

GENDERED WATERS: THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ON THE PROGRAM 'ONE
MILLION CISTERNS' IN THE BRAZILIAN SEMI-ARID REGION

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my sisters Renata and Claudia, always my strongest supporters in life;

this is also a belated gift to our adored parents Rogerio and Maria Lea, now together in peace and forever alive in us and in our descendants;

and to my soul sisters:

Azoilda, Idalia, Mariana, Mariel, Manuela, Julia, Monica, Andrea Rondinelli, Vivianne, Juliana, Olivia, Carol, Fernanda, Monica Nogueira, Vanessa, Ruth, Liz, Rena and Zoe; Diane and Theresa, Regina and Monica Fauss, Jasmine, Rita, Maristela (from Fortaleza), Leticia, Tia Elisa, Tia Edith, and specially my cousins Teresa and Aylce who were my angels during one the most difficult moments of my life;

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AACC-RN - Associação de Apoio as Comunidades do Campo do Rio Grande do Norte (Association for the Support of Rural Communities of Rio Grande do Norte state)
AMB - Articulação das Mulheres Brasileiras (Forum of Brazilian Women)
ANA - Agência Nacional das Águas (National Water Agency)
ASA - Articulação do Semi-Árido (Semi-Arid Forum)
BAP – Programa Bomba D'Água Popular (Popular Water Pump Program)
CAP-NET GWA - Gender and Water Alliance
CE - Ceará State
CF8 - Centro Feminista 8 de Março (Feminist Centre March 8)
CIA - Intelligence Agency
CIDA - Canadian International Development Agency
CMN - Casa da Mulher do Nordeste (House of the Northeast Women)
CNBB – Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (National Conference of Bishops of Brazil).
CONSEA - Conselho Nacional de Nutrição e Segurança Alimentar (Nutrition and Food Security National Council)
CPF - Cadastro de Pessoas Físicas – (Social Insurance Card)
CPT - Comissão Pastoral da Terra (Church Commission for the Earth)
CTA - Centro Tecnológico Aeroespacial (Technological Aero Spatial Center)
DGTZ - The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
DNOCS - Departamento Nacional de Obras Contra as Secas (National Department for Constructions Againsts Droughts)
EMBRAPA - Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation)
FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization
FEBRABAN- Federação Brasileira de Bancos (Brazilian Federation of Banks)
FIDA - Fundo Internacional para Desenvolvimento da Agricultura – same as IFAD
GAD - Gender and Development
GAP - Gender Action Plan
GTDN - Grupo de Trabalho para o Desenvolvimento do Nordeste (Working Group for the Development of the Northeast)
IBGE - Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics)
IFAD - The International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI - International Food Policy Research Institute
INCRA - Instituto de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform)
IPEA - Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (Brazilian Applied Research Economic Institute)
IWRM - Integrated Water Resource Management
LOSAN - Lei Ordinária de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (National Law on Food and Nutritional Security)

MAPA - Ministerio da Agricultura, Pesca e da Alimentacao (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food)
 MDA - Ministerio do Desenvolvimento Agrario (Ministry of Agrarian Development)
 MDG - Millennium Development Goals
 MDS - Ministerio de Desenvolvimento Social (Ministry for Social Development)
 MIN - Ministerio da Intergracao Nacional (Ministry for National Integration)
 Ministry of Social Development (MDS-Ministerio de Desenvolvimento Social)
 MMM - Marcha Mundial das Mulheres (Womens's World March)
 MOBREAL - Movimento Brasileiro de Alfabetizacao (Brazilian Movement for Literacy)
 MST - Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Rural Workers Movement)
 NGOs - Non Government Organizations
 OPENO - Operacao Nordeste - (Northeast Action)
 P1+2 - Programa Uma Terra e Duas Águas (One Land and Two Waters Program)
 P1MC - Programa Um Milhao de Cisternas (One Million Cisterns Program)
 PB - Participatory Budgeting
 PDA- Plano de Desenvolvimento de Area (Plan for Area Development)
 PDHC- Projeto Dom Helder Camara (Dom Helder Camara Project)
 PE - Pernambuco State
 PRSPs - Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans
 PT - Partido dos Trabalhadores (The Worker's Party)
 REF- Rede de Economia e Feminismo (Economy and Feminism Network)
 RN - Rio Grande do Norte State
 SAPs - Structural Adjustment Policies
 SEBRAE - Servico Brasileiro de Apoio a Micro e Pequenas Empresas (Brazilian Service for Support to Micro and Small Business)
 SOF - Sempre Viva Organizacao Feminista (Sempre Viva Feminist Organization)
 SUDENE- Superintendencia para o Desenvolvimento do Nordeste (Superintendence for the Development of the Northeast),
 UGMs - Unidade Gestora Micro-regional (Micro-regional Management Unit)
 UN - United Nations
 UNE - Uniao Nacional dos Estudantes (National Students Organization)
 WID -Women in Development

ACADEMIC ABSTRACT

Women, especially in developing countries, are often responsible for managing water at the household level, which is considered part of their reproductive work. However, they are rarely represented in bodies that decide on water management, and they hardly play a role in the implementation of projects to increase water access. While the need for enhanced gender equality in water management is recognized in the international development discourse, the complexities of gender equality and the need for transformational, ‘deep’ change are poorly understood, and even much less translated into progressive practice on the ground.

This dissertation presents a qualitative case study of women participation in the Program ‘One Million Cisterns’ in the Brazilian Semi-Arid region, in three locations: Afogados da Ingazeira, Mossoro and Fortaleza, using participant observations, document analysis and semi-structured interviews with key participants. It illustrates the promises and the challenges of bringing about ‘deep’ gender equality and women’s empowerment in water development. The case study shows that women not only derived significant material benefits from the program (access to water, more time, better health); they also acquired economic and political opportunities, as cistern builders and as members of municipal water commissions – roles that had traditionally been reserved for men. The study also found significant synergies between civil society, government and international agencies in creating new avenues for participation and social inclusion, despite considerable resistance and numerous misunderstandings around gender equality. A confluence of favorable conditions at the macro, meso and micro levels enabled women to extent and amplify their participation in water management and in their own development. Key for this transformational process was the role played by local feminist NGOs as well as by social movements and networks supporting women’s organization

Chapter 1. An Introduction to Gendered Waters

1.1. Introduction

Lata d'gua

(Luís Antonio e J. Júnior)

Lata d'água na cabeça
Lá vai Maria, lá vai Maria
Sobe o morro e não se cansa
Pela mão leva a criança
Lá vai Maria

Maria lava a roupa lá no alto
Lutando pelo pão de cada dia
Sonhando com a vida do asfalto
Que acaba onde o morro principia

Water Bucket

(Luís Antonio e J. Júnior)

Water bucket on her head
There goes Maria, there goes Maria
Goes up the hill* and does not get tired,
By the hand she takes the kid
There goes Maria

Maria washes clothes high up there
Fighting for the everyday bread
Dreaming of the life on the asphalt**
That ends where the hill begins.

