No Shortcuts to Shifting Deep Structures in Organisations

Aruna Rao, David Kelleher and Carol Miller[*]

Abstract In the late 1990s an international feminist network, Gender at Work, wrote about the 'deep structure' of organisations through which gender discriminatory norms and power relations are reproduced. In this article, the authors reflect on the evolution since the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 of Gender at Work's theory and practice on approaches to shift deep structure. The Gender at Work Analytical Framework, used by dozens of organisations worldwide to assess, strategise and evaluate the process of organisational change, is described. Using a case study on the Dalit Women's Livelihood Accountability Initiative in Uttar Pradesh, India, the article demonstrates the adaptation of the Analytical Framework for working directly with community-level programmes, highlighting its strength at bringing into focus the deeply entrenched social norms and deep structures that exclude women from claiming their rights. The article concludes with reflections on what Gender at Work has learned since Beijing about working to challenge deep structures in organisations, programmes and systems.

1 Introduction

At the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, those of us working on issues related to gender equality and organisational change were both hopeful and cautious about the potential of institutionalising gender equality in organisations with the mandate to deliver social and economic justice and development. Feminist researchers were already highlighting the ways in which gender discriminatory norms and power relations were embedded and reproduced inside organisations (see Acker 1990; Goetz 1992, 1995). In the late 1990s, we began exploring and writing about what we referred to as the 'deep structure' of organisations, that is, the collection of values, history, culture and practices that form the 'normal' unquestioned ways of working in organisations.[1] Because gender is a primary signifier of power (Scott 1986) and identity, the deep structure is a collection of the deepest held, stated and unstated norms and practices that govern gender relations in all societies. We started our analysis with the premise that organisations that are not gender equitable in their own functioning are less likely to infuse gender equality into their work. Our aim was to transform organisations, to fundamentally change the rules (and deep structure) and contribute to a new way of thinking about organisations (Rao, Kelleher and Stuart 1999). Our strategies to support organisational change have sought to create spaces where aspects of deep structure are surfaced and confronted through critical reflection and analysis and challenged through strategic actions.

Over the past 15 years, Gender at Work, an international, feminist network committed to ending discrimination against women and advancing cultures of equality, has worked with over 100 organisations – from small community organisations in South Africa, to trade unions, to large-scale governmental programmes in India and international agencies all over the world.[2] From this experience we have developed a more nuanced understanding of gender, organisational change and the challenges and opportunities for shifting deep structure. Perhaps the biggest evolution in our work has been an increased understanding of the relevance of the Gender at Work approach to supporting shifts in deep structure at both the societal and systems level. Our work with organisations may have different entry points but the strategies we support confirm the importance of working at multiple, reinforcing levels to promote changes in gender norms.[3]

2 The Gender at Work Analytical Framework

Those familiar with the Gender at Work Analytical Framework[4] will have observed that it can be used as a guide for analysis, diagnosis, strategy and outcome mapping in working both at the organisational and societal levels.

Figure 1 shows the dimensions of change inside an organisation. The top two quadrants are concerned with individuals – their access to resources and their consciousness or understanding of their rights. The bottom two quadrants are systemic. The bottom right quadrant is about the formal rules that facilitate a gender equality agenda. The bottom left quadrant is about informal social norms and deep structures. The deep structure is, as noted above, a collection of values, history, culture and practices that form the basis of organisational choices and behaviours and are gendered, often unquestioned and kept in place by power structures. This includes social norms. In our work we understand norms as the commonly held beliefs within a social group as to how members should behave. Norms result in a pattern of behaviour motivated by a desire to conform to the shared social expectations of an important reference group (García-Moreno *et al.* 2015). As one participant in a recent Gender at Work workshop said, 'We are afraid that if we loosen traditional and rigid gender roles there might be chaos'. Areas of inquiry regarding deep structure in an organisation include: acceptance and encouragement of women's decision-making and agenda setting; values of equality that are exemplified in social, informal, and work relationships between women and men; interrogation of women's multiple responsibilities ('triple role') and the related implications for participation in the work of the organisation; and belief in the importance of work on gender equality and reward structures for this area of work.

Gender at Work-supported processes may include interventions in one or more of the quadrants. We have found that a combination of changes in consciousness, rules and resources are required to support changes in deep structures.

Our experience suggests that by working closely with change agents within the organisation (such as a trade union or a non-governmental organisation (NGO)) it is possible to shift some aspects of the deep structure so that it is more capable and willing to advance a gender equality agenda with its constituents.

Figure 2 shows the Gender at Work Analytical Framework from the point of view of potential development impact within the community in which the organisations work.

