



Social Capital

Strengthening women through networks

- Archana Jetti



What is Social Capital?

- It's not what you know but who you know
- 'social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them...closely related to what some have called civic virtue" – Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*
- 'a harmonious commingling of trust, viable channels of communication, and norms and sanctions...sufficient levels of social capital are essential for social and economic development' – M.B. Neace



Towards a parsimonious definition...

- Resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions – Nan Lin
 - **Flow of information**
 - **Influence**
 - **Social credentials**
 - **Reinforcements of identity and membership**



Connection to women in the third world?

Buzzwords in development literature : 'welfare', 'upliftment', 'poverty alleviation', 'community participation' and more recently 'empowerment'.

What is empowerment anyway?

Female Genital Cutting : Symptomal approach

- creating legislation to prosecute**
- educating communities on harms**
- training for treatment**

Micro Credit Programs : Poverty alleviation approach

- setting up income generating projects**
- training in marketing, accounting, saving**



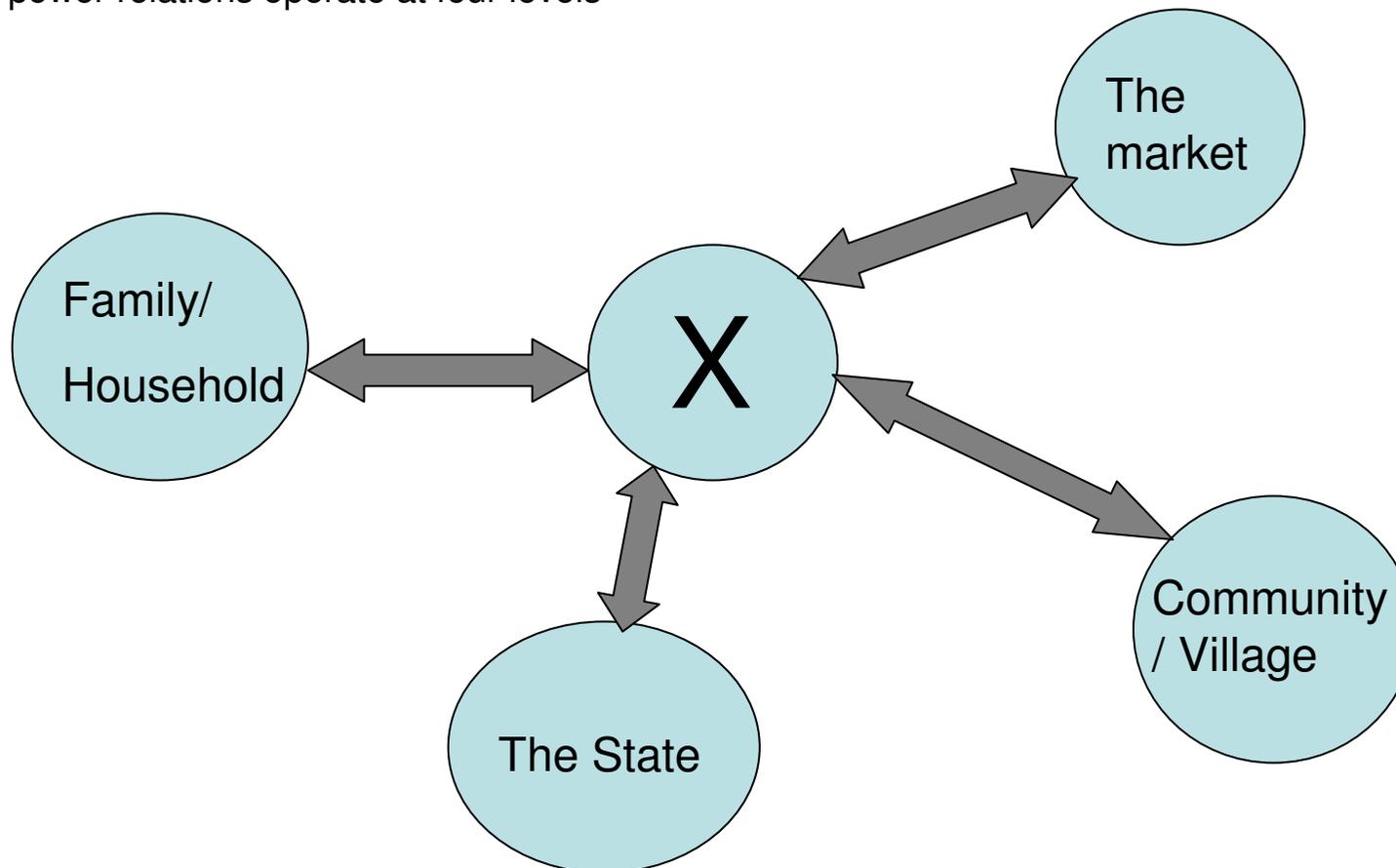
Empowerment includes..

- **Identifying and meeting practical and strategic interests**
 - from lived experiences in their roles as wives and mothers
 - deductively derived when challenging their position in the society
- **Control over material and non-material resources**
 - cash, assests, securities, etc
 - intellectual (knowledge, information, ideas), ideology (beliefs, norms, attitudes, values behavior)



Why the disconnect?

Gender-power relations operate at four levels





Velugu – Unity of theory to praxis

- World Bank initiative in collaboration with the State of Andhra Pradesh
 - Started in June of 2000
 - Covers 187,500 families
 - Involved in capacity building - SHGs
 - Raising awareness among the villagers on the benefits on savings
 - Getting women involved in micro-credit programs

- Focused on women belonging to the lowest caste in the Indian caste hierarchy – Dalits.
 - Also called the untouchables
 - They have it worse than poor men, women of other castes. In fact they have it worse than the dalit men
 - Confined to their immediate habitat and kinsmen
 - Getting water for the local well is taboo.
 - They are subordinate to their fathers as young girls, to their husbands as young wives and to their sons as mothers
 - They lack an identity of their own



Looking at their lives post-VELUGU , through the lens of social capital –

- Dalit women move out of their communities
- Interaction with non-kin who are part of the SHG
- Interaction with vendors at the market for raw-material (textiles, threads, sewing machines)
- Interaction with government official as they register their small tailoring business
- Interaction with the banking systems to conduct their financial transactions
- Gaining familiarity and identity in the community as the tailoring shop
- Becoming symbols of success for other dalit women who seek to emulate them



Micro credit programs

- Strong entry point
- It cannot tackle structural issues of gender and power

Social capital

- Analytical tool
- Enhances the capacity of micro-credit programs to address non-material and strategic interests of women

Only then can these women decide for themselves how they will negotiate the gender-power structures in their attempt to gain empowerment.

After all we do not get what we need, but what we negotiate.