* hill = slum on the hill, *favela*

** asphalt = the city (with paved streets)

This carnival song was since it appeared in 1952 and became a part of a Brazilian collective memory of great sambas still known today. It portrays a laundry woman carrying water in a bucket up the hill to the slum holding the hand of her child. The lyrics imply that the water she carried up the hill was to be used to wash clothes for people from the city (the asphalt) because this was her way to fight for her daily bread. But it is also implicit that she did not have access to water in the hill/slum for her own cooking, washing, bathing and drinking. The sight of women carrying water in Brazil was common in the 1960s, and can still be seen today in many places such as in the rural Semi-Arid or the urban favelas. *Access to clean water and sanitation is still a problem for poor women* not only in Brazil but also in several other developing countries and regions.

1.2. The water crisis

It has become commonplace to speak of a global water crisis regarding availability of and access to freshwater resources. The 2006 United Nations World Water

Development Report states that the global water crisis is “a crisis of governing systems that determine who gets what water, when and how, and decides who has the right to water and related services” (UN News Centre, 2006). Scholars also point to the human dimension of the water crisis (Barlow 2007) calling attention not only to social inequalities in water access, but also to decisions about water. Human access to water is fundamentally political, and global inequalities in water access basically follow wealth distribution, making lack of access to water both a consequence and a cause of poverty (Crow 2001: 10).

Motivated by the urgency of these issues, this dissertation was built on three basic premises. Firstly, it assumes that any solution to the water crisis needs to increase the participation of key stakeholders in water management. Secondly, it recognizes the central role of women for responsible water management (Kevany 2010:1). And thirdly, it emphasizes the need for the participation of poor women in solutions to the water crisis, and more specifically, the intersection of race, class and gender (Collins 2008, Crenshaw 1994) that are key to comprehending social inequalities in general and water inequalities in particular.

With these premises in mind, the primary research priority of this dissertation is *to contribute to a better understanding of the interrelationship between the participation of low-income women and water development policy. Participation in this case means not only the inclusion of low income women as passive beneficiaries of policy, but also as productive agents in water management.*

1.3. The case study

The primary case study presented herein draws on the experience of water development policy in the Brazilian Semi-Arid, one of the poorest rural areas of Brazil and host to an estimated 2 million families with no access to clean drinking water. The study investigated the participation of women in the program entitled One Million Cisterns (P1MC), and specifically their involvement in the construction of rainwater harvesting tanks (cisterns), and later in the program's municipal commissions. It adopted a feminist standpoint and a qualitative case study approach, with a focus on three localities: Afogados da Ingazeira/PE; Mossoro/RN and Fortaleza/CE. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, document analysis and participant observation.

This study is not concerned with the effectiveness of rainwater harvesting, although there is a clear need for more studies in this area (Domènech and Saurí 2011). Nor is it an evaluation of the entire program. The focus is on successful experiences of empowerment where the participation of women expanded beyond being passive beneficiaries of policies. Therefore, the investigation did not take place at the core of the Program, but on its margins.

This dissertation claims that for a full understanding of the gender dimension in water policy we need to go beyond shallow concepts of women's restricted or limited inclusion and participation in water access. A focus on deep participation and empowerment that acknowledges the need for the transformation of power structures and recognizes women as active change agents can shed a more productive light on the role

of women in water development and lead to an actual demand for their services in previously male-biased settings.

1.4. Research Purpose and Questions

Informed by the general research question *What are the conditions for deep/transformatory¹ participation of women in water development management and policies?*, the present research developed the following specific research questions that guided the investigation carried out with the women associated with the One Million Cisterns program (P1MC):

1. What was the context of emergence of the P1MC? How was it organized? What are the possible avenues for public participation of both men and women? How did women become a part of the program's agenda?
2. How did women participate in the program? How did the first *cisterneiras* (women cistern builders) appear in the program? What changed in their lives? What helped them? Which barriers and challenges did they face? Which role did feminist Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the feminist movement play in their case?
3. What other forms of deeper participation engaged in by women can be observed in the program? How did the women commission members appear in the program? What changed in their lives? What helped them? What barriers and challenges did they face? What role did feminist NGOs and the feminist movement play in their case?

¹ In this dissertation the terms 'deep', 'transformatory' and 'empowering', to characterize participation, are used interchangeably.

4. In a cross–case analysis, what were the recurrent themes and ideas mentioned by poor women and their supporters that shed light on conditions reflecting needs for their own development? Was their participation a successful story of deep participation? How?

1.5. Organization of Chapters

A brief summary of each chapter will follow in order to map the flow of the dissertation and to facilitate reading. *Chapter 2. Development, Participation, and Empowerment: Change concepts or changing concepts?*-- Starting with a discussion about development theory and practice, this chapter explores the concept of participation in development. Based on a critical analysis of social inequalities, authors Paulo Freire and Fals-Borda defended the idea of participation as a means of transforming society through collective self-inquiry, reflection and action. In this context, participation had an emancipatory meaning and was supposed to mobilize and include actors who had traditionally been excluded. In this sense participation meant empowerment (Goulet, 1989). Different types of participation are presented recognizing that *participation* has become a buzzword in development. The term *empowerment* has also become a buzzword (Cornwall & Brock, 2005), especially in relation to women and gender equality in water management development. Different views about empowerment are presented in this chapter with the goal of understanding the complexities of both terms. It is concluded that empowerment is framed as a continuum between two poles of meanings: On the one end of the spectrum the meaning is individual improvement; at the other end it is conceptualized as social transformation. Moreover, some perspectives seem to frame

women's position in society as uni-dimensional while others adopt a complex multidimensional perspective. In addition, as pointed out by Eyben & Napier-Moore (2009), Batliwala (2007) and Papart (2009), there are visible differences between perspectives that frame women's empowerment as a requirement for social justice and those perspectives that see women's empowerment as a means or an instrument to achieving results such as economic growth. These perspectives come into play when one determines how water development policies frame women and why is it important to include women in the debate on water development.

Chapter 3. Gender and Water: Why does it matter? -- Chapter 3 argues that in poor rural areas of the developing world, low income women often work more hours than men, both in productive and reproductive activities. In parallel, rural low-income women also care for water domestically and productively (Wijk-Sijbesma 1998: 31). Nevertheless, women are underrepresented in decision making bodies and are in subordinate positions in organizations responsible for water management (Moraes and Perkins 2007; Zwarteveen and Bennett 2005).

Water development policy makers have been trying to address this contradiction through the adoption of gender mainstreaming strategies. Although such strategies have yielded some positive results, for the most part the end results are weakened by overoptimistic promises of women's empowerment that in fact remains limited (Parpart, 2009). However, the process of including rural low-income women in water management development, and specifically in water policy, has not been sufficiently understood neither in theory or practice.