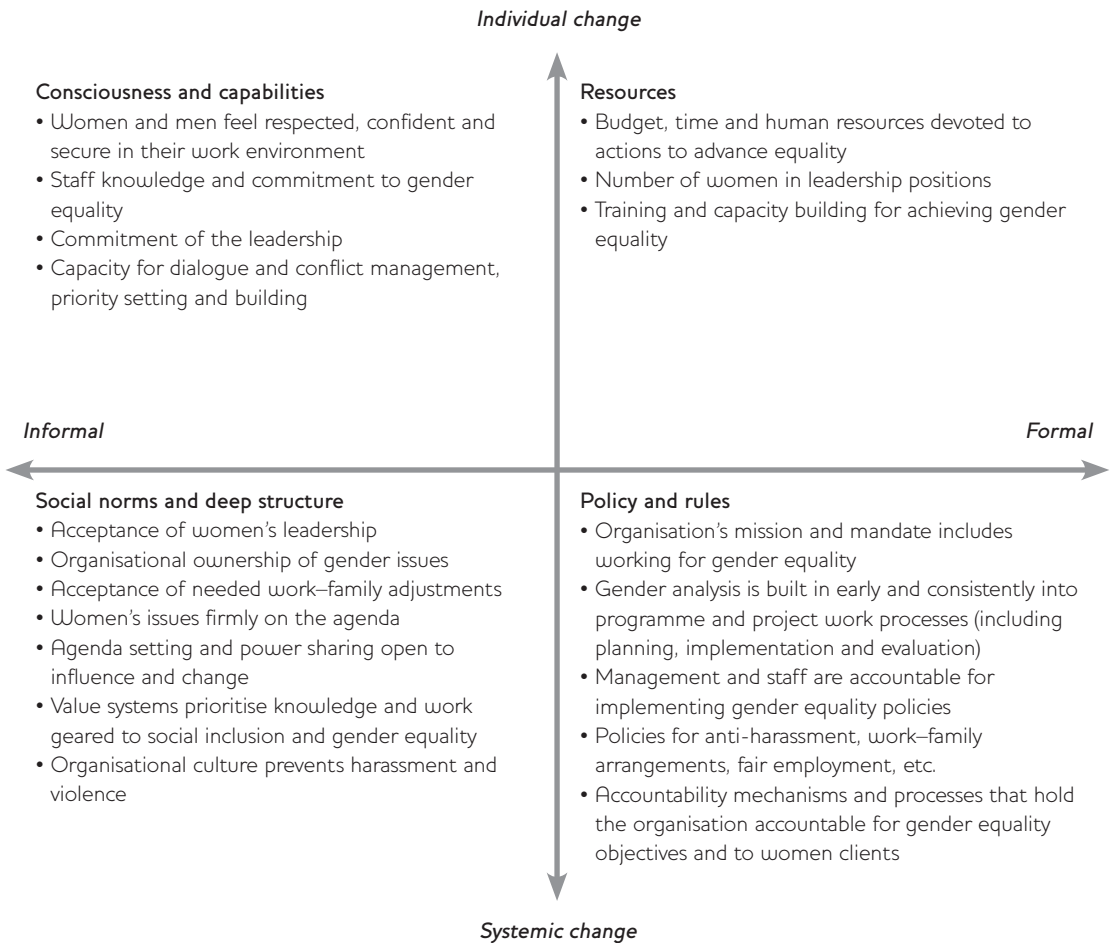Over the past 15 years we have used a gender action learning approach to build capacity to facilitate change in the four quadrants of the framework (Kelleher 2009). A recent analysis of the results of action learning programmes in 30 organisations in Africa and South Asia found results both at the organisational and community or constituency level (Friedman and Kelleher 2009). At the organisational level there was evidence of change towards more gender-equitable cultures. For example: in relation to power relations – more democratic decision-making, more openness to dissenting voices, more inclusive leadership; more respect for women as colleagues; women's agenda getting more attention; childcare arrangements a norm; and changes in discourse around social norms bringing gender issues more into the open. Organisations themselves were more vibrant, self-reliant and more strategic. At the community level, social norms and deep structure were challenged to produce evidence of shifting norms in relation to women's land ownership; new discourses in relation to gender-based violence (GBV) and the acceptability of GBV; the value of girls' education; and division of household responsibilities. Community support and recognition of women's rights also increased in some contexts.

In order to understand the ways in which we have supported shifts in social norms and deep structure, the following section tells the story of an initiative with *dalit* women in Uttar Pradesh in India.

