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# Engaging Water?

Integrated Water Resources Management and Civil Society in  
India

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# Abstract

This essay contains a research on the impact of IWRM-projects on the civil society. IWRM is a water project strategy with local stakeholder participation as an important part. We compare three cases in the context of contemporary India and analyze them according to our theoretical framework, with influential concepts in civil society and foreign aid theory.

We find that the cases had a mainly positive impact on the civil society, and that IWRM projects in general have the potential of affecting the civil society in a positive direction. This requires a strong element of capacity building features and local and demand-led approaches. Problems arise when donor involvement dominates over local participation.

The most important obstacle we find is the difficulty to combine the two theoretical standpoints of building on existing social capital and not letting traditional power structures prevail - hence to let women and marginalized groups participate without disturbing the social balance.

*Keywords:* IWRM, civil society, India, participation, democracy

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Foreword

*The population is increasing. Development is increasing. Pollution is increasing.  
The supply of water is not. Our tiny blue planet has only so much H<sub>2</sub>O to go  
around.<sup>1</sup>*

We find water fascinating.

Throughout human history, water has been a crucial factor in the shaping of societies. And the importance of water supply has not gone away with the rise of modern society. Millions of people on earth still do not have access to clean water. Consequently, the struggle *for* water might become struggles *over* water. The scarcity can withhold development, democracy and create conflicts. Water becomes a problematic and complex social and political phenomenon.

International aid and aid projects have taken some different forms over the years. Today, the water question is a key feature in development and aid thinking. Providing aid, however, is not unproblematic - and water issues, with their complex nature, are not exceptions.

Additionally, the aid and water issues sometimes get mixed together with questions of civil society and democracy. The process of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), given the role of the influencing independent variable in this essay, often does precisely that.

But what happens when such diverse political phenomenon as water, aid and civil society are blended together? Is it a fruitful combination?

That is what this essay is all about.

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Mats Kullander

Lund, May 2006

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<sup>1</sup> Global Water Partnership, gwpforum.org

## 1.2 Statement of Purpose

A lot of political science research has been done on international aid, civil society, and different kinds of water issues. In our essay we aim to combine some of these theories and thinking with the fairly new but highly influential philosophy of IWRM. By the use of existing theories we wish to explain how and why the civil society is affected by water management projects. We do this by conducting a comparative study of three IWRM cases in India in the pursuit of answering the following main question:

*How was civil society affected by the three IWRM projects in India, and how can this be explained?*

In answering these questions we aim to identify the parts of the projects that were somehow directed towards civil society, and how the projects in those or other ways affected the civil society. With the spatial framing being the three Indian regions, the limitation in time will be from the starting to the ending of the projects. Hence, focus will be on the *processes* and not on the aftermath or the subsequent (post-project) outcome status of civil society. This is motivated by the recent finishing of the cases (there may not have passed enough time after the projects for civil society outcomes to show), and the practical reason of insufficient civil society outcome information.

With the concept of civil society being so closely connected to the democracy debate, we will provide a complementary discussion on that connection in regard to our study and context.

Although humble before the possibility of generalization or prediction, we believe that our approach and conclusions can be of value in other development improving (water) management projects around the world. The global water issues are critical, and their connection to civil society and democracy should definitely be the subject of studies – not least because of later years’ civil society focus by organizations and donors. Knowing how the numerous and extensive socio-environmental projects affect civil society seems important.

## 1.3 Method

Our study uses, or consumes, theories of civil society, foreign aid, and democracy in the pursuit of understanding and explaining the events of the three case studies (hence, the cases, not the theories, end up in the focus of our magnifying glass). The study is a comparative one, where conclusions are drawn from analyzing the three cases using the compiled theoretical framework.

In the case selection process, the strategy of “most similar design” (MSD) have been used. MSD constitutes a strategy where the to-be analyzed cases should show signs of being as similar as possible on the many variables in society that may affect the phenomenon in question. When wanting to find out about the nature of the dependent variable (y) and the features of the independent variable (x) that may be influencing y, one chooses the cases with regard to variation in independent variables (Esaiasson et al 2005 s.112-113, 118). Optimally, this creates something remotely close to a “ceteris paribus” situation.

For us, MSD have meant that we have chosen cases located in the same context (India) in the hope of keeping constant as many variables as possible. The cases show some variation in x (IWRM), and the nature of y (process influence on civil society) is the target of investigation.

We have put together a theoretical framework consisting of scientific views on the civil society, democracy, as well as their relationship with aid projects. With this framework applied to the three cases we have tried to analyze and draw inferences regarding the effect on the local civil society and the responsible characteristics of the IWRM.

## 1.4 Material

This essay is based on written material – both primary and secondary - obtained using library databases and the Internet, and includes books, reports and Internet publications. The primary material used refers to the three Indian water projects, and is predominantly produced by individuals connected to either the World Bank or the Chilika project. These persons have first-hand information and have been involved in many, if not all, of the projects’ stages.

When studying and examining the material, one should pay attention to the criteria of authenticity, independence, contemporaneity and tendency. The fact that primary information is in general regarded as trustworthier than secondary ditto (Esaiasson et al 2005 s.305-309), speaks in favour of our main case material – but, still, we are aware of the possible negative consequences of tendency and reduced independence, since some authors have been attached to the projects. Although, with this in mind, we do consider the advantages of the case

material's authenticity, contemporaneity and primary status as outweighing the possible problems stated above.

Material from the World Bank consists of several documents, made either as a preparation for the project (PAD- or pre-report) or as an evaluation of the project (IC-reports).

The additional material used is of secondary or scientific theoretical nature. We have used books presenting theoretical views of issues relevant to our study, and web pages built up in cyber space by some major organizations. We have tried to study these with non-naïve eyes as well.

## 1.5 Disposition

The following of our essay is divided into three main parts. Firstly we bring out the theory surrounding the issues of our study. Thereafter follows a section analyzing the empirical cases, where important parts of the theoretical connections are highlighted when appropriate. The third part consists of the segment where we compare and analyze the cases along the theoretical framework. Our conclusions are presented in the very last part.

## 2 Theoretical exposition

### 2.1 IWRM – a concept presentation

Today, Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) has become an almost hegemonic philosophy when it comes to the management of water resources. All of the major organizations and donors (like the UN and the World Bank) are using the methodologies and strategies of this broad concept.

Some of the principles of IWRM (e.g. participatory approach) had been somewhat advocated earlier, but when entering the 1990s the global water management practices still had a quite narrow focus and was putting trust to technological “hard tools”. But numerous of water experts saw the water situation in the world as critical and were calling for a radical change in the approach to freshwater resources. Therefore, in January of 1992 concerned experts gathered in Dublin for the International Conference on Water and the Environment. With the heavyweight UN conference in Rio de Janeiro in June same year, the Dublin participants saw their conference as an opportunity to put together their thoughts of the need for a new approach to the world’s water issues. The compiled views could then be presented to the world leaders in Rio (Calder 1999 p.51, 151-154).