This dissertation will then take a closer look at some of the complexities involved in any form of empowerment as it pertains to the context of rural women in the Brazilian Semi-Arid.

Chapter 4. The Context of Inequalities of the Brazilian Semi-Arid -- The fact that Brazil is a rich country with a lot of poverty and inequality is one of the biggest problems the country inherited from its colonial past, if not the worst. Fortunately, over the last decades the country has been committed to deepening the democratization process and investing in social policies. Among them are new places and spaces for political, economic and social participation in the growing Semi-Arid region's civil society organizations.

The Articulation of the Semi-Arid (ASA), an umbrella non-governmental organization (NGO) representing more than 800 organizations in the Brazilian Semi-Arid, has been mobilizing rural communities and building rainwater cisterns since 2000. Its first program aimed at building "One Million Cisterns" and has so far built more than 300,000 cisterns for domestic water use with funding from several national and international agencies, but mostly from the national government. Women have been the main beneficiaries. How did they come to participate in the program? Were there places and spaces for the extended, deeper participation of low-income women? If so, how did they emerge? What supported and challenged this participation? Was there social transformation and empowerment?

Chapter 5. Research Design and Methodology -- In order to shed some light on the reality of deep transformative participation of women, qualitative empirical work was conducted in three communities or micro-regions of the Brazilian Semi-Arid (Afogados

da Ingazeira in Pernambuco; Mossoro in Rio Grande do Norte, and Fortaleza in Ceara). A qualitative case-study analysis was adopted, using a feminist perspective. Three methods were used for collecting data: participant observation, semi-structured interviews with key participants, and document analysis.

A first phase of the field work was done through a visit to Recife in April 2008 where a number of individuals (men and women) involved with ASA were interviewed. This allowed for a reconstruction of the history of the program from different perspectives.

The second and more extensive phase of field work took place in June and July 2008, through trips to Afogados da Ingazeira, Mossoro, and Fortaleza. Interviews were conducted with women cistern builders and commission members in order to understand their involvement with the program as well as their perspectives about the changes in their lives.

Chapter 6. The participation of women in the PIMC -- This chapter first talks generally about the participation of women in the PIMC: the avenues of participation and how women entered onto the program's agenda. This historical reconstruction is based on documents and interviews. Then the history of the emergence of each group of cistern builders is explained in parallel to the presentation of the feminist NGO's that were supporting them. Individual women cistern builders are also presented, mostly in their own words. This is done for Afogados da Ingazeira and Mossoro.

The case of Fortaleza was different. It had cistern builders as well (in the micro-region). But Fortaleza also had a number of women participating in the municipal commissions of the program. Among other things, these commissions were expected to

select the localities where cisterns would be built. Since the goal of this research was to investigate alternative forms of participation that go beyond the passive recipient position, interviews involving municipal commission members provided a welcome enrichment of the study.

Chapter 7. Thematic Analysis -- Immediately after the field work the researcher noted the recurrence of themes among the women interviewed. This chapter organizes these themes into thematic networks. The themes selected were:

(1) The meanings of sair, which in Portuguese means going out/ leaving. This was important because women often classified other women by saying “This one can go out, this other can’t.” This is a highly relevant theme because in order to build cisterns or go to meetings in other localities women had to go out and leave the private sphere.

(2) Feminist NGOs and the work of women cistern builders. The relationship between the NGOs and women cistern builders was quite close because the women cistern builders’ existence was made possible through feminist analyses and, once they existed, they found work and support through the feminist network.

(3) ASA’s Local and Municipal Commissions: knowledge, power and water. Here the participation of women in municipal commissions is described and scrutinized: how did they get there? What were their gains?

(4) Networks of Networks: how feminism works. These networks proved that feminists in different regions were connecting, and that they did play a crucial role not only in the success of women cistern builders but also in their dissemination and in the strengthening of gender equality at ASA.

(5) Synergies of Actions: Government and NGOs. This section highlights the synergy among different governments and agencies which created opportunities for women's participation.

Finally a comparison between the cases is presented. The following, research questions provided the framework for this research:

Chapter 8. Conclusion: Gendered Waters and Deep Participation. This frame is further elaborated in the conclusion through a categorization of conditions for the deep participation of women at three levels: Micro, Meso and Macro respectively corresponding to individuals, groups and networks.

It is concluded that the Program One Million Cisterns (P1MC), a civil society initiative supported by the Brazilian federal government, illustrates both the promise and the challenges of deeper participation and empowerment of women.

Beyond material benefits (including new income as cistern builders), women could access unprecedented opportunities for personal growth and empowerment including access to political power in their communities. Crucially, this was thanks to the advocacy role of feminist NGOs and related increase in women's organization. However, resistance against the transformational gender dynamics of the program was strong not only from families but also from communities, institutions and organizations.

When women supported by the feminist movement (through NGOs) were able to take advantage of places and spaces for growth, it is important to note that those spaces did in fact become possibilities for social inclusion. The continuous democratization of Brazil and the consecutive proliferation of spaces for democratic participation has created new opportunities for dialogue between civil society and the state (see Rocha, 2009). A

number of social policies are finally being implemented in the poorer Brazilian Semi-Arid. This creates favorable conditions for feminist organizations composed of rural agricultural workers and NGO members. It is also important to note that these women are also supported and encouraged by the global feminist movement. Their engagement in broader social movements, such as World Women's March and the World Social Forum are a few examples of the magnitude of their networks that also involve international agencies from developed countries.

Despite the fact that women were direct beneficiaries of access to water, and were the main managers of water through the P1MC cisterns, their extended or deeper political and economic participation in the program did not come easily or naturally. This level of participation, to the extent that it occurred, did not emerge from the core of the program, but it grew from its borders at the intersection of ASA and the feminist movement.

1.6. Conclusion

The increased participation of women as stewards of water resources is crucial to any progress towards more responsible and innovative water management in poor rural regions of the developing world. While there has been some progress in acknowledging the need for gender equality in water management in the international development discourse (UN Millennium Goals, etc.), the practice of including and empowering women lags far behind. This is because the concept of transformational or deep changes to gender relations which can lead to gender equality has not been properly understood, let alone acted upon. Deep, meaningful participation involves social transformations and requires real shifts of power in cultural, economic, social and political terms.

Chapter 2. Development, Participation, and Empowerment: Change Concepts or Changing Concepts?

2.1. Introduction

Development, Participation and Empowerment--Do these concepts refer to social change or have their meanings changed over time? This chapter assumes that part of the complexities of theorizing and implementing water projects or programs involving women in water can be better understood through investigation of these concepts.

Participation is discussed starting with its original meaning as social change, as well as its transformation from development to policy. This chapter will also explore participation link to either empowerment or efficiency. If participation became a buzzword so did empowerment which is important to women's new roles in water management development and policies. How does participation and empowerment interact?

