

Several NGOs dealing with women's participation and the drinking water crisis are developing a strong link to the regional Water Board in order to provide more effective levels of governance to the people of Gujarat. By listening to the concerns of women in rural Gujarat and expressing these concerns to the GWSSB, a more participatory democracy is slowly being developed. Building a cohesive indigenous civil society, one that relates to the regional state (something which is currently happening in Gujarat) will eventually lead to more competent development strategies.

NGO-State Collaborations in Gujarat

NGO-state partnerships can be beneficial to the people affected by lack of resources. The challenging issue is for NGOs to maintain their autonomy while still acting as watchdogs of the government. Academics (Farrington 1993, Riker 1995, Fowler 1997) claim that this is very difficult to achieve. However, PRAVAH has maintained its mission to provide water to all people through women's participation, while still working with the GWSSB. Moreover because of this interaction, PRAVAH keeps a closer watch on government expenditures and actions and increases accountability for the Gujarati people. PRAVAH, through constant discussions with the GWSSB, receives several government reports that were previously not made accessible to NGOs. PRAVAH members also have more power in the decision-making process (i.e. how and where financial resources are being allocated). Thus, more NGOs are aware of how government money is being spent and their role as watchdogs has become more efficient.

It has been argued by Riker (1995) and Fowler (1997) that when collaborative efforts occur between states and NGOs, NGOs begin to lose their unique identity, philosophies and independence. In Gujarat, co-opting NGOs within the drinking water sector has generally not occurred. Many NGOs working on drinking water issues have maintained their autonomy while simultaneously working with the state. Many NGOs have not changed their objectives to suit those of the state. Specifically, they have maintained a strong, independent stance by continuing to support alternative drinking water initiatives. The reasons for this are several. First, there is strength in numbers. For example, PRAVAH does represent various credible, large NGOs that have come together in order to influence government policy. NGOs that are aligned in large numbers gain a certain momentum and confidence that is not easily broken. In other words, the GWSSB, simply because of its large size and expansive power, has not coerced these NGOs to do away with their own philosophies. PRAVAH may not have reached all its rural members but the large, more reputable NGOs that belong to the network have brought with them collective power which very well enhances their autonomy.

A second and equally important factor is that the GWSSB has slowly begun to realise the significance of NGO community development initiatives and alternative strategies and how these ideas complement those of the state. This realisation has occurred because the GWSSB officials have yet to find efficient, sustainable solutions to the drinking water crisis. Furthermore, GWSSB has no desire to co-opt NGOs because the latter still holds the majority of money and political power. The GWSSB is not fearful of spending monetary resources on some NGO initiatives although they are still wary of sharing their political power. Certain key GWSSB