3 The Dalit Women's Livelihood Accountability Initiative (DWLAI)

DWLAI was a two-year initiative (2010–12) carried out by Gender at Work in partnership with four local NGOs in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. The project sought to increase *dalit* women's access to and participation in the 'right to work' programme under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), passed by the Indian government in 2005 after a long struggle by trade unions, workers' movements, civil society groups and women's organisations. The Act features, among other provisions, the right to 100 days of paid work; unemployment benefits; equal wages for equal work; and 33 per cent reservation of jobs for women. It also includes a provision for safe worksite facilities such as providing drinking water, shade, childcare and health care to workers. This was a milestone in labour legislation but failed to benefit women, particularly poor, lower-caste women. In Uttar Pradesh, for example, women's rate of participation in the MGNREGA right to work programme was low. Originally estimated at around 21 per cent, this figure was in all likelihood significantly lower. The participation of members of

Individual change

Consciousness and capabilities
- Women and men feel respected, confident and secure in their work environment
- Staff knowledge and commitment to gender equality
- Commitment of the leadership
- Capacity for dialogue and conflict management, priority setting and building

Resources
- Budget, time and human resources devoted to actions to advance equality
- Number of women in leadership positions
- Training and capacity building for achieving gender equality

Informal ← ——————————————————————— → *Formal*

Social norms and deep structure
- Acceptance of women's leadership
- Organisational ownership of gender issues
- Acceptance of needed work–family adjustments
- Women's issues firmly on the agenda
- Agenda setting and power sharing open to influence and change
- Value systems prioritise knowledge and work geared to social inclusion and gender equality
- Organisational culture prevents harassment and violence

Policy and rules
- Organisation's mission and mandate includes working for gender equality
- Gender analysis is built in early and consistently into programme and project work processes (including planning, implementation and evaluation)
- Management and staff are accountable for implementing gender equality policies
- Policies for anti-harassment, work–family arrangements, fair employment, etc.
- Accountability mechanisms and processes that hold the organisation accountable for gender equality objectives and to women clients
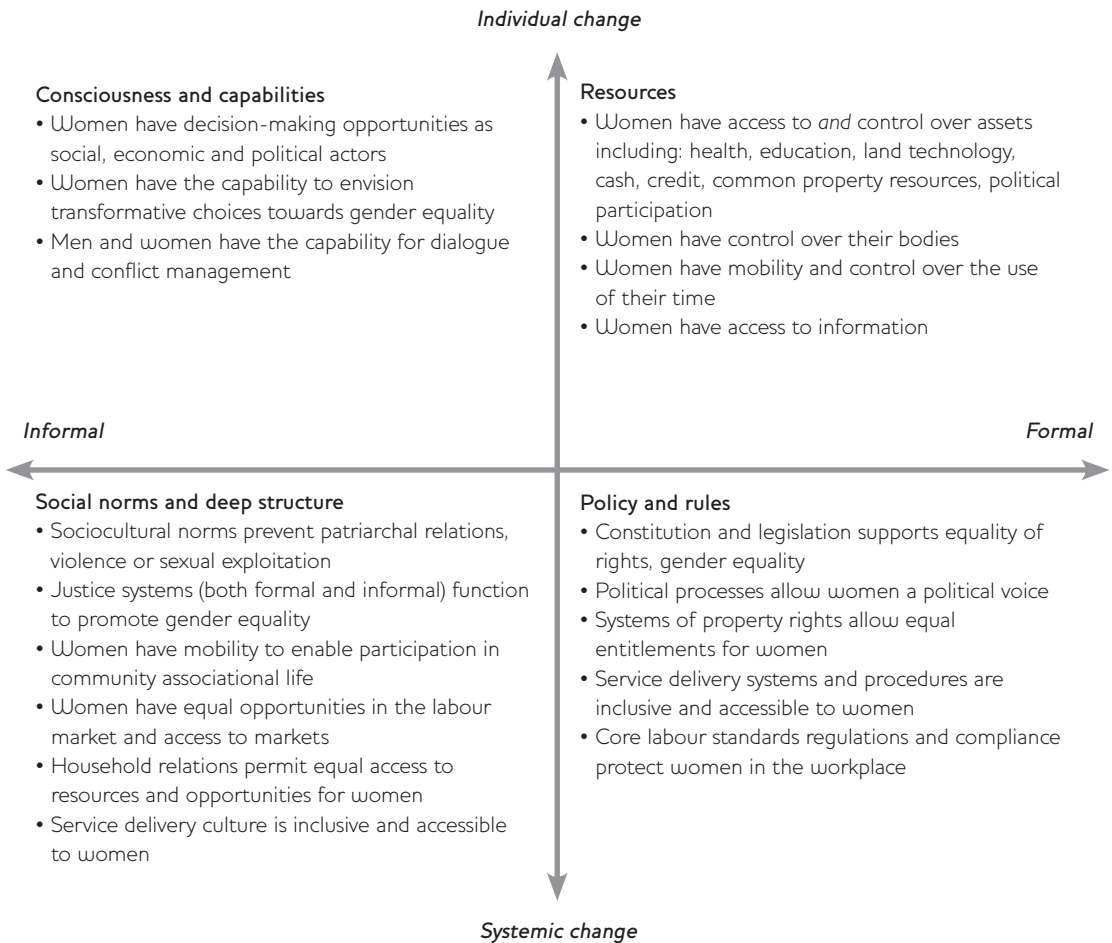
Systemic change

Source Adapted from www.genderatwork.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Gender-Equality-and-Institutional-Change.pdf.

certain *dalit* sub-castes, including *Musahars*, *Sahariyas* and *Kols*, was even lower, owing to their marginalised status within the wider *dalit* community. Their low participation in the right to work programme was not helped by their negligible engagement with the actors and processes of the *Panchayati Raj* system, the local governance institution responsible for overseeing planning and decision-making for MGNREGA.