This dissertation's most basic research question emerges from this discussion: When does the participation of women in water development or policy lead to empowerment? When does social change happen for women?

2.2. The multiple meanings of participation in development.

Most development projects initiated across the globe in the period after World War II started from the idea that development was essentially about modernization, industrialization and urbanization (Escobar, 1995; Sklair, 1991). Underdeveloped

countries and regions were classified negatively as lacking capital, having low productivity, limited by traditional culture and dependent on subsistence agricultural due to low levels of technology. Development projects were initiated by international and/or government agencies in order to modernize these regions. Since development was a remedy to poverty, and poor regions or countries lacked capital, Western industrialized (rich) countries would lend substantial economic and military assistance to poor countries or regions in order to stimulate industrialization and to stop the spread of Communism (Bradshaw and Wallace, 1996).

The modernization theory that inspired the development of stimulus funding for underdeveloped nations derived partially from Max Weber's attempts to relate the rise of capitalism to the Protestant ethic and to show how other belief systems inhibited the rise of modern society (Sklair,1991:34). Development policies were informed by evolutionist assumptions defending the concept that modern societies evolved from traditional ones.

General dichotomies guided the paradigm of development. This concerns first of all, the identification of spaces that were considered underdeveloped. In terms of nations, after World War II, the redefinition of the West involved the notion of the three worlds: the free industrialized nations, 2) the Communist industrialized nations and 3) the poor, non-industrialized nations, constituting the First, Second and Third world respectively (Escobar, 1995:31). Even in industrialized countries, the notion of underdeveloped regions was used to indicate pre-industrial development and organization. More than that, rural areas were identified with the agricultural sector, while urban areas with the industry and service sector (Saraceno, 1994:325). Third World Countries as well as underdeveloped regions of industrialized nations, were characterized as having high

proportions of population in the countryside and in agriculture. In other words, underdevelopment was linked with rurality. Therefore, the consequent movement of population was characterized by migration from Third World countries to industrialized nations, from underdeveloped to developed regions, and from rural to urban areas. Better jobs, access to services and quality of life were to be found in industrialized and urbanized nations, regions or cities. This focus on simply converting a nation or country from rural to urban failed to meet anyone's objectives! By the 1970s, demands for public participation emerged in critical response to top-down development projects that failed to reduce the poverty they supposedly were designed to combat. Based on a critical analysis of social inequalities, authors Paulo Freire and Fals-Borda defended the idea of participation as a means of transforming society through collective self-inquiry, reflection and action. In this context, participation had an emancipatory meaning and was supposed to mobilize and include those who had traditionally been excluded.

For Freire, the supreme touchstone of development is whether people who were previously treated as mere objects, known and acted upon, thereby become subjects of their own social destiny. When people are oppressed or reduced to the culture of silence, they do not participate in their own humanization. Conversely, when they participate, thereby becoming active subjects of knowledge and action, they begin to construct their properhuman history and engage in processes of authentic development. (Goulet, 1989:165)

According to Cornwall (2005), the original transformatory meaning of participation was linked to control over resources, social justice and change. In this sense, participation could be defined as:

(...) the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control. (Stiefel and Wolfe 1994:5 cited by Cornwall & Brock, 2005:6)

However a decade later the concept of participation began to be domesticated to fit the needs of neo-liberal policies and the involvement of local people began to be desired by projects and programs, so they could be more efficient. Participation, in this sense, was closely linked to cost sharing and consultation.

During the 1980s earlier people-centered narratives of popular participation met the exigencies arising out of neoliberal reforms and the realities of the rolled-back state. Community participation became a channel through which popular participation began to be operationized. In this process, it took a rather different shape than that conveyed by the statements of intent that preceded it. Rather than seeking to involve the people' in defining their own development, 1980s community participation largely focused on engaging 'intended beneficiaries' in developing projects. Cost-sharing and co-production of services emerged as dominant modes of participation; the concept of ownership began to be stripped of any association with a transfer of power and control and invoked to describe the need for people to make contributions in cash or kind to support these processes. (Cornwall & Brock, 2005:7)

This type of local participation was useful for development agencies because it created "political support needed to overcome political and bureaucratic opposition" as well as by countering grassroots resistance to reforms, providing a palliative that served to neutralize popular resistance to Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs (Rahman, 1995; Leal and Opp, 1998 cited by Cornwall & Brock, 2005:7). Although community contributions helped keep costs of the programs low (Cornia et al. 1987:295 cited by Cornwall & Brock, 2005:7), participation was instrumentalized and therefore domesticated, unable to carry the transformatory claim for which it originally intended. Decades after WWII, the term participation became a buzzword. Public participation is used in all fields of knowledge and policy from education to rural development. Several developmental theories use participation as a central concept, such as Participatory Action Research, Participatory Learning in Action, Stakeholder Analysis, and

Participatory Rural Appraisal – although with different meanings. Large development agencies adopted the idea of participation (involving local people) as a means of achieving more effective interventions. The emphasis thus shifted to efficiency, and participation often did not imply a shift in power or real involvement in critical decisions.

Parallel to this growth of a new set of participatory models, policy making was also characterized by the increasing reliance on decentralized forms of governance with the goal of enhancing sustainable development. Local and regional levels of government as well as corporate entities on the local level such as businesses, industry associations and trade unions became important actors in development projects. These trends reflect the view that the management of increasingly complex and transversal problems requires the inclusion and participation of the entire set of “consequential” actors. Despite the good intentions of good governance agendas, the transformatory power of participation was also absent.

A second effect in the late 1990s came out of a good governance agenda. Participation became a prominent way to forecast as consumer involvement the shaping of service provisions and accountability through partnership models that had become a feature of local service provisions in many countries (Loewenson 2000; Manor 2004). Over the course of the decade, decentralized governance sprang into fashion as the most acceptable route to “good” governance. Offering the answer to multiple ills, development myths about decentralization regularly invoked the participation of “the poor”. Conflict and power are as absent from this world as they are from the world we are offered in today’s development policies; versions of participation and empowerment invoked in decentralization policies

are those that fit the frame, forming part of a chain of equivalence in which the more conflictive elements of both are stripped away in the service of poverty reduction (Cornwall,& Brock, 2005:8).

These shifts in the understanding and reality of participation raise questions about the emancipatory and transformative potential of contemporary models of participatory development. Has participation, in search of efficiency, lost its transformative edge? Could this other style of participation actually mobilize and empower “hitherto excluded” interests, actors and communities in civil society? Or did this type of participation rather entrench the privileged position of established actors? In order to understand some of these dilemmas of participation, different aspects of the concept and its implementation will be examined in the next section.

2.3. Classifying participation

Attempting to make sense of the diversity of meanings regarding participation, a number of classifications were proposed. In terms of scale, Goulet (1998:166-7) noted that participatory projects often worked at micro levels within communities or groups, where most of them would succeed but would have difficulties scaling up. Therefore the effects of those projects would remain micro – which limits them. On the other side, the process of transforming a micro project into a macro one could carry the risk of cooptation.