“The Dublin Principles”, the foundation of IWRM, read as follows:

1. *Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment.*
2. *Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels.*
3. *Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.*
4. *Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good (gwpforum.org).*

Accordingly, IWRM constitutes a holistic approach, recognizing that water issues are complex and involves a multiplicity of layers, institutions and activities of society and nature, and consequently must be addressed in an integrated way. Local stakeholder involvement, the use of indigenous knowledge, the safeguarding of local heritage and ecology, the ensuring of a long-term viable economic situation in the watershed areas, and a demand-recognizing perspective are all important features of IWRM (Calder 1999 s.151-156).

Since IWRM is meant to foster civil society, human democratic participation in governance, reducing poverty, and improving people’s health, the underlying thought is to promote and encourage democratic participation and democracy in the longer run as well (usaid.gov).

## 2.2 Concept Definitions

### 2.2.1 Civil Society

*[A]n intermediate associational realm between state and family populated by organizations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed voluntarily by members of the society to protect or extend their interests or values. (White, Gordon cited in Carothers & Ottaway 2000 p.9)*

We have chosen to work with this definition due to its usability in multiple contexts, and that it would be appropriate in the complex Indian society. Definitions including the rigid precondition of “self-generation” of civil society, put forward by Larry Diamond for example (Diamond 1999 p.221), have been consciously avoided because of the specific circumstances in cases like the ones outlined below, where external donor involvement affect the construction of associations in the civil society. When used in the analyses in this essay, the definition above is slightly adjusted, so that the voluntary part extend to the contribution of or participation in the organizations concerned, instead of a self-generating meaning in the formation process.

### 2.2.2 Social Capital

*Features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated norms (Robert Putnam cited in Mohapatra 2004 p.99).*

Social capital has been an influential concept ever since the glory days of Robert Putnam. The concept can, somewhat simplified, be understood as a link between civil society and democracy.

### 2.2.3 Participation

*[A] process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions, and resources that affect them (official definition, World Bank 1996 cited in Vedeld 2000 p.8)*

In the world of IWRM and civil society aid (stakeholder) participation is considered a very important instrument. We have chosen this definition of participation because it is from one major international actor in this field and the World Bank is also behind two of the empirical cases below. We are aware that it can be considered odd to choose a definition that an actor uses, but we think that it is important to report on what kind of view the actor has on this matter.

## 2.3 Theoretical Framework

Theory surrounding civil society in developing countries can be divided into a number of the most important factors. These concerns how civil society can be assisted and the positive outcomes that follows. Theory also suggests how certain actions may be unfortunate or even counterproductive.

In the following we put forward six theoretical perspectives on these matters, where the first four sections are supportive to civil society, while the concluding two, affect it negatively.

This section and the connected parts of the cases below, includes our operationalizations of the central concepts in this thesis.

### 2.3.1 Capacity Building

*Case after case shows how, through associative activity for mutual aid or dissent, and through learning to act in the economic, social, and political spheres, participants become connected to the community, regain a sense of self, undergo a change in their life situation, and become personally transformed. (Campfens 1997 p. 458).*

For a vivid civil society, there must be citizens able to participate in organizations and communities. For a number of reasons, many in India lack this fundamental ability. The poverty is so thorough that the struggle for survival leaves little time to engage in the political or civil sphere (Drèze & Sen 2002 p.28). Some theorists argue that prerequisites for a civil society, above all atomized liberal individuals, are unusual outside the western world (Van Rooy 1998 p.13). But these depressing statements can be inverted, things may change. One influential school from the community development theory states that participation in development programs can enable people to take part in the civil society as well, development programs contribute to social learning through organizational action (Campfens 1997 p.33, 460-461). This can be obstructed if rigid existing power structures such as paternalism or religious hierarchy are allowed to persist in the program participation (*ibid.*).

Organizational input may breed the appearance of other similar associations; civil society reinforces itself with well managed external contribution, starting a spiral of associations and thereby capacity building features (Hadenius & Uggla 1996 p.1622).

Educational functions in civil society are very important for capacity building. If organizations are internally democratic, members learn democratic processes. Therefore, participation in organizations educates people, both in associational decision-making and democratic ditto. A new way of managing conflicts is found (*ibid.* p.1623). Members are thereby empowered to engage in a civil society.

### 2.3.2 Women and Marginalized Groups

An important part of dealing with any development issue is to involve women. Allowing and promoting the participation of women in the political, social and economical life is crucial to a positive development and to any social change (Sen 2001 p.199-203). As we have seen above, this is recognized in the fundamental principles of IWRM. It is also underlined by several cases that women participation in civil society is necessary to promote women rights and to counteract abuse of women (e.g. Basombrío 2000 p. 284).

Women have in many places fewer bonds to traditional hierachal structures, making them more efficient to work with when assisting new forms of civil society. One of the most obvious mistake to do when building civil organisations, is to let existing power structures, such as patriarchy, prevail in assisted associations (Campfens 1997 p.21.).

In societies with wide economic disparities and minorities without access to the political arena, civil society and social capital is less likely to flourish but more important to exist, because it can be the cure for inequality. Social capital exclusive to segments within societies can also, though, work as a wedge between groups in a social conflict (Hoeber Rudolph 2004 p.122,126). In India, with its caste system and numerous tribes, this is a very evident problem. Participation and equality is connected, increase in one gives raise in the other. Hence, organizing marginalized groups and making them part of civil society is crucial for their (and India's) economic development and ability of an integrated society (Drèze & Sen 2002 p.8-11).

### 2.3.3 Local Focus

For a good approach to civil society and development projects, local thinking is essential. The forms of associations to be involved in the projects must be culturally and socially embedded. This may require considering other types of organizations than the traditionally dominating NGOs, which are not the most appropriate instrument in all contexts (Howell & Pearce 2001 p.112, 235). The donors have long considered NGOs as the only collaborative partner when assisting civil society, most of convenience due to the NGOs often professionalized nature. Today, donors are about to change this approach, recognizing the importance of a vivid civil society on multiple levels for NGOs to function (Ottaway & Carothers 2000 p.295f.).

The local thinking also involves an historical and political analysis of donors' and the West's role in the host country. To be able to address the issues in a fruitful way, developers can ask themselves questions like; how can we involve the poor and vulnerable? And "*whom does civil society represent?*" (Howell & Pearce 2001 p.235).

When assisting civil society, there is a shift in, or, ideally, a broadened base for societal power. If more people participate in civil society, more voices are heard. It is, thereby, more likely that the political sphere takes these groups into

account, local needs are being considered. Using local civil society organizations, there is a greater chance that this goal is achieved, facilitated by those organizations who know the every-day life and needs of the local people (Golub 2000 p.150).

Studies on the survival of projects in assisting civil society have shown that the more participation there are, the more likely it is for the project to maintain even after the withdrawal of the donor (Hadenius & Uggla 1996 p. 1633).