DWLAI's focus was on shifting structural and ideological barriers to women's employment, as well as deeply entrenched practices of gender, class and caste discrimination that shape social interaction and limit economic opportunities in India. A baseline study for the programme indicated that *dalit* women either were not aware of their rights for work or didn't believe they could claim them. Moreover, social and cultural norms

prevented *dalit* women from being considered for work within MGNREGA and where they were able to obtain work, they were hired for manual labour only. Informed by the Gender at Work Analytical Framework, the contextual analysis for the DWLAI programme conceptualised MGNREGA as part of an open system that reinforced and maintained deep cultural norms and practices that excluded women from employment opportunities. This system also included organisations that were ideally positioned to support *dalit* women to access resources and opportunities provided by MGNREGA but were failing to do so in any strategic or systemic way. While several civil society groups were monitoring MGNREGA, creating awareness and working towards improving its implementation, these organisations rarely focused on *dalit* women's access to MGNREGA entitlements. *Dalit* women had no organised voice within MGNREGA discourses, nor

Individual change

Consciousness and capabilities
- Women have decision-making opportunities as social, economic and political actors
- Women have the capability to envision transformative choices towards gender equality
- Men and women have the capability for dialogue and conflict management

Resources
- Women have access to *and* control over assets including: health, education, land technology, cash, credit, common property resources, political participation
- Women have control over their bodies
- Women have mobility and control over the use of their time
- Women have access to information

Informal | *Formal*

Social norms and deep structure
- Sociocultural norms prevent patriarchal relations, violence or sexual exploitation
- Justice systems (both formal and informal) function to promote gender equality
- Women have mobility to enable participation in community associational life
- Women have equal opportunities in the labour market and access to markets
- Household relations permit equal access to resources and opportunities for women
- Service delivery culture is inclusive and accessible to women

Policy and rules
- Constitution and legislation supports equality of rights, gender equality
- Political processes allow women a political voice
- Systems of property rights allow equal entitlements for women
- Service delivery systems and procedures are inclusive and accessible to women
- Core labour standards regulations and compliance protect women in the workplace

Systemic change

Source Adapted from www.genderatwork.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Gender-Equality-and-Institutional-Change.pdf.

did they have a constituency within civil society that could systematically and consistently advocate on their behalf (UN Women 2012: 21).

3.1 *What happened?*
Gender at Work identified a set of local partners who were committed to working with poor and marginalised groups to access their rights but who wanted to find ways of carrying out this vision more effectively. As one part of its overall strategy, DWLAI sought to facilitate changes within these local organisations to strengthen their capacities to work in the area of women's economic rights and gender equality, with a specific focus on MGNREGA. Gender at Work built a consortium with four local (grassroots) NGOs – Lok Samiti, Parmarth, Sahjani Shiksha Kendra (SSK) and Vanangana. Some of these organisations had worked with MGNREGA in the past but were

not focused on women's participation and others were focused on *dalit* women's rights but had little experience with MGNREGA.

Gender at Work employed gender action learning (GAL) processes in working with these NGOs. GAL processes are designed to provide structured space for reflection, planning and support for organisational change agents (over 18–24 months). During this period, change agents work with existing energy for change within their organisations (and communities) to surface aspects of the deep structure and to develop alternative new norms around specific issues they define as actionable. Differing from traditional approaches to gender mainstreaming, GAL combines awareness raising, knowledge and skills building with focused gender equality change projects, identified by participants, that form the basis for critical reflection, learning

and change. These change projects/experiments can be implemented at the organisational level and/or at the community/programme level and are particularly suited for surfacing and shifting blockages for producing positive programme outcomes that directly challenge formal (enshrined in laws) and informal social norms that hold gender inequality in place. Through GAL processes, participants are given opportunities to reflect and discuss existing norms and ways of working, and co-create alternative norms and practices though concrete actions.

Specifically for DWLAI, over the two-year period, the process supported by Gender at Work sought to strengthen the awareness of the local NGO partners on *dalit* women's conditions and how to involve them in their work, which included capacity building on gender and gender analysis, and developing skills for social audit and surveys. All four organisations were brought together to share experiences and learn about each other's work; build a common goal; and articulate specific objectives for each organisation which later translated into distinct programme innovations. They discussed inequality, unequal power relations, and how these can be addressed in the context of the MGNREGA. Using the four quadrants of the Gender at Work Analytical Framework, they identified ways of tackling the structural dimensions of inequality by working across the four domains of change. Consistent with GAL processes with other organisations, the learning process was designed to strengthen the ongoing programmes of partner organisations, sharpen their focus and deepen their interventions.