Another question raised by Goulet was origin, and he identified three possible beginnings for participation. The first one, the “state promoted participation” (Goulet,1989:) was also called “invited” participation (Cornwall,) This type of

participation is generated by authorities who need and invite people's input with the intention of achieving their own goals. People's participation is needed in order to produce more or to operate more efficiently (Goulet,1989:167).

The second origin of participation is "spontaneously generated from below" by local groups or communities themselves that experience a crisis and find the need to "mobilize itself to protest, resist, say no" (Goulet,1989:167). A good example of this bottom-up participation are environmental justice groups that organize themselves when dealing with a common threat.

And finally, a third mode of participation is related to the participation instigated by what Goulet called *change agents* which work as catalysts of change within a certain group or community. Change agents, such as "technicians, community organizers, missionaries, or militants of some movement" could be the starters of this type of participation. Their aim is to facilitate both mobilization and self organization so that people will become aware of their own situation and act upon it. As Goulet put it:

Many such change agents adhere to ideologies which view self-reliance in poor people as a desirable goal. Accordingly, they see their own activation of the masses as 'facilitation' or 'pump priming,' destined to disappear after the people awaken to their dormant capacities to decide to act for themselves.

(...)

In most cases, moreover, external facilitators are not content to help a populace mobilize; they also want it to organize. Mobilizing leads to joint action around some discrete, limited objective seen as urgent or important, whereas organizing is a longer-term pattern of collective action which postulates the need to meet and build solidarity even in the absence of specific tasks to conduct. The broader purpose of organization is to make people conscious of their strength – actual and potential – precisely *qua* group. That strength is to be utilized not only to resist injustices, but also to gain a deeper understanding of one's situation, including future or contingent action. Mobilization does not always lead to organization although, conversely, organization usually requires prior mobilization. (Goulet,1989:167)

Although this type of participation originates outside of the grassroots group such as the top-down participation, Goulet affirmed that in fact it is more similar to the bottom-up participation because it aims at empowering communities and groups towards their own autonomy.

This diversity of meanings and interpretations of participation inspired a number of scholars and practitioners to organize participation in hierarchical levels. Arnstein (1969), for instance, proposed a ladder of participation to illustrate the different but continuous degrees of citizen participation, proposing eight levels that, although continuous, could also happen independently.

- 1- Manipulation
 - 2- Therapy
 - 3- Informing
 - 4- Consultation
 - 5- Placation
 - 6- Partnership
 - 7- Delegated Power
 - 8- Citizen control
- (Arnstein,1969 cited by Guimaraes, 2009:7)

A similar attempt to classify participation was made by Pimbert and Pretty (1994) who suggested seven types of participation ranging from more passive to more active forms:

Table. 2.1. Types of Participation, Components and Characteristics

Type of Participation	Some Components and Characteristics
PassiveParticipation	People are told what is going to happen or has already happened. Top down, information shared belongs only to external professionals.
Participation in information giving	People answer questions posed by extractive researchers, using surveys etc. People not able to influence the research.
Participation by consultation	People are consulted and external agents listen to their views. Usually externally defined problems and solutions. People not really involved in decision making. Participation as consultation.
Participation by	Provision of resources, e.g. labor. Little incentive to participate after

material incentives	the incentives end, for example much farm research, some community forestry.
Functional Participation	Groups are formed to meet predetermined objectives. Usually done after major project decisions are made, therefore initially dependent on outsiders but may become self dependent and enabling. Participation as organization
Interactive Participation	Joint analysis to joint actions. Possible use of new local institutions or strengthening existing ones. Enabling and empowering so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices
Self-Mobilization	Already empowered, take decisions independently of external institutions. May or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power. Participation as empowering.

Source: Pimbert and Pretty, 1994 cited by Guimaraes, 2009:7-8.

Analyzing those classifications, Guimaraes (2009) suggested that the question of whether those steps could be climbed gradually depended on the perspective taken. From an efficiency perspective, the answer would be yes, and lower levels of participation could gradually grow into higher levels. However, from an empowerment perspective, Guimaraes argues that this would not be a feasible ladder to climb. Not only because the social world does not behave in such an organized way, but also because the more passive forms of participation would not lead to more action; but quite the contrary.

This is the distinction between the *efficiency argument* and the *equity and empowerment argument*. The former envisages the use of participation instrumentally, to achieve better project outcomes or greater sustainability in rural development terms, for instance by mobilizing beneficiaries' contributions through their involvement in implementation, or by increasing project acceptance, local ownership and sustainability. The latter regards participation as a process that empowers the poor and strengthens their capacity to take independent collective action in order to improve their own situation (and can, in some cases, even lead to changes in the distribution of power, as successful collective action and the associated increase in awareness and self-confidence lead the poor to claim a larger share of power and resources in the rural community). It advocates dismiss instrumental uses of participation as inadequate, since they rarely if ever lead to the effective empowerment of the majority, particularly the poor and oppressed (Guimaraes, 2009:8).

Despite this complexity, it is possible to conclude that the transformative aspect of participation – or when participation was linked to social change – was often

associated with the concept of empowerment. In parallel, the concept of empowerment was also appropriated by feminist and gender studies. The next section will present a brief investigation of gender equality and empowerment of women, with the goal of shedding some light on the participation of women in water development.

2.4.The concept of empowerment and its evolution

Over the last decades the term empowerment became such a buzzword that it is now used by a range of different arenas including social movements, business management, psychology, development, and education to name a few.. Therefore, the task of defining the term can be quite frustrating. This research is interested in the meanings of women’s empowerment in context of development and practice and will, therefore. look at a number of related feminist perspectives.

What is Empowerment? Srilatha Batliwala, while doing a historical reconstruction of the term, argued that “empowerment” can be traced back “as early as the Protestant Reformation in Europe and reverberates through the centuries in Europe and North America through Quakerism, Jeffersonian democracy, early capitalism, and the black power movement” (Batliwala , 2007:558). But it was in the second half of the twentieth century that the concept was “revitalized and acquired a strong political meaning” (Batliwala, 2007:558) and started to be used by several different social movements claiming social change, especially women’s movements. According to her:

The concept of women’s empowerment emerged from several important critiques and debates generated by the women’s movements through the world during the 1980s, when feminists, particularly in the Third World, were increasingly discontent with the largely apolitical and economist ‘WID’, ‘WAD’, and ‘GAD’ model in prevailing development interventions (Batliwala, 2007:558).

The interaction between feminism and popular education was part of these debates. Feminists borrowed the idea of “conscientization” from Paulo Freire, as used in Popular Education and Liberation Theology. In rough terms, conscientization meant a critical consciousness or a process of becoming aware of one’s own position in society, its oppressions and the collective action needed to change it. However, despite contesting “top down, paternalistic community development approaches, those theories did not include gender and the subordination of women as a critical element of liberation” (Batliwala, 2007:558). This is what the women’s movement contributed.