Sen argues that democratic evolution and civil society promotion is of great concern for people in severe poverty, but more concrete issues come first hand (2001 p.151-152). According to this, theory recognizes that civil society promotion is best achieved under programs where people see other, more direct effects on their daily life or self-interest issues (Ottaway & Carothers 2000 p. 302). Without local knowledge, such programs are close to impossible.

Furthermore, theory emphasizes the importance of building on existing local social capital, existing local associational networks<sup>2</sup> and so on (Hadenius & Uggla 1996 p.1625). These kind of existing structures are more frequent on local levels, with relatively homogeneous groups. For optimal result, multilayer systems can be grounded on these to create cooperation between different groupings, established organizations can also come to serve a wider purpose than originally planned for, thus engender more social capital and trust within even complex societies (*ibid.*). The process can be described as contributing to horizontal social capital.

### 2.3.4 Demand-led Development and Arena Creation

Following the reasoning above, an approach where the participation of local civil society is emphasized is the most productive path to travel. In development thinking, this is done partly by adopting a “demand-led” course of action, rather than a “supply-led” one. A focus on the demand side means allowing and promoting (democratic) participation and make functioning institutions for the same purposes, instead of mostly placing emphasis on for example service institutions and mechanics of decentralization. This implies a people-led approach where the local’s wishes and needs are asked for and where civil society organizations has an empowering and capacity-building function, so that the stakeholders are able to deal with change and problems in the long run (Howell & Pearce 2001 p.11, 94, 99-100). Spending time reasoning about the forming of partnerships and participatory connections with the civil society is important so that implicit normative judgements are not solely decisive. Whilst grassroots and local associations may be enforced and used to enforce civil society, the crucial thing for external or “higher” organizations or donors to do is to create and safeguard an arena of and for civil society, where it can operate openly(*ibid.* p.11, 234, 237).

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of India, this would for example be the Panchayats, traditional village councils.

### 2.3.5 Adaptation to Donor Demands

When civil society organizations are partly or fully created by donors or international actors, they tend to adjust themselves in order to satisfy the financier. The outcome tends to be organizations with little support and confidence from the grass-roots. The created organizations may even contribute to marginalize excluded groups (Van Rooy 1998 p. 206).

Instead of donors assisting to accomplish what the local civil society wants to achieve, the local civil society carry out what the donors whish. With the limited local knowledge of the donor related to the civil society's often massive experience, this is an unfortunate process of change (Golub 2000 p.151).

The dependency on the international community also becomes problematic when the projects are considered as finished and the focus of aid is turned elsewhere. If civil society is not sufficiently anchored socially, then there is a danger of losing much of the organizations and engagement (Howell & Pearce 2001 p.119-121). In spite of this, Larry Diamond concludes that civil society functions better if it is (financially) dependent on international actors rather than on their own government; "*especially when that international dependence is dispersed among a number of donors*" (Diamond 1999 p.257).

There are also risks of enhancing conflicts and ruining traditional informal societal systems when development is introduced "from above". Conflicts may arise when poor people and women are given the opportunity to participate in decision-making, disturbing the status quo. And sometimes the new structures introduced by developers supersede social networks and functions in a negative way, e.g. transferring power from groups who really need it to already favoured ones (Sundar 2004 p.218, 224-226).

### 2.3.6 Depoliticization and Instrumentalization of Civil Society:

Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce call for caution against a depoliticization of civil society which can be an effect of development programs' tendency towards technicization of civil society – hence, when it is seen and used mostly as a means to an end, rather than a goal in itself. It is important to recognize that civil society is a political phenomenon, often with own political visions, but also something that donors and developers should think openly political about. If implicit normative decisions about the work with civil society are made, there is a risk of undermining both civil society and the development process. For example, donors may decide to work with civil society groups that are not central to the process, and/or may fail to pay attention to the material imbalances and relationships of dependency which can become problematic, not least when the projects are finished and attention is turned elsewhere (Howell & Pearce 2001 s.10, 117-118, 231-234). If civil society becomes merely an instrument, "*it is reduced to a technical exercise of coordination, cooperation, and joint effort, depoliticized and neutralized*" (Howell & Pearce 2001 p.117).

## 2.4 Civil Society and the Promotion of Democracy

Democracy can always be improved or deepened. Even in states where democracy can be seen as consolidated (why not give the example of India here), it should be viewed as something developmental. The people's knowledge and participation, for example, can be enhanced to further strengthen a country's democracy (Diamond 1999 p.17-19).

Generally speaking, following the reasoning of Robert Putnam, voluntary participation in associational life, and a vivid civil society ("civic community" in Putnam's slightly different definition) is good for democracy because it promotes social capital and trust in society – which in turn helps the consolidation and quality of democracy (*ibid.* p.225-226).

Larry Diamond identifies a number of ways in which civil society can promote democracy<sup>3</sup>. This includes that civil society has a function as a "school of democracy", where people learn to cooperate and participate in a democratic spirit. Civil society can also serve as a more "regular" school, a channel for representing interests, a means for empowerment at the local level, a training ground for future politicians, a meeting ground for different cultural and religious groups and a distributor of relevant information. Important, also, is the democracy strengthening effect that a vigorous active civil society has, even though the particular activity (e.g. community development project) might not have an explicit goal concerning political democracy (*ibid.* p.239-249). A vibrant civil society acts as a buffer against despotic tendencies, by advocating the interests of their own members (Hadenius & Uggla 1996 p. 1622).

A possible problem regarding the role of civil society in democracy (and relevant to this essay) is the issue of dependence. A pure detachment from the state is not possible, and perhaps not even desirable, but civil society should not be dependent on it (Diamond 1999 p.252). A similar reasoning can be used in regard to the international community:

*International support is enabling, but it also imposes, actively or passively, an agenda of its own [...] Some NGOs really are creatures of international support and have at best a thin base of indigenous initiative, support, and organization. This does not mean that they do not do valuable work for democracy and development (this varies widely), but it may call into question the extent to which they are truly civil society actors of their own country. (*ibid.* p.253)*

According to Hadenius & Uggla, civil society organizations should be democratic internally, have a broad popular base and an open recruitment to be able to promote democracy (1996 p. 1623).

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<sup>3</sup> See also Hadenius, Uggla 1996 p. 1622f.

# 3 The I of IWRM – integrating civil society in practice

## 3.1 Integrated Watershed Development Project – the Shivaliks Mountains

### 3.1.1 Preparation and Purpose

The first project we aim to analyze is a World Bank-financed<sup>4</sup> project in five states<sup>5</sup> in northwest India where the water situation was alarming. The World Bank describes acute shortages of drinking water, fodder and fuel-wood, along the Shivaliks, - the mountain range where the project was situated (PAD-report World Bank, 1999. p2). We will focus mainly on the integrated part of the project, the participating approach and the aspects concerning civil society, and less on the physical improvement of the water infrastructure. It is important to remember, however, that participation by stakeholders in the project is important to the World Bank because of the positive impact it is supposed to have on projects *per se*, but the World Bank is also aware of the positive social capital that participation may produce (Vedeld 2000 p. 9).