It was clear from the outset that raising awareness with *dalit* women of their entitlements and ability to act, though important, was not enough and that getting access to MGNREGA resources and achieving the goal of increased participation required challenging and breaking deep-rooted discriminatory practices and stereotypes about women and work reflected in MGNREGA's implementation. To do this, the programme piloted a series of innovative models of women's engagement with MGNREGA that showed what these women were capable of doing and achieving when allowed to participate fully. Through action learning processes, each partner designed and implemented a pilot to shift gender/caste/class stereotypes that were obstacles to women accessing their rights under MGNREGA.
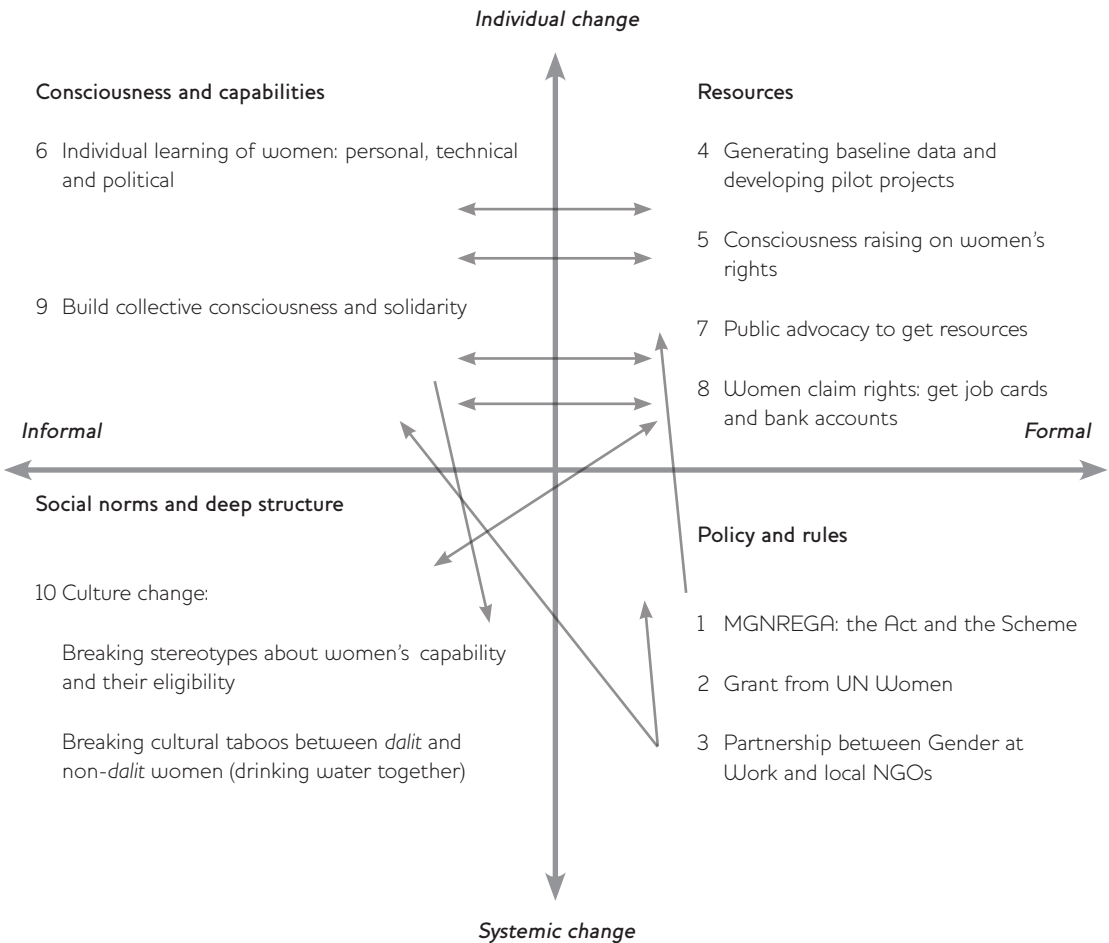
MGNREGA work typically involves earthwork such as digging ponds, de-silting canals and constructing embankments. Women's participation in MGNREGA was limited to manual labour: carrying mud and digging at building sites. Skilled and semi-skilled jobs within the MGNREGA programme, such as that of the 'mate' (worksite supervisor), *rozgar sewaks* (employment secretary), technical assistant and computer operator, were held exclusively by men.