Feminists were also influenced by Gramsci’s ideas of “subalterns and the hegemonic role of dominant ideologies” as well as the social construction theory and post colonial theory (Batliwala, 2007:558). Feminists introduced gender to those theories as a “fundamental category in the analysis and practice of social change and development” (Batliwala, 2007:559) influencing activists and social movements. In Third World countries feminists also pushed “consciousness-raising into the realm of radical organizing and movement building for gender equality” (Batliwala, 2007:559). From this interaction, in the 1980s the concept of empowerment began to be used by several different social justice arenas. In this context, women’s empowerment was:

(...) a political and transformative idea for struggles that challenged not only patriarchy, but also the mediating structures of class, race, ethnicity – and, in India--caste and religion – which determined the nature of women’s position and condition in developing countries. (Batliwala, 2007:558)

It was in the 1990s though that “women’s empowerment” became a popular word in development. Batliwala argues that “development –assistance agencies (multilateral, bilateral, and private) [were] eternally in search for sexier catchphrases and magic bullets

that could somehow fast track the process of social transformation” (Batliwala, 2007:558); therefore they easily adopted the term “women’s empowerment’ in substitution of concepts such as “peoples participation” and “women’s development” (Batliwala, 2007:558). But it was at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing that women’s empowerment gained a new level of importance. The resulting Platform for Action was an agenda for women’s empowerment² accepted and signed by state actors and government agencies that committed (at least in theory) to women’s empowerment. What did the term mean at this time? Although women’s empowerment was mentioned a number of times in the Beijing Declaration an explicit definition was not clear.³ Yet, Batliwala affirms that at this time:

The most important point, however, is that all efforts to conceptualize the term more clearly stressed that empowerment was a socio-political process, that the critical operating concept within empowerment was power, and that empowerment was about shifts in political, social, and economic power between and across both individuals and social groups (Batliwala , 2007:558).

According to the author, at least in India, it was the success of the term on the ground (as used by social movements and NGOs and the dissemination of it to other donor agencies) as well as the adoption by the government that lead to the instrumentalization of the concept. This process of instrumentalization increased later in the 1990s in India with the dissemination of neo-liberal economic policies. By then empowerment was co-opted,

² Mission Statement 1. United Nations, 1995. “Platform for Action” The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Beijing, China – September. Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#statement> Accessed on June 15 , 2009

³ Empowerment was mentioned several times together with other concepts, but never formally defined. The closest sentence to a definition was on Item 13 of the Beijing Declaration: “Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace”. In Beijing Declaration 13. United Nations, 1995. “Platform for Action” The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Beijing, China – September. Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/beijingdeclaration.html> Accessed on June 15 , 2009

and its transformatory potential limited to manageable arenas. In India, empowerment became mainly two types of action: the self-help women's groups (SHGs) that did savings and lending, and the reservation of seats for women in local self-government bodies (Batliwala, 2007:562). Respectively, those two actions later would be called economic empowerment and political empowerment, and although they might stimulate or improve women's lives, they are very different from the initial meaning of empowerment as societal transformation.

2.5. Power in empowerment, from the concept to practice

Jo Rowlands in 1995 had already called attention for the complexity of defining empowerment. She argued that the confusion surrounding the term exists because of its root concept, power, with the latter having a great variety of meanings (Rowlands, 1995:101) (Boudon, 1989). She differentiates between two major types of definitions for power. The first one is the "zero-sum notion" that understands power as meaning "The more one has, the less the others do." The second does not sum zero and encompasses several different definitions such as the ones used to describe "a power treat, an economic power, and integrative power, the power of love, the power to create, etc." (Rowlands, 1995:101).

Rowlands proposed two main frameworks to understand power: the conventional and the generative. The conventional framework would understand power as "power over" meaning someone or group having control and/or influence over others. Feminists criticized this framework because it ignored "the distribution of power in society and the dynamics of gender, race, class and any other force of oppression." They also pointed out

that power is “an instrument of domination” and as such could be “subtly exercised and internalized,” and when internalized “the overt use of power over is no longer necessary” (Rowlands, 1995:102). In agreement with this definition of power, empowerment would mean ‘bringing people who are outside the decision making process into it’ (Rowlands, 1995:102), which means “access to political structures and formal decision-making” and in the economic sphere, it means “access to markets and incomes that enable people to participate in economic decisions (Rowlands, 1995:102).

On the other hand, power as understood by the generative framework is “power to” create, lead, and transform; and therefore, it does not sum zero. One’s increase in power does not necessarily decrease others’ (Rowlands, 1995:102) although it might challenge the distribution of power. Empowerment in this sense would imply the ‘power to’ increase one’s ability to resist and challenge ‘power over’ (Kelly 1992 cited by Rowlands, 1995:102). Differing from the prior perspective, empowerment here would lead to “access to intangible decision making processes.” This poses a challenge to policies and projects that are results oriented, since in this case of empowerment results cannot be predicted.

This perspective of empowerment provides interesting insights into the role of professionals in regard to working with empowerment in development. Rowlands argues that their role must be that of a helper and facilitator in order not to interfere with the direction of the process. Since empowerment may take unanticipated directions “the professional cannot expect to control the outcomes” (Rowlands, 1995:103). In her own words:

A process of empowerment that seeks to engage poor and marginalized people cannot be effective if the methodology is top down and directive,

or encourages dependency. Empowerment is a process that cannot be imposed by outsiders – although appropriate external support and intervention can speed up and encourage it. It calls for a facilitative approach and an attitude of complete respect for and confidence in the people being worked with or accompanied. It therefore makes great demands on the change-agents, and may require (and feed into) their own empowerment (Rowlands, 1995:105).

Other challenges highlighted by Rowlands for development work with

empowerment are time and the conditions of people involved. Both Rowlands and Batliwala (1993) agree that the empowerment process takes time and each person has an individual pace. This is a (Rowlands, 1995:105) challenge for projects and programs which need to show results in limited time. Another challenge is the type of people involved in empowering projects. According to Rowland, there is “a temptation to work with people who have already a degree of self-confidence” (Rowlands, 1995:105); therefore, some projects fail to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized due to this tendency. She argues that one needs at least a bit of sense of self-worth in order to take the time and initiative to participate in a meeting for instance. It is, however, possible to imagine that even if this happens, the results from creating leadership in a group could also have positive unexpected results. Finally, Rowlands borrows a definition of women’s empowerment from Keller and Mbwewe (1991) that embodies her own framework. According to them, women’s empowerment is defined as...