The project included two main components, watershed protection and development and institutional strengthening (*ibid.* p.5). IWDP project were divided in phase one from 1990 to 1999, and phase two reaching from 1999 to 2005. It was in the first phase that the Bank awareness of the possibilities in the participation approach grew, resulting in a very evident such approach in the second phase. The bank's explicit purpose was that the benefits of the project would reach marginalized and vulnerable groups of the society, particularly “women, landless and transhumant” (*ibid.* p.7), groups whose voices and social demands have been neglected traditionally in modern Indian development politics (Drèze & Sen 2002 p.8-11).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Specific Investment Loan, US\$ 135 million.

<sup>5</sup> Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh.

<sup>6</sup> See also 2.3.2 in this thesis.

The most important instrument to reach the goals was to use community participation to ensure sustainability of the project and increased stakeholder involvement (PAD-report World Bank, 1999. p30). The beneficiaries were supposed to be participating during the entire process, from the planning stage and implementation to maintenance and evaluation (*ibid.* p.42ff.). It has been stated though that the civil society representatives were involved too late in the planning process to have any particular influence on the overall project structure (Vedeld 2000 p.17f.).

The project also had income generation for women on its agenda, affecting 468 675 women, trained in new agriculture techniques (IC-report, World Bank 2005. p. 6, 15). Women were also directly benefited by water-infrastructure improvement, mainly by increasing the available time by reducing time spent on collecting drinking water and fuel-wood, making education and participation in society more likely (PAD-report World Bank, 1999. p.39). As emphasized by Amartya Sen, political rights are hard to demand if you lack basic necessities (and thereby freedom) such as drinking water (Sen 2001 p.15 ).

### 3.1.2 Institutional Reforms

Concrete, the way to involve stakeholders in the project was to establish a Village Development Committee (VDC) in every affected village. These stakeholder organizations should during the planning process set up Village Development Plans (VDPs) and sign an agreement with the implementing authorities about the conditions of the project (PAD-report World Bank, 1999. s17f.). According to Hadenius and Uggla, strengthening the relationship, cooperation and understanding between local civil society and authorities are very important for the abilities of civil society (1996 p. 1628). That, though, calls for legitimacy and involvement among locals.

To enable the village organizations to meet the participatory demands, the World Bank had a number of strategies. Several social teams, integrating the social aspects of the project with the more physical dittos, were created during the project. Each state was responsible for the elaboration of these social teams, whose detailed form therefore differed between the states. At a lower level, capacity builders were hired to facilitate participation through education and training. Those, as well as the social teams, were hired mainly from local NGOs or regional universities. Closest to the locals were “*Participatory Development Motivators (PDMs), preferably women [...] selected from the community*” (*ibid.* p. 42).

By this institutional building, the World Bank claims that the process included representation of beneficiaries in the decision-making from the villages to the state (*ibid.*). In this architecture, NGOs played a major part. It was as mentioned from NGOs that project staff were hired, NGOs were used for training and educating both staff and stakeholders in the technical and environmental parts of the project as well as the institutional part. It was the five states who decided

which NGOs that were best suited for the tasks, but they had to follow some explicit criteria<sup>7</sup> agreed with the bank (*ibid.* p.16, 65, 106). Panchayats, the traditional village councils throughout India, were in some extent involved, through consultation and interchange of experiences.

Control over the implementation and maintenance, as well as decision-making concerning the IWDP-project were gradually transferred to local groups, a process supposed to be finished with the last progression year. This withdrawal is necessary for the project to be perceived as participatory (Vedeld 2000 p. 8).

### 3.1.3 Examining the impact

1343 VDCs were created and 1941 Self-Help Groups (SHGs). 36 percentages of the members in those are women, 32 % belonging to “disadvantaged groups” (IC-Report, World Bank 2005 p. 6, 15).

The World Bank is very satisfied with the participation approach. The Bank argues that the approach *“helped customize interventions to local priorities and constraints and improve cost-efficiency”* (*ibid.* p.3). The Bank is also pleased with the local organizations, who are *“representative, empowered and accountable”* (*ibid.* p.7). Stakeholder organizations have been trained in a wide array of skills, including social and organizational issues (*ibid.*). On the negative side it is stated that some of the organizations on the village level are young and need further support to survive, and that the cooperation with the state implementors has not always been optimal (*ibid.* p.9).

The Social Development Department under the World Bank had additions to this generally positive view. The department did a rigid investigation of the participation approach during the planning process preceding the second phase of the project. Vedeld, author of the study, had a number of remarks, including that the participation approach was included too late to have impacts on the design, even though participation became part of the design. Village leaders were to some extent involved in project studies, less influential members of the local societies were not (Vedeld 2000 p.22). There was, thus, a great risk that existing power structures were brought into the planning of the project, even though such development is called caution for in theory (e.g. Campfens 1997 p.22).

Furthermore, consultants without connections to the diverse stakeholders had disproportionate influence over planning process and product. Project staff was unfamiliar with, and sometimes felt threatened by, the participation approach (Vedeld 2000. p.35).

Panchayats were involved, but could in some states have been utilized more; links were not fully established or formalized. The involvement of NGOs and the broader civil society in the area was not sufficient, neither in the planning process nor in the establishment of Village Development Committees (VDCs). This is a

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<sup>7</sup> E.g. non-political, proven track record, experienced field staff, conversant with local culture and language, internal stability etc. (PAD-report World Bank, 1999. p.65)

very serious remark for our analysis, and Vedeld emphasize that this may bring doubts about if the project reflects the needs and priorities of all affected people in the area (*ibid.* p.24).

One of the main purposes of the VDCs was, as we have seen, to bring about Village Development Plans (VDPs). According to the PAD-report, the VDPs should have been made after negotiations with implementation authorities. Vedeld state that this has not been the case, rather were the VDPs “*developed by project staff in a fairly blueprint fashion*” (Vedeld 2000 p.23). As we saw in our theoretical framework, projects are more effective when affected people make the priorities.

Vedeld concludes that participation in the planning process was thin but widespread. The preparations in the participation approach came along too late to affect the design of the project, but had the capacity to make positive outcomes on the project at large (*ibid.* p.38). Participation by local civil society and marginalized groups in World Bank projects has the potential to create social capital and hence good governance, Vedeld claims, referring to Putnam. Will the future and this essay make him right?

## 3.2 Tamil Nadu Water Resources Consolidation Project

### 3.2.1 Preparation and Purpose

Water is scarce in Tamil Nadu, in southernmost India. The agriculture is economically important in the state but was restrained by the water situation and that the irrigation system was old. The project aimed to modernize the hydro-infrastructure, focusing mainly on agricultural purposes. It was a World Bank-project, hence a structural loan. Farmer organizations were established and were supposed to gradually overtake responsibility for operations and maintenance. For this type of project, the participatory approach was relatively new and innovative. 1995-2005 were the years of action (pre-report, World Bank 1995 p.1-3).