With the support of Gender at Work, the four partners developed innovative models to engage *dalit* women and break down social and cultural norms about women's work, including attitudes about the ability of semi-literate *dalit* women to hold skilled and semi-skilled jobs at MGNREGA worksites. Vanangana initiated an all-women's worksite – building a large pond – where *dalit* women have been involved in all stages from planning the work, to getting it approved, working at the worksite, and supervising it. Parmarth, through their women's federation worked with the *Panchayat* to implement the individual benefit scheme of MGNREGA, through which individual *dalit* and OBC[5] landowners have worked to make their fields cultivable. Lok Samiti's project aimed at enabling access to MGNREGA by Musahar[6] and Muslim women by getting job cards and work for women from these communities for the first time since the implementation of the Act. This initiative also sought to break gender and community-based barriers and stereotypes (e.g. Muslim women not being interested in or allowed to do manual work outside the home). SSK trained *dalit* women to become worksite supervisors across five districts. For this they developed a training module specifically for semi-literate women. The module combined awareness raising with skills and leadership development and it has been used to advocate for policy level interventions to bring more women into these positions. This model also challenged stereotypes related to women's abilities to carry out 'technical' work. In addition to the pilots, the programme supported and was successful in efforts for collective organising of *dalit* women to enable them to play an active role in advocating for their rights.

Throughout the initiative, active advocacy and policy dialogue with key players in the programme at the state and national levels supported the pilots and the GAL processes. This 'political knitting' was carried out by an Uttar Pradesh (UP) adviser to one of the Right to Food Commissioners appointed by the Supreme Court of India, who was a key member of the Gender at Work team. MGNREGA is an important landmark in the history of social security legislation in India and is seen by the Right to Food

Individual change

Consciousness and capabilities

6 Individual learning of women: personal, technical and political

9 Build collective consciousness and solidarity

Resources

4 Generating baseline data and developing pilot projects

5 Consciousness raising on women's rights

7 Public advocacy to get resources

8 Women claim rights: get job cards and bank accounts

Informal

Formal

Social norms and deep structure

10 Culture change:

Breaking stereotypes about women's capability and their eligibility

Breaking cultural taboos between *dalit* and non-*dalit* women (drinking water together)

Policy and rules

1 MGNREGA: the Act and the Scheme

2 Grant from UN Women

3 Partnership between Gender at Work and local NGOs

Systemic change

Campaign as a major tool in the struggle to secure the right to food. Thus, the UP adviser on behalf of the Right to Food Commissioner, investigated problems, advocated for the initiative with the state-level MGNREGA functionaries, investigated violations, and ensured senior-level support for the initiative.

3.2 *What was achieved?*

Through its integrated strategies, the outcomes of DWLAI touch on individual, organisational and system-level changes. Increased awareness among partner NGOs on gender equality and women's rights, and specifically the complex intersection of discrimination experienced by *dalit* women, has translated into tangible changes in ways of working and in shifting social and cultural norms related to women's employment. The women staff from the NGOs themselves gained confidence about taking

on new responsibilities, taking on new jobs and risks as they watched the *dalit* (and Muslim) women push the boundaries. Overall, the partners are better equipped to work on gender equality issues and are better positioned to enable *dalit* women to exercise their rights and claim their entitlements. Lok Samiti has restructured its work force to include *dalit* women.

For women programme participants, the outcomes (mapped against the top two quadrants of the Gender at Work Analytical Framework) have supported access to new resources and opportunities (technical skills, access to jobcards and bank accounts registered in their name) as well as changes in consciousness and knowledge about their rights (they learned about their rights under MGNREGA, about their own capacities and skills). Reported results include:

The participation of Dalit women increased by 30 per cent; women's work days increased by 30 per cent; a model work site was developed with all the facilities [including childcare] that proved this could be done; 50 Dalit women were trained and began working as supervisors on work sites, and women's right to food and livelihood security was strengthened as a result of their own advocacy and lobbying efforts (Sandler and Rao 2012: 555).

DWLAI pushed further than the provisions of MGNREGA to get *dalit* women into supervisory (mate) positions on worksites. The technical training in addition to the pressure placed on MGNREGA officials to hire trained women as supervisors was considered an important breakthrough for women (UN Women 2012: 7). This helped to shift social and cultural norms about *dalit* women's workplace leadership roles and capabilities, and built confidence and self-esteem among women. Similarly, having *dalit* women serving water at worksites also broke social taboos related to pollution and 'untouchability', as did the sharing of seating and eating spaces by *dalit* women from various castes and OBCs. The initiative, by increasing *dalit* and other marginalised women's participation in MGNREGA, also had a positive impact on casual labour rates for both women and men in the area.

