	Women – 3 Men – 4	Focus Group Survey (17)

ANNEXURE III B
LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED IN KERALA

STATE LEVEL

State Planning Board, Kerala :

Secretary.

Member, State Planning Board

Division Head, Decentralization Unit

Jt-Director, Socio-Economic Planning Unit, Kerala Planning Board

Member, Decentralization Unit

Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, (KSSP) Thiruvananthapuram

President (also Director, Integrated Development Research Center,

Pallakad)

Secretary, KSSP

Members, KSSP – 2

Director, Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF)

Water Sector Program – South Asia (WSP-SA) of world Bank.

State Coordinator, Sector Reform Program (WSP-SA)

Consultant, GoK-WASP-SA Program

Joint Secretary, Water Resources Department

Executive Engineer, KWA Swajaldhara Monitoring Cell

MD, Kerala Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (KRWSSA)

Director, Cap-Deck (Capacity-building for Decentralization in Kerala)

Deputy Director, Bureau of Economics and Statistics

Director, SAHAYI (NGO)

Academic/ Researchers:

Prof Michael Tharrakan, Center for Development Studies (CDS)

Prof, Institute of Management in Government (IMG)

Prof, Center for Environment and Development (CED)

Prof, Center for Earth Sciences Studies (CESS)

DISTRICT LEVEL

Kerala Water Authority

Executive Engineer, Kollam West, Kollan Division

Asst-Executive Engineer, Kollam Subdivision

District Coordinator (Kollam), Cap-DecK

Ex-President, District Panchayat, Kollam

Project Management Unit (Sector Reform)

Team Leader

Project Consultant – Community Organizing

Project Consultant – Finance and Accounts

PANCHAYAT LEVEL

Gram Panchayat Volunteer Resource Team (GVRT), Aanchal

Social Mobilizer

Engineer

Accountant

Plan Coordinator, Yeroor Panchayat

VILLAGE LEVEL

Panchayats and hamlets	Panchayat		Beneficiary groups		Additional
	Panchayat	Working Group / NHG	Committee	Users/ Members	
Aanchal (GP)	President (w) Secretary Women – 3 Men mem – 2	Women –2 Men -1			
Mallavattam				Pump Operator Women – 4 Men – 4	Survey (18) Focus Group
Neelamootil			President Secretary Treasurer Pump Operator Women -2	Women – 4 Men – 3	Survey (19) Focus Group
Ambalakonam			President (w) Secretary Women – 2 Men – 2	Women – 3 Men – 2	Survey (17) Focus Group
Yeroor (GP)	President Secretary Women – 3 Men – 2	Women –3 Men 2			
Kanjyavel		Pump Operator Women – 2 Men -2		Pump Operator Women – 3 Men – 3	Survey (16) Focus Group
Mayilladumkunnu			Vice-President Secretary Women – 2 Men – 2	Women – 3 Men – 2	Survey (18) Focus Group
Pulleri (Thevallakara GP)			President (ward) Secretary Pump operator Women – 1 Men – 1	Women – 3 Men – 2	Survey (15) Focus Group

ANNEXURE III (C)

LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED IN MADHYA PRADESH

STATE LEVEL

Samarthan (NGO) – Director

Project Coordinators – 2

CEO, Taal (NGO)

State Director, WaterAid, Bhopal

State Director, UNICEF, Bhopal

Sector Reform Project Cell, Bhopal –

(In-Charge) Superintendant Engineer, PHED

Executive Engineer, PHED

Social Mobilization Consultant,

Monitoring Consultant

Academics/ Researchers (Bhopal):

Prof, State Institute of Public Administration.

Prof, Water and Land Management Institute.

Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission (RGWM – Pani Roko Abhiyan):

Task Manager, RGWM

Joint Development Commissioner, RGWM

Deputy Commissioner , RGWM

DISTRICT LEVEL:

Collector, Sehore (also Chairperson, District Water and Sanitation Mission)

CEO, Zilla Panchayat, Sehore

Swajaldhara Cell, Sehore Subdivision, MP-PHED

Asst. Engineers (Swajaldhara) – 2

Sub-Engineer (Swajaldhara)

District Office, Samarthan (NGO)

District Coordinator

Field Staff, Samarthan (3)

PANCHAYAT/ VILLAGE LEVEL

Villages	Panchayat	VWSC	Health Committee	Users	Additional
Kharpa	Sarpanch Upa-Sarpanch Sachiv (secretary) Women members – 1 Men member – 1	President (Sarpanch) Women – 1(Panch) Men – 2	Men – 3 (1 Panch) W omen – 2 (1 Panch)	Women – 4 Men -3	Survey -18
Lasudiya Dhakad	Sarpanch (Las. Khas) Women members – 2 Men member – 1	President (Sarpanch) Women-2 (Panches) Men – 2	Ex-President Women – 2 (1 Panch) Men – 2	Women – 3 Men – 4	Focus Group Survey -15
Lasudiya Khas	(Sarpanch) Women members – 2 Men member – 2	No VWSC	Women – 2 (Panches)	Women – 3 Men – 3	Focus Group Survey -15
Manpura	UpSarpanch Women member – 1 Men member – 2	No VWSC	Village Treasurer President Men – 2	Women – 5 Men – 2	Focus Group Survey -16
Ramkedi	Women members – 2 Men member – 1	No VWSC	Women – 2 Men- 2	Women – 4 Men – 3	Survey – 14

ANNEXURE IV A

LIST OF DOCUMENTS SOURCED IN GUJARAT

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ANNEXURE V

TASKS/ STEPS IN WATER SUPPLY PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Generic steps as developed by key resource persons, and used to develop the scoring sheet for assessing redistribution of activities/ functions after decentralization. Each State has small variations in the offices/ officers involved.

- Step 1:** Need is assessed and the project is identified by the Assistant Engineer.
- Step 2:** The AE prepares the Rough Cost Estimate and forwards it to the relevant officer (usually Executive Engineer) for Administrative Sanction.
- Step 3:** Administrative Sanction is granted by Executive Engineer
- Step 4:** If soil and water quality investigations are to be undertaken, the AE prepares an investigation estimate, and sends the same for sanction.
- Step 5:** Land is acquired, either from private owners by the Revenue Department or from the Panchayat/ village.
- Step 6:** On approval of the investigation estimate, soil/ water investigation is done by the Public Works Department or any other technical agency.
- Step 7:** Soil details are sent to Design Wing/ Section
- Step 8:** Detailed design (technical) drawings are prepared
- Step 9:** The drawings are sent to the Superintendent/ Chief Engineer. The Superintendent/ Chief Engineer's office forwards the drawings to the subordinate officers for preparing the estimate.
- Step 10:** The concerned Assistant Engineer prepares the detailed cost estimate based on the current schedule of rates approved by the organization.
- Step 11:** The detailed estimate is sent for approval and Technical Sanction.
- Step 12:** On approval of the estimate, tenders are invited for execution of work. Usually materials are procured in bulk by the State.

Step 13: Contractor is selected, through the competitive bidding process; usually, the lowest bid is accepted.

Step 14: The contractor begins executing the work. The site engineer including the Assistant Executive Engineer supervises the work.

Step 15: The Engineers also take measurements of completed works, check the bills and make arrangements for the payment to the contractor. They also submit necessary reports on completion of the work including the completion report.

Step 16: The work is handed over to the concerned Panchayat for operation (and sometimes, maintenance).

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