The Tamil Nadu state was positive to the project, and the participatory approach. The Government of Tamil Nadu (GOTN) created a new implementation authority, to be responsible for the project and enable participation. Preparation, e.g. farmer organization activities, consultancy, training etc., was initiated 1993, two years before the set off of the project (Official letter. Haribhaskhar, Chief Secretary GOTN 1994 p.2-4 (see annex II)).

### 3.2.2 Institutional Reforms

In the initiating process, neither stakeholders nor broader civil society were deeply involved. Discussions with and between government agencies, NGOs and farmers were assuredly held, but that followed mainly *after* changes in water policy and institutional reorganizations, not before (pre-report World Bank. 1995 p.37). The main focus in participation in this project lied on turn-over (transferring of control and power) from implementation agencies, the World Bank and government of Tamil Nadu, to farmer organisations. Turn-over is the unique way to assure sustainability, according to the pre-report. In this process, NGOs and civil society were stated to be of essential importance, because of their local knowledge and field experience (pre-report World Bank 1995. Vol. 2, annex 4, p. 64).

Fifteen specialized teams worked with the establishment of farmer organizations. They were composed of three implementation-agency staff and two community organizers, one man and one woman. Recruitment of these teams was solely made from NGOs (pre-report World Bank. 1995 p.32).

NGOs were used for a number of purposes. Not only in training and educating farmers and farmer organizations for the turn-over of operation and maintenance, but also in supporting people who for instance had lost their land to new irrigation

canals or in another way had been negatively affected by the project. NGOs were also supposed to be the main advocates of women rights and needs. The World Bank had several demands on the NGOs, such as that they had to be registered, be non-political and secular, be familiar with local dialects and customs, have considerable field experience and have recognized internal stability (pre-report World Bank Vol. 2, annex 18, p. 302).

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is the high-flown conception of the agreement that farmer councils signed with WRO, the main implementation agency. The MoU contained the phases of the turn-over process. The first, joint, phase started when a council had been formed and included "*close collaboration between WRO and the council through exchange of information and transfer of skills*" (MoU-template, p. 2). The farmers' councils had from an early stage very extended responsibilities for the operation and maintenance of the new water infrastructure. Beside that, they also had certain economic responsibilities regulated in the MoU. During the joint management phase, they were supposed to prepare the organization for a complete turn-over of the new system.

Farmer organizations were divided into three separate levels. At the lowest stage, with a large number of organization units but few farmers in each, were the sluice committees or outlet level organizations. Above them were the farmers' councils, involving several hundreds of farmers. For common issues on state or scheme level, an "*Apex Committee*" was created (pre-report, World Bank. 1995 p.11).

These facts implicates that a lot of the reasoning from the theoretical framework came into effect. The developers recognized the importance of involving civil society (though perhaps mostly the NGOs) and its local comparative advantage in knowledge. On the other hand there has been some "civil society from above"-problems, with the establishment of the farmer associations.

### 3.2.3 Examining the impact

The formation of farmer and water-user organisations were to some extent delayed, due to factors such as regime-change in Tamil Nadu and a very severe drought. 3 500 such organisations have been established, though. In those, only a small, but not insignificant, number of women are members (20 %), and an even smaller share of the presidents is women. The drought also caused problems for farmers to take the supposed economic responsibility for operation and maintenance of new the irrigation and investments, simply because there were no economic margins for farmers during the drought. The World Bank concludes that stakeholder organizations are recently formed and will need support and training before they can be able to perform their tasks independently. User committees had the year 2005 full responsibility of only a fraction of the area affected by the project (IC-report, World Bank 2005. p.4-7). The government of Tamil Nadu and its implementing agency has assured to continue with educating and training of the committees and has earmarked budget funds to make the farmer organizations

mature for the turn-over of operation and maintenance. Delay was also caused by difficulties in the recruitment of staff for the teams working with farmer organization, i.e. recruitment from NGOs (*ibid.* p.11-13).

Although these illustrated drawbacks, the Government of Tamil Nadu is mostly satisfied with the participation approach. The state asserts that involvement starts to take roots and that it has fostered feelings of responsibility, obtaining of skills and social awareness. Tens of thousands of farmers and locals have been trained during workshops, interactive sessions, seminars etc. On-Farm Development has been carried out to improve the agriculture's ability to utilize the new technologies and water-infrastructure. The advantages of this kind of approach are bigger than the disadvantages of this project claims the Secretary of Public Works Department (PWD) of Tamil Nadu who concludes that "*Integrated Water Resources Management is the need of the hour in water starved Tamil Nadu*" (Unedited letter. IC-report, World Bank 2005. p.40-43, 52).

The Tamil Nadu water project follows much of the theoretical thinking, outlined above, regarding these types of civil society affecting processes. A broad base of participation and cooperation has been created, and even though it can be accused of not being self-generated, it has been developed and educated by local civil society actors. The inclusion of women, an important part of civil society development, has been a relatively small piece.

Although local community councils must have existed before the project, e.g. panchayats, we find no evidence that these have been used at all. Hadenius and Uggla (1996 p.1625) suggest that new organizations should be built upon available social capital, but no such efforts seem to have been made.

### 3.3 Restoration of Chilika Lagoon

#### 3.3.1 Background

The Chilika Lagoon is located in the relatively poor state of Orissa. In the 80s and 90s, environmental problems in Chilika mounted due to a negative position change and narrowing of the lagoon mouth, together with increasing siltation. This disturbed the lake's connection to the neighboring Bay of Bengal's salty water. Salinity in Chilika decreased. The lagoon was turning into a fresh water ecosystem, severely harming the lake and the surrounding environment (Patnaik & Trisal p.2-4).

The Orissa State Government decided that something had to be done, and therefore created, in 1992, the Chilika Development Authority (CDA) – an autonomous body appointed to manage the lake in an integrated manner, meaning in practice objectives e.g. the involvement of stakeholders and cooperation/collaboration with other institutions and organizations (Ghosh 2003 p.6).

#### 3.3.2 The Management: integrating the civil society

The project of the rejuvenation of Chilika Lagoon had a focus on civic participation (the key ingredient can be said to have been “stakeholder involvement”), and one was aiming for improving the environment in a sustainable way. The CDA got its main financing from the Indian authorities. With the CDA as the nodal figure, the project was built upon strategic stakeholder partnerships created through networking. Local communities (such as fishing community groups), grassroots-level NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), government institutions and agencies, research institutions, and international organizations were all involved in the different parts of the restoration. The operations carried out were supported by scientific research, but, according to Ghosh and Patnaik, the CDA emphasized the anchoring of the operations in the local community before implementation (2006 p.118-123), and village-level consultations were held so that stakeholder suggestions could be incorporated into the management plans (Patnaik & Trisal s.8). Mostly it was project staff that made the priorities and the initial decision making, which does not promote sustainability of the project to the same extent as a true participatory approach, even if anchoring of decisions and consultations were made (see 2.3.3).