(...) a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination. (Keller and Mbwewe, 1991 cited by Rowlands, 1995:104)

2.6. Empowerment in the Millennium Development Goal #3 - gender equality and women's empowerment

In order to examine the effects and limits of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Number 3, Naila Kabeer (2005) presented her own framework to explain women's empowerment. Kabeer defines, power as the "ability to make choices," and people who are denied choices are "disempowered" (Kabeer, 2005:13). Therefore, empowerment "is the process of acquiring the ability to make choices (...) [and] change" (Kabeer, 2005:13-14). For that to happen "alternatives" (or the ability to choose differently) must not only exist but needs to be seen because internalized oppression could make alternatives invisible. She also adds that that not all choices are linked to empowerment; some are more significant in ones life and therefore are called "strategic choices." Examples of strategic choices could be: "where to live, whether and whom to marry, whether to have children, how many children to have, who has custody over children, freedom of movement and association and so on" (Kabeer, 2005:14). In sum, empowerment for the author is the ability to make strategic choices.

Kabeer also argued that the concept of "empowerment can be explored through three closely interrelated dimensions: agency, resources and achievements." Agency "represents the processes by which choices are made and put into effect, (...) resources are the medium through which agency is exercised; and achievements refer to the outcomes of agency" (Kabeer, 2005:14). Agency and resources represent people's capabilities whereas achievements are the "extent to which this potential is realized" (Kabeer, 2005:15).

Kabeer explains that agency can be positive or negative. It is positive if it has the sense of "power to" as referred earlier by Rowlands; and it is called negative if it means

“power over,” also discussed earlier in this chapter. Moreover, she adds that power operates also “in the absence of explicit forms of agency” and could be exercised as “institutional biases, cultural or ideological norms” that could work creating and reinforcing inequalities. In this sense, values and beliefs are keys to legitimating inequalities. As a result, agency as linked to empowerment often starts from within and implies not only exercising choice but also challenging power relations (Kabeer, 2005:14).

The author also discriminates between a passive (little choice) or active (purposeful) form of agency as well as between a more “effectiveness focus” or a “transformative focus” of agency. According to Kabeer’s own definition, the transformative forms of agency....

“(...) do not simply address immediate inequalities but are used to initiate longer-term processes of change in the structures of patriarchy. While changes in the consciousness and agency of individual women are important starting points in such processes, it will do little on its own to undermine the systematic reproduction of inequality. Institutional transformation requires movement along a number of fronts: from individual to collective agency, from private negotiations to public action, and from the informal sphere to the formal arenas of struggle where power is legitimately exercised”(Kabeer, 2005:16).

Using this perspective Kabeer examines the three monitoring indicators from the Millennium Development Goal Number 3 “ Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality”⁴. The three indicators are the proportions of women in education, wage work and in national parliaments, which she frames as “resources”. Then looking at the positive effects and limitations she will point out the advances and challenges of gender equality and women’s empowerment in practice. Below is a summary of her findings.

⁴ Please see: <http://www.undp.org/mdg/goal3.shtml>

Table 2.2. Resource and Effects of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

RESOURCES/ EFFECTS	Positive	Limits
Access to Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change in cognitive ability • improvement of well-being for self and family • change in power relations within and outside household • change in access to and control over resources, and role in economic decision-making • less likely to suffer domestic violence • increase in women’s capacity to deal with the outside world (governments, services) • greater possibility to direct collective challenges to male prerogatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes conditioned by the context and social relationships that embodies and promotes education • limited expectations and opportunities from girls (besides marriage/reproductive roles) • the hidden curriculum: relationships embodied in the delivery of education (reproduction of inequalities, teacher’s gender bias, concentration in caring professions) • gender stereotypes in curriculum • legitimizes other social inequalities (low value of physical work, domestic activities) • focus on family health and welfare rather than a more equal place in society • does not necessarily provide women with the analytical capacity and courage to question unjust practices
Access to paid work	<p>In self employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • potential to shift balance of power within the family • change in women’s self-perception • reduction in domestic violence • increase in women’s assets • long term membership to women’s associations (microfinance for example) led to wider impacts <p>In agricultural wage labor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic improvements for women • greater independence in household decision making • widening social networks <p>Non-agricultural wage labor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes in women’s lives are more marked because associated with migration out of rural areas and was from patriarchal controls of kingship and community • better than casual labor • may be able to leave abusive marriages, delay marriage or delay childbirth • may be able to help family financially • new social network and independence • improvements in household relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploitative work conditions, mostly in agro and manufacturing industries, export oriented manufacturing, flexible labor practices • health hazards • lack of time • women continue to bear burden of domestic work, or share it with other women and girls • gender inequalities at work, women less likely to unionize • women in low income countries continue to work in the informal economy • no improvements in women’s subordinate status at home and work

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more likely to vote 	
Political Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of national representation • Could potentially address many constraints that limit the life changes of women • Local government • Potential to decisions that directly affect the lives of poor people • Potential for women bringing new issues to the political agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality is the proportion of women in national parliaments is low (average 13.8) • Women’s participation depends on structure of political sphere, political culture of parties, electoral systems • If women are from the narrow elite, if invited rather than elected, if they have no grassroots constituency to represent and answer to, their presence will be only a token one • Women who enter national parliaments are not generally drawn from the ranks of poor people • Local government • Participants may represent and reproduce same patriarchal power structures

Source: Based on Kabeer, 2005: 16-22 and 23-24.

After this examination Kabeer concludes that gender relations are complex and multi-dimensional and that they cannot be reduced to a “simple set of priorities.”

Gender relations, like all social relations, are multi-stranded: they embody ideas, values, and identities: they allocate labor between different tasks, activities, and domains; they determine the distribution of resources; and they assign authority, agency, and decision making power (Kabeer, 2005: 23).

At the same time, because of this complexity, gender relations are also not “internally cohesive” and contain “contradictions and imbalances.” As a result “a shift in one aspect of social relations can initiate a series of changes in other aspects with unpredictable consequences” (Kabeer, 2005: 23). In practice this means that “of any set of policies that seeks to improve women’s access to resources” such as the three MDG indicators, there is a potential to make a difference and become “a genuine expansion of women’s choices. Simultaneously, it also has the potential for becoming nothing more than a “token gesture of paternalistic benevolence.”(Kabeer, 2005: 23).

So where is the transformation potential? What could transform a “simple set of priorities” into sustainable “extensions of women’s choices?” According to Kabeer the missing link is the mobilization of women at the grassroots. In the case of the MDG it is the participation of women from the grassroots and their allies in all steps of the MDG’s implementation including the definition of objectives, activities and outcomes. In her own words:

It is through the mobilization of women as women but also as workers, mothers, and citizens that the international community can ensure that the MDGs speak to the needs and interests of half of the world population. Building this collective capacity of women in all spheres of life to participate and to hold authorities accountable is thus the only basis on which the world’s policy makers can keep the promises that they have made on the issue of gender equality (Kabeer, 2005: 23).