4 Shifting social and cultural norms/deep culture: how does change happen?

The action learning processes facilitated the creation of spaces where new positive gender social and cultural norms and discourses related to *dalit* women's employment could be created and tested. The adoption of peer learning and reflection processes was 'a relatively new approach in the context of rural India where hierarchies are rigid and decision-making centralized' (UN Women 2012: 31). Through the implementation of the pilots, the participating NGOs shared learning and knowledge and shifted ways of doing things within their organisations, as well as in how they worked with *dalit* women. The fact that each partner pioneered a different practice supported the programme in developing 'an in-depth understanding of the challenges inherent in realising the potential of the MGNREGA and demonstrated ways in which to overcome those barriers' (UN Women 2012: 42). Through regular peer learning processes and visits to partner organisations, each partner and their women members learned and strategised and adapted their learning to their context. This participatory peer learning also contributed to building solidarity among local NGOs and between their women members who engaged in collective problem-solving and in strategising for solutions.

As we see in Figure 3, DWLAI supported consciousness change work with *dalit* women to allow them to learn technical skills, a new understanding of their rights and a greater appreciation of their capacities. Consciousness raising among women staff and leaders within the local NGOs also gave them the confidence to take on leadership roles in their organisations. Through the collaborative work and collective action the programme built collective consciousness and solidarity among participants.

The creation of women-only spaces was important: for example, the women-only worksite in Vanangana where 100 women worked together to build a pond, under the supervision of women 'mates'. The effort initially encountered opposition from men in the community, with women subjected to disparaging remarks about their inability to use heavy tools. The woman took it as a challenge, gaining strength from each other.

Through action learning processes the relationship between the top right and bottom left quadrants in Figure 3 was reinforced to support transformatory deep culture change/social norm change. Not only was the concern to enable women to access resources that were theirs by right, but to support *dalit* women to really use and control those resources required changes in attitudes/consciousness and in social norms/deep culture change related to women's employment.

One key factor in DWLAI's success and ultimately sustainability was shifting attitudes of key norms enforcers or setters in MGNREGA (MGNREGA duty-bearers and officials/NGO staff) who may either reinforce existing negative norms or support the creation of new norms and ways of doing things. Government officials and *Panchayat* leaders admitted that the programme had challenged many of their assumptions about *dalit* women and that they had new appreciation of their concerns and needs as well as their capabilities as workers and as leaders advocating for their needs and rights (UN Women 2012: 28). In turn, *dalit* women also reported the changed behaviour of duty-bearers and officials towards them, including being invited to attend and speak at meetings and being addressed respectfully. However, changes in attitudes and behaviours of officials appointed by *Panchayats* who work at the grassroots level, were more mixed (UN Women 2012: 37), signalling the importance of understanding norm change as a process of contestation that may engage different social groups unevenly and which happens over time. Similarly,

reported changes in household level decision-making patterns for *dalit* women participants also hinted at how access to new resources, combined with new positive norms being introduced about women and work, were found to have increased the respect women received at home, and increased their control over their wages, potentially creating a virtuous circle in relation to creating lasting norms related to *dalit* women's employment.

Significantly, DWLAI also provides some insights into the relationship between changes in formal policies and laws and informal cultural norms and practices. What we have increasingly seen in the period since Beijing is a crisis of implementation (gaps) with regard to policies and legislation that uphold principles of gender equality and women's rights. What DWLAI shows is that these policies and laws can and should be used to leverage change in women's lives and that if used strategically and creatively they can create space for proposing new social norms to replace patriarchal deep structures/cultural norms that are often at the root of implementation failure. Overall, the programme showed that progressive legislation like MGNREGA in India provides an important opening for positive change for women's rights. But it is only the first step. When women have access to resources (capacity building) that enables them to broaden their awareness and thinking, a network of support across the organisations and women, it fuels their energy and confidence to challenge deeply held beliefs and attitudes. Equally important is the political advocacy to open doors and demand rights that result in concrete positive outcomes for women in the change process.

5 What have we learned since Beijing about working on deep structures in organisations and systems?

Although we are still working on the same issues identified 20 years ago, we now have some hard-won understandings.

We continue to learn how entrenched deep structures are and that there are no quick fixes or short-cuts. However, we know that these structures are not unchangeable and that change begins when individuals begin to see themselves as gendered beings trapped within, but not entirely prisoners of, multiple gendered *institutions*.[7] We have been learning about how we can create the reflective space that will allow individuals in institutions to experience the kinds of personal transformations that give way to institutional change (Sandler and Rao 2012: 556).

As important as individual change is, meaningful social change requires collective change in deep structures/social norms and practices. We now have a better idea about how to facilitate such changes by creating spaces for reflection and action, ways of disrupting negative power dynamics, securing senior level support and allowing the emergence of new social norms or ways of doing things to emerge. GAL processes also reinforce our understanding that culture is a process and that people are involved in the making of and remaking of culture (Rutherford 2011: 18). Cultural and social norms are constantly being contested and there are moments when we can support and reinforce this.

A key lesson, therefore, has been about coupling consciousness change with concrete actions to shift gender power relations and social norms – it is through these processes that profound personal, organisational and in some cases (such as MGNREGA) community level shifts are possible.