Ghosh & Patnaik states that the community participation and development was realized in different fashion depending on the specific problem in question. Capacity building, training, awareness and education were stressed means. When addressing the issues of the areas around the lake itself the CDA formulated micro-plans, mixing indigenous knowledge with scientific expertise, wanting to adopt a “sustainable rural livelihood” approach (2006 p.122-127). Through training programs and exposure visits the watershed communities, e.g. those living in the drainage basin of the lagoon, were intended to be empowered to take decisions and build the capacity to collectively tackle their environmental issues. The people in the area also shared a part of the management costs (Patnaik & Trisal p.8). Capacity building of the local community, the CBOs and the NGOs together with need-based training programs was supposed to engender an enabling milieu where the watershed inhabitants themselves can manage the problems and raise productivity (Ghosh & Patnaik 2006 p.124). The possible positive outcomes of that kind of programs are stated above (2.3.1).

Voluntary participation of the fishing community played a vital role in the spreading of information on the use of the correct type of nets and the banning of juvenile catches (Jellison et al 2004 p.17).

The training, education and mass awareness have been carried out by both established formal institutions and more grassroots-based organizations. In the villages, local NGOs have run education and awareness through producing newsletters and publications in local languages and non-formal education by trained individuals, principally women (Jellison et al 2004 s.18). The involvement of NGOs and grass-roots organizations has been a way to achieve capacity-building and to establish local legitimacy (Golub 2000 p.150).

Furthermore, museums, libraries and environmental programs for children have been established in the villages (Jellison et al 2004 s.18). The stakeholding CBOs and NGOs have also formed a federation called “Campaign for Conservation of Chilika Lagoon” which works closely with the CDA. Also, a known local NGO, Pallishree, have set up 10 environment awareness and education centres in the area (with financial support from the CDA and two Japanese institutions) (Ghosh 2003 p.20).

Finally, Patnaik states that the important participation of women was encouraged, and they were involved in the teaching and through Women Self-Help Groups (World Bank presentation p.17).

# 4 Framed Assessment – IWRM Affecting Civil Society

## 4.1.1 Capacity Building

Capacity building is the most visible advantage of this kind of projects. Stakeholders participated in planning, implementation and operation of complex water infrastructure issues. They had to get together, agree on decisions and choose their representatives. Members of the local communities had to cooperate and contribute to a wide range of matters.

Several thousands of organizations have been established; Village Development Committees, Farmer Councils, a blend of self-help-groups, and a variety of associations on different levels between the local societies and the states. It is very likely that these organizations give their members a sense of the essence of associational life. Theory argues (2.3.1) that these kinds of organizations engender social learning and social capital, and makes participation in other parts of the civil society more likely.

Theory, thus, states that associational activity spreads like rings on water. If initiated in one place, it can promote proliferation. This can happen because of two, partly connected, factors; social capital and the educating feature of organizational participation. It has been hard to conclude what kind of decision making procedures that have been used in the different organizations mentioned above, and in at least the IWDP case, this has differed due to variations in the local contexts. Naturally, though, the educational advantage is greater when a democratic internal structure is used in the organizations.

Vedeld recognizes the difficulties to start associational activities and civil society from scratch, and recommends the World Bank to start in villages with a lot of social capital, a proven capacity to organize (2000 p.34). This recommendation, which the Bank has followed according to the IC-report, is grounded in the underlying theoretical assumption that we call “rings on water”.

Apart from the fact that new organizations have been established, and that social capital and associational education have been the harvest of that, capacity has also been built in already existing organizations, such as NGOs, panchayats and community based organizations. The social staff in the different projects has been recruited from NGOs and a lot of economic means has flown through NGOs. Other existing associations have been trained and enabled to shoulder responsibilities in the project. When these organizations and the NGOs now undertake new tasks and duties, they are better prepared. The civil societies in the

three regions are now more suited to fulfill the responsibilities that democracy usually put on the civil society, such as advocating the interests of the people, stabilizing society and serve as recruiting base for political leadership, etc.

Hence, capacity building has been evident in all of the cases, and it is hard to put one in front of another without deeper knowledge of the regional context. We can only conclude the capacities among a great number of communities, reasonably are stronger now than before the projects. It could have been even more clarified effects, though, if civil society had been more deeply involved in the initiating and planning process, and if project staff would not have wangled with the participating approach - when this has been occurring (e.g. the elaboration of village development plans in IWDP, see 3.1.3). In all of the cases, local communities and newly established organizations need further support to fulfill their new duties, and it is important that the donors do not retire with their satisfaction, and leave their partners behind with no more abilities but more duties. It is also inaccurate to believe that everyone in this poor context can be expected to participate fully, and so every post has been possessed voluntarily. Voluntary participation has other problems, though. Participants tend to be those with time to share for the project. We must therefore ask ourselves who the participants really are. This type of participation approach may result in a bias in which part of the society that gets enabled. Some capacity building is better than none, though, and, actors have done a lot in order to broaden the advantages of the projects.

#### 4.1.2 Women and Marginalized Groups

In the Shivaliks mountain range, where the IWDP project took place, the situation for women has been particularly severe, and the water issue there was the fundamental and basic access to water. The gender focus was in this case thorough, with a big share of women staff on all levels. The projects also managed to include women in the VDCs, the most important stakeholder organizations in that case, 36% of the members were women, which must be considered as a success and an empowerment for many women.

Self-Help-Groups and income-generating activities for women were present in the three cases, but least so in Tamil Nadu. There, the representation by women was lower in the Farmer Councils (20 %) than in corresponding organizations in IWDP. In all cases, project personnel were to a striking extent made up of women, especially staff educating and training local communities, e.g. in Tamil Nadu, where every second was female.

Theory emphasizes the importance of this kind of gender approach, which can bring long term attitude and institutional change.

The IWDP-project also had explicit focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups, particularly landless and transhumant. In the World Bank evaluation, concept has changed to disadvantaged groups, 32 % of the members in VDCs

belong to these groups. The IC-report does not give any definition of this concept, so it is problematic to analyze the actual outcome in that matter, besides concluding that integrating marginalized groups was an explicit goal in the project, and that the social groups (see 3.1.2) worked with social integration in the communities.

In the Chilika case, fishing tribes and similar groups were one of the main targets of the operation. The participation of excluded was here profound, which, according to theory can improve integration. Passage 2.3.2 also showed that social capital is more fragile but very important in societies with wide economic disparities. Hence, efforts in strengthening social capital in such economically divided society are always of great value.

