

refers represents 70% of Gujarat's total population (Patel 1991). Moreover, the major constraint that Gujarat faces is its poor endowments of natural resources, particularly water. Availability of water to rural communities is a primary concern. Currently, the situation has become more severe; out of Gujarat's 18500 villages, more than 12000 villages every year are declared to be 'no source' (see Appendix B). High salinity levels, few perennial rivers and a dwindling natural resource base are a few of the physical factors heightening the crisis. Also, poor management of sustainable resources by the Gujarat government and unequal distribution of resources within the rich-poor dichotomy make the situation even more intolerable.

Women in rural Gujarat are the primary users of water related activities yet their views are rarely acknowledged when development initiatives concerning water resources are being implemented in their communities (Barot 1997, Shiva 1998). To have the objectives of community control and women's participation be met in this avenue, water must be equitably distributed on the basis of collective management where women in rural Gujarat have equal say in the decision-making process. Moreover, development initiatives surrounding this resource must include women at all levels of the planning, implementing and management of these water related activities. Otherwise, development initiatives will stay at status quo; the 'patriarchal water order' will remain a dominating force throughout rural communities in Gujarat leaving its people thirsty, sick and poor.

PRAVAH

PRAVAH is an issue-based network of activists, experts and NGO representatives working together to provide drinking water to all people in Gujarat through the promotion of community participation, especially women's participation in creation, implementation and management of their own resources. In 1994, the Centre for Drinking Water Resources Management of Utthan conducted an in-depth study of the drinking water situation in Gujarat. Dr. Indira Hirway and Dr. P.P. Patel, researchers of the report entitled "Dynamics of Drinking Water in Rural Gujarat", found a devastating situation among some of the rural poor because of the lack of clean drinking water available and also felt that the Gujarat Water Supply and Sewerage Board was failing to provide decentralised, effective solutions towards this problem (Hirway & Patel 1994). Sixty or so NGO representatives, academics and experts attended the seminar to discuss the report findings. One of the major conclusions of the discussion was the desperate need for some form of collective strength in Gujarat to influence government policy and incorporate effective decentralised programs in order to ensure drinking water to all in Gujarat. Thus, PRAVAH was conceptualised during this seminar and was formed in October 1994 with the support of 65 NGOs and individuals.

PRAVAH's most significant concern at the moment is the lack of participation among its rural members. The larger, more urban based and credible NGO representatives have received more advantages in that their proposals are seen and passed more frequently by the GWSSB than are those of the smaller grassroots NGOs. Moreover, negative feelings have developed between these two types of NGOs because of the unequal power dichotomies felt within the network. An even greater problem is that due to PRAVAH's internal limitations members have begun to lose