As we reflect on the MGNREGA case, as well as others, we see four important factors in successfully shifting some aspects of deep structure:

- Reflective space – this level of change requires a social container which allows individual change agents to learn from one another, and share their understandings of the system. Crucially, it must support the change agents naming the issue in their own terms and then taking action on this understanding.

- Agency – the willingness of a small group of people (change agents) to challenge the structures around them and to imagine something different, and to act on that imagination. We also have a greater appreciation of the micro-political strategies used by change agents that can contribute to deeper structural change or to islands of change to influence the wider system.

- Collective strength – challenging deep structure is not for the faint-hearted; in MGNREGA as in other work, creating women-only spaces[8] where women come together to build collective strength, identify allies and defy resistance, have been effective in supporting women to navigate the stormy waters of contesting gender norms.

- Systems approach – the relevant, surrounding social and institutional milieu must provide some openings for change and also be engaged in the change strategy. In the MGNREGA story, there was

a government programme, there were experienced, local NGOs willing to work on it, and there were well-established links to the *dalit* community. The strategy engaged all those elements. It did not simply focus on the *dalit* women.

Even so, resistance and backlash will happen as aspects of the system change and those groups that benefit from a social norm will dig in to quash dissent and maintain their privilege. Culture is contested; changes and efforts to embed new gender norms in organisations are often vulnerable to resistance, reversals and erosion.

Are some aspects of deep structure more amenable to change (less 'sticky') than others? Our understanding of deep structure would tell us that core aspects such as the gendered division of labour and exclusionary power are most difficult to change in organisations and communities. In MGNREGA, as in many of our projects, we see some success at challenging aspects of the deep structure but not all. For example, women having access to work, their own bank accounts and union membership does affect the exclusionary power structures in their lives. At the same time there are other aspects of the deep structure such as the differences between women and men's work, and foundational economic rationale that reproduces economic inequality that remain intact.

We know from our work with other organisations that we need to disrupt patriarchal social norms and power relations embedded in most organisational cultures. Many progressive policies related to ending gender discrimination, sexual harassment and supporting work–life balance are often only tinkering without challenging the deepest of deep structures: patriarchy (Sandler and Rao 2012: 556). However, we have learned that these victories must still be celebrated as contributions to re-imagining organisations.

Twenty years on from Beijing, the current focus on 'social norms' in development discourse (ODI 2014;

World Bank 2011, 2014) is encouraging in that it signals greater awareness that interventions failing to address deep structure may have limited impact on women's and girls' choices and chances. There is also an increased interest in understanding how gender norms change, with recent research drawing attention to the effects of economic incentives, broad social changes such as urbanisation and demographic change, education, access to new ideas through the media, role models, legal change, policies and programmes promoting gender norm change and social mobilisation and campaigning (ODI 2014; World Bank 2011, 2014).

While we are encouraged by the attention being given to social norms, including gender norms, there are two key dimensions that we believe need to be kept in focus going forward. First, social norms are part of the way in which gender power inequalities are held in place and the current interest in social norms must keep a close eye on the deep structure of power relations at play, including patriarchy, and that the end game should be transforming gender power relations. We must not allow the issue of power to evaporate from discourse around social norms. Secondly, as we have seen in our work over the past 15 years, societal norms regarding gender and other hierarchies are sufficiently strong that they are carried into organisations. We must continue to pay attention to the way that the very organisations invested with supporting social and economic change themselves perpetuate gender norms and other power hierarchies to produce gender inequitable organisational cultures, systems and outcomes. This means that in our work to change social norms we must continue with multidimensional strategies that include work on organisational change alongside efforts to address gender norms contributing to gender inequality at the broader societal level. A few organisations on their own cannot change gender discriminatory norms and power relations in the wider societal context but they *can* provide leadership, exemplars and ignite new conversations.

Notes

*   The authors thank Rieky Stuart for her comments on an earlier version of this article.
1   For more on deep structure, see Rao and Kelleher (2002).
2   This article draws primarily on Gender at Work's work with mixed organisations.
3   We have been influenced by both feminist institutionalist approaches and systems thinking to help us conceptualise ways that organisations are embedded in ongoing institutional dynamics within the wider environment or systems (Krook and Mackay 2011; Mackay 2014; Ramalingam 2013).
4   For more about the Gender at Work Analytical Framework, see: http://genderatwork.org/OurWork/OurApproach/GWFramework.aspx.

5   OBC refers to Other Backward Class. This term is used by the Government of India to classify castes which are considered 'educationally and socially disadvantaged'.
6   The Musahar were once rat-catchers, but this activity has been abandoned. They are now mainly landless agricultural labourers. They are one of the most marginalised groups in India.
7   By 'institutions' we mean the rules that specify how resources are allocated and how tasks, responsibilities and values are assigned. These rules determine who gets what, who does what, and who decides.
8   Although we have not addressed other genders in this article, we do not subscribe to gender binaries and believe that this analysis has relevance to other specific groups along the gender continuum.

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