A discussion that comes up concerning several aspects of our study, as well as the focus on vulnerable groups, is to what extent the external actors should let existing power structures prevail and to what extent inclusion of for example women should be emphasized. Theory is clear on the position that action should be taken on traditional social capital. If one changes the social structure in the new organizations a great part, maybe this social capital, built up by e.g. panchayats, gets lost. It is also a risk that legitimacy for the new associations drops if the composition differs a great deal to what the traditional civil society is used to.

We find that there has to be a balance, between to build on traditional social capital and to slowly adjust the parts of the civil society that the project can influence, towards a more integrated structure. Obviously it helps that the cases have a gender perspective in the entire process. Water is also, especially in the poor region where IWDP took place, mainly a women's issue, and it would therefore be a great setback if women were not deeply involved.

#### 4.1.3 Local Focus

Focus on the local context is emphasized in civil society and aid theory. One part of this is to recognize and involve the area's traditional and socially embedded structures and associations – and not just focusing on NGOs.

We find that our three projects have been aimed quite a lot at NGOs, but at the same time have included more locally unique and “unorthodox” associations and structures.

NGOs are not the best tool in all contexts, but they have been fundaments in the participatory approaches of the projects, because of the developer's idea that NGOs have a great amount of local knowledge. The NGOs have been much used, and for a variety of central project tasks. They have been educators, trainers, information disseminators, advocates of women rights, social and economic service providers etc.

In the past many donors equated civil society with NGOs - a not very productive approach according to theory. We do not conclude that this has been the case in the Indian projects outlined above, perhaps apart from the Tamil Nadu

project where almost no other local structures besides NGOs were used (see 3.2.3).

However, the possible negative consequences of an excessive focus on NGOs might be mitigated by the fact that there were smaller local NGOs that were involved, not big international ones coming from the “outside”. Additionally, in the cases of Chilika and the IWDP projects other forms of civil society structures were used, e.g. CBOs, fishing community groups and the panchayats.

Evident in the cases is also a will to involve the less influential and affluent of the society, e.g. the poor and the women. Even though many women undeniably were integrated and participated in the projects, one can certainly doubt the *actual* amount of power and participation of the vulnerable and the poor. Some information indicates that it often was village leaders or other more privileged members of society that influenced the more central decision-making (e.g. 3.1.3 or 3.2.3). The parts of the projects building around and upon existing traditional structures might add to such described problems. Hence, there is nothing wrong with the developers’ “vulnerability focus” going in to the projects, but there may be a little more to ask for in later practice.

Following theory, a main benefit has been the widespread and quantitatively large participation carried out in these projects (although sometimes maybe not socially deep, as described above). A broadened civil society base has been created and supported. Referring very clearly to 2.3.3 and Golub, more people have participated and more voices have been heard.

As for the positive structure’s chances of long run survival, after the initial project is finished, one can only make theory-anchored speculations. But with the evident broad participation, capacity building and enabling the chances for civil society to continue with its functioning should have risen, according to theory. The projects of Chilika, Tamil Nadu, and IWDP are supposed to be upheld by the locals in the future, supported by some government funding.

#### 4.1.4 Demand-led Development and Arena Creation

The part of “demand-led development” that means focusing on participation and the build up of participatory platforms or institutions have been widely used in all of the above cases. The involvement of the local stakeholders have been a, if not *the*, fundamental part of the projects. One has worked for the enabling and collaboration of the civil society in almost every phase and section of the projects. This strategy is positive because it is one necessary way to ensure a functioning environment for civil society in the longer run.

A demand-led approach also involves letting the people maneuver the project boat in the direction they wish, i.e. the wishes and needs of the locals are heard and used. We conclude that the Chilika project had clear and early enough demand-led approach so that the local suggestions could be incorporated into the initial main management plan. In the IWDP and Tamil Nadu cases, early ground plan stakeholder involvement is not quite as evident, even if participation partly occurred also in an early stage (see 3.1.3, 3.2.2). However, later – in the whole

project troika - stakeholders' wishes and suggestions were continuously heard, affecting the shape and tasks of the project. But it is somewhat unclear how many, and which, of the different parts of the projects that are really initiated by the locals or mainly suggested by the developers. This obscurity is of course important to notice – and we do – but we can only trust the facts given, stating that many sub-projects were started due to specific stakeholder demand.

The three IWRM projects analyzed also contained fairly big parts focusing on the "supply-side", which is unavoidable and favourable as long as it does not dominate. A lot of work was put into creating service institutions (see 3.3.2) and training and education programs. But this was predominately carried out by the local civil society itself (though often after initial training of the developers), which should lessen the possible negative effects of an excessive supply-led approach.

Finally, even though, as the section below will show, a lot of the civil society development was steered by the developers we find that a better arena for dialogue and participation has been created. For example, in the Chilika project networking was emphasized and an important function of the CDA was to facilitate this networking of civil society actors. And, exemplifying from the World Bank cases, different types of village committees were established. These constituted one form of platform where (representatives of) civil society could meet, discuss and decide.

#### 4.1.5 Adaptation to Donor Demands

As stated under 2.3.5, donor-dependence in civil society is something to avoid. In the cases above, a lot of financial and consultative support has flown from donors to civil society, both to NGOs and to grassroots-organizations. The World Bank has had certain demands on the created organizations; the VDCs were for instance encouraged to engage women and vulnerable groups as members. This may disturb a present social balance, but can, as we have seen, have other positive outcomes.

Problems can also arise if the village communities perceive that their organizations rather act to fulfill the World Bank's desires than the community's. In that case, legitimacy falls and participation decreases (Golub 2000 p.151). As we saw in the IWDP-case (3.1), villages came in late in the planning process, and had, to some extent, to face the fact. They were more involved later on but too late to change the main direction of the project, if that would have been preferred. This counts more or less for all the cases, even if civil society were used consultatively.

In the three projects studied in this thesis, organizations have been created due to donor demands; farmer councils, community organizations and village committees. These organizations have been set up for duties and to have responsibility over matters that were created mainly by other agents. In these, for the local communities, new situations, they had to adapt. As stated in the theoretical framework, this adaptation is negative *per se*. Civil society, though, had enough influence on implementation of the projects to make them sustainable

also after the withdrawal of the donor (see 2.3.5 or Vedeld 2000), even if Tamil Nadu is a possible risk of exception here.

NGOs were selected after certain criteria made up by the World Bank in two of the cases and by the Orissa state in one case. Hence, other NGOs were left behind. It is possible that this have consequences for the civil society as a whole, when e.g. economic means reach some parts and others not. This can lead to an unintended movement towards that particular kind of civil society, which might result in imbalance (Ottaway & Carothers 2000 p.296).

#### 4.1.6 Depoliticization and Instrumentalization of Civil Society

After assessing the three cases outlined above we can conclude that some problems of depoliticization and instrumentalization are evident. None of the projects had the strengthening of civil society as the primary target. Rather, civil society was seen, in harsh words, as a “tool” in dealing with the main issue – the water situation. It was not unusual for associations to be created almost from scratch, and to work with just a couple of tasks. As stated in theory, this type of technicization or instrumentalization of civil society is not desirable. However, this tough critique aside, the developers in the projects had the possible positive civil society and social capital effects of participatory approaches in mind. Hence, they were not thinking of civil society as a tool to be “thrown away” when the projects were finished.

The developers’ consideration of the political dimension of civil society varied both within and between the cases. That the civil society has a political dimension was not denied, but was neither something in the focuses of the projects. The organizations chosen to work with were predominately picked on basis of ability and knowledge, rather than with any explicit considerations about political characteristics or consequences. This, though, was not entirely true in the cases of Tamil Nadu and the IWDP projects where the World Bank had several demands on the civil society associations up for consideration. These demands included political ones, even if the actual demands were that the associations should be non-political and secular etc. Hence, in these two cases civil society partners were chosen with some political consideration but with the underlying thought that the associations should *not* be political. In the case of Chilika Lagoon we find no evidence of explicit political thinking in the choosing of participating actors.

### 4.2 Donors and Demos: effects on democracy

Do the projects have the features that democracy promotion demands? We have seen that the projects have increased the citizens’ capabilities, thanks to the participation in associations. According to Hadenius and Uggla, organizations have to be democratic internally, have a broad popular base (and legitimacy) and have an open recruitment to able to promote democracy. We can conclude that

donor involvement have been apparent in the formation in many of the organizations, and have tried to influence the composition of them. Thereby, legitimacy tends to decrease and it is questionable to which extent there has been an open recruitment.

Larry Diamond, on the other hand, does not have these harsh demands. For him it would be enough to conclude that some social capital has been engendered and capacity has been built. This indicates that the projects have had the capabilities to strengthen democracy in the regions.

As stated in 2.3.5 and 2.4, the dependency issue can be critical, but that civil society reliance on the international community is better than being dependent on the local government. The former is most probable in the two World Bank projects, with the possible negative side effect of the Bank's status as sole international actor. In the case of Chilika Lagoon, the initiating and implementing actors were mostly domestically based, and the problem of local government dependency might exist.

The positive features to democracy that Larry Diamond puts forward (2.4), were evident in every Indian case. Civil society had many educating and empowering functions, for example. And the statement that development projects with no explicit goal regarding democracy can be promoting democracy anyhow is easily applied to our cases, suggesting, that the participatory activities have been "schools of democracy".

For people in poverty and severe conditions, abstract goals such as improved civil society or improved democracy can be difficult to relate to. Therefore, some theory argues (Golub p.137) that this kind of goals is easier to achieve if people see more direct effects on their daily life, e.g. the water issue.

## 5 Conclusions

*How was civil society affected by the three IWRM projects in India, and how can this be explained?*

As highlighted above, civil society was quite strongly affected by the projects, and mainly in positive ways. The effects are due to the projects' deliberate civil society aims as well as unintended consequences.

Positively for civil society capacity among participants has been built, new arenas have been created, consideration of local context has existed, and marginalized groups have had their voices heard. It has been impossible to avoid some of the regular problems connected to assisting civil society "from above", principally depoliticization and instrumentalization of civil society, and adaptation to donor demands. Thanks to a demand-led approach, those problems have been reduced, at least in the IWDP and Chilika cases.

The Tamil Nadu case had the capability of a more successful course of action, but the participatory approach was not utilized in its full potential. If stakeholders and the broad civil society would have had a more thorough involvement, both the project itself and the outcome on the civil society would have been more gratifying. Also in the IWDP and Chilika cases, engagement could have been even more apparent, especially in the initiating and planning process.

Even though civil society has been for the most part strengthened, effects on democracy are harder to confirm. Following our analysis we conclude that democracy has been promoted due to the projects' civil societal, educational and participatory approaches, at least at the local level.

When performing this study we have come across a somewhat paradoxical line of theoretical argument, appearing when two important theoretical approaches are applied to the real world of IWRM and civil society. Theory states that developers should build upon existing social structures, to ensure legitimacy. At the same time, a focus on the participation promotion of vulnerable groups is emphasized. We find that this has to be balanced in the practical projects if the two slightly contradictory goals are to be achieved. Thus, if for example women are to be empowered one might have to disturb the existing local structures. But simultaneously, in order to apply a fruitful approach to civil society, one has to build on and use the same local structures. Hence, a balance is needed – something we conclude that the three Indian projects in some ways achieved.

We believe that the results that we have found are valid also on other socioeconomic development projects with participatory approaches. It is not the water-infrastructure issue that determines the impact on the civil society, nor is it the Indian context, but rather the associational and participatory strategy. Therefore we conclude that our findings are possible to generalize.

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# Appendix

## Appendix I

### Project Analysis Overview

	Tamil Nadu	IWDP	Chilika
Capacity Building	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>
Women and Marginalized Groups	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>I</b>
Local Focus	<b>W</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>
Demand-led Development	<b>I</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>
Adaptation to Donor Demands (negative effect)	<b>I</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>I</b>
Depoliticization & Instrumentalization (negative effect)	<b>I</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>I</b>

Key:

**Rate of project feature**

Strong = S

Intermediate = I

Weak = W

## Appendix II

N. HARIBHASKAR, I.A.S.  
CHIEF SECRETARY  
GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU



Annex 1  
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SECRETARIAT  
MADRAS - 600 009

Letter No. 60256 / WR1 / 94 Dated: 1st. November, 1994.

TO

Mr. Heinz Vergin,  
Director, India Department,  
The World Bank,  
Washington, D.C. 20433  
USA.

Sub:Tamil Nadu Water Resources Consolidation Project Policy  
and Institutional Reforms.

...

I am pleased to confirm Government of Tamil Nadu's keen interest in improving the management of the water sector and the productivity of irrigated agriculture, and the commitment that we place on achieving this with assistance of the Water Resources Consolidation Project (WRCP).

Tamil Nadu's Water resources are scarce and the state's future development will depend on the best planning and allocation of water between sectors and efficient use by the main sectoral users, especially agriculture. Comprehensive planning of water use on a river basin basis and across sectors is required. For agriculture, the state's main water user, productivity from irrigation must be increased. The state's objective is to increase yields and production of food grains and increase production of high value diversification crops so as to improve incomes in rural areas and assure production of food staples, while ensuring sound environmental management and the growing water needs of non-agricultural users.

To achieve these aims, GOTN has embarked upon a vigorous programme to create a specialist water and irrigation agency for the state and to adjust policies associated with water planning and allocation. Under the WRCP the actions already undertaken will be further followed up. Summarised below in two attachments is a listing of actions already undertaken in preparation for the WRCP (Attachment I), followed by a listing in matrix form of additional actions intended to consolidate these reforms with assistance of the project (Attachment II).

Yours sincerely,  
*[Signature]*  
P.M.A.  
CHIEF SECRETARY.