2.7. The fuzziness of women empowerment in development discourse

Another recent contribution to the debate about women’s empowerment in development was offered by Eyben and Napier-Moore (2009). Using a historical perspective the authors explore the multiple meanings of the concept of ‘empowerment’ as used by international development organizations since the United Nations Women’s Conference in Beijing in 1995. For this purpose, they interviewed two dozen individuals working on global policy issues in international development. They also examined policy documents from international development agencies dated after 1995 and found out that “empowerment” and “gender equality” had multiple meanings, concluding there is profuse fuzziness around those concepts.

Comparing the context in which changes occurred; Eyben and Napier-Moore contrast the enthusiasm with social justice and the multiple voices of civil society in the post cold war environment (1980s), with the current context. In their perspective, the latter is characterized by the revival of the efficiency and economic growth agenda, as well as more skeptical views of social movements and non-governmental organizations⁵. As an illustration they say that currently:

(...) OECD countries are responding to the views of recipient government leaders, particularly those in highly aid-dependent sub-Saharan Africa, who may be less interested in the MDGs and more in developing economic infrastructure, expanding the private sector and encouraging foreign direct investment. A strong driver for revival of the economic growth agenda is China's arrival in aid-dependent countries as a significant donor, providing aid for economic investment as part of trade deals without any strings relating to human right issues. (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:286)

Taking into consideration that the international development environment had changed over the last decades (since 1995), the authors argue it is important to look at the multiple meanings of the concept of empowerment as 'struggles over meanings'. Moreover, they argue that the fuzziness around the concept of empowerment 'may offer strategic advantages to feminists struggling in an unfavorable global policy environment' (Eyben & Napier-Moore, 2009:286).

The Fuzziness of Empowerment. In order to understand the fuzziness of the empowerment concept, the authors propose five explanations that resulted from their research. The first relates to the multiple meanings the concept in relationship to the context and position of the speaker. Meanings vary depending on where the speaker is

⁵ For more on this discussion please see J Jowell, A Ishkanian, E Obadare, H Seckinelgin & M Glasius, "The backlash against civil society in the wake of the Long War on Terror", *Development and Practice*, 18(2) 2008, pp 82-93. Cited by Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:286

positioned in relation to the world and which type of experience she/he is describing her/his own or others. The example below clearly demonstrates that in a single conversation a person could use different meanings for the same concept.

In the course of a single interview, Short had shifted her meaning of empowerment in relation to context and positionality; it meant one thing in Britain and something else in developing countries. In the former, she positioned herself in relation to her own direct experience in her family and constituency. In the latter, she reflected as a former development minister, a context in which the urgency of reducing poverty argues for rolling out policy initiatives to affect as many people as possible in the shortest time possible. Very practically, it may have proved to be a useful tool in getting more girls into school and more women into politics. Thus the meaning we give to the concept not only shifts over time, but it can also shift in the context of a single interview or text. (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:287-8)

A second explanation for the fuzziness of the term mentioned by the authors is simple ‘intellectual laziness and time pressure’ (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:288), which is just a result of work done without enough attention to words.

The third explanation is the need for broadness in policy, which means that “fuzziness is used to create and sustain a broad-based policy constituency and to manage conflicts therein” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:288). This explanation refers to the use of broad concepts in policies in order to create consensus and avoid conflicts, although the meanings for the different members are in fact multiple. This is also known as allowing normative consensus.

The fourth explanation is “strategic ambiguity” which is a conscious political choice by those in “conditions of recognizable discursive differences” such as the case of feminists in development agencies who strategically accept fuzziness in order to include their own claims. The authors argue that “the alternative of a clear and radical rights-based agenda would gain less support and may risk creating a backlash” (Eyben &

Napier-Moore 2009:288). Therefore it is understandable that feminists for example would benefit from using an ambiguous concept such as empowerment as a means of inclusion of feminist claims that otherwise could be rejected.

The fifth explanation provided by the authors refers to organizational difficulties. They argue that clear concepts are in fact desired because they could lead to “consistent policy and practice.” However this desired clarity is difficult to reach. On the contrary, the authors respond that fuzziness “is a collective response to organization tensions. Good intentions are foiled by organizational requirements to keep all parties on board” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:288).

Another source of ambiguity found by Eyben & Napier-Moore was the use of terms that sometimes were synonymous and other times had different meanings, i.e., women’s empowerment and /or gender equality. The authors observed that in the Beijing’s Platform of Action “women’s empowerment” appeared 30 times while “gender equality” appeared 12 times. They argue that the latter phrases have been mentioned in policy documents much more since then, either paired with empowerment or as a goal in itself. In fact, what they found, again, was diversity of use. Sometimes “gender equality” is preferred; sometimes “women’s empowerment” and sometimes both terms are used. Through their research, the authors concluded that often this combination would differ even in texts or discourses from one organization to another depending on the target audience. They concluded that there are “different texts for different audiences”(Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:289).

The same diversity was observed in their interviews. Although concepts were often mentioned synonymously, some interviewees stated their preferences for one or the

other. The preference for the term gender equality was justified as: “Equality is an outcome and economists -the most influential people in development policy- prefer outcomes.” Another justification was stated as: Women’s empowerment can be scary with connotations of being feminist and left wing; it draws attention to power, an aggressive word” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:289). Others stated their preference for the term women’s empowerment for the following reasons: because “a poor women can have gender equality and still be powerless.” Another reason cited was because women could get lost in gender; and “because empowerment implies action,” and/or “resonates with power and transformation” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:289).

Some interviewees described empowerment as power to (make decisions), and power within (where women are active in their own empowerment), and one defined empowerment as power with which was the only definition that perceived empowerment as relational in contrast to the other interviewees who perceived it as individual.

The interviews also mentioned their agencies were trying to empower women and the authors noted that “there is a relation of power between those using the term and those who are its object” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:289). However they argue that there is a ‘passive evasive voice’ in the development discourse on empowerment because it is not clear who should be the subject of empowering: women themselves or the development agent/agencies? (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:289).

What is empowerment about? Considering all the fuzziness, would it be possible to define what ‘empowerment’ is about? The authors say yes. They found that in discourses and documents analyzed: “Today, most frequently, empowerment is about

choice, decision making, realizing opportunities and potential, and community action” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:291). *Choice* meaning individual choice that refers to agency and could be connected to women’s sexual and reproductive lives, for instance. *Decision making* refers to women making decisions that affect their lives. *Realizing opportunities and potential* is present in agencies’ discourses linked to arguments such as “countries pays a high price for not allowing women to live up to their full economic potential”(Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:292).

The authors indicated that community action is on the decline.. Words like communities, the collective and women’s movements were very rare in comparison to the earlier agenda. They concluded that empowerment now is closely linked with a more individualistic perspective.

Forms of Empowerment. In relation to the forms of empowerment the authors suggest the two most common qualifiers are political and economical empowerment. Political empowerment was understood as “being active in formal politics as well as women having a voice” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:293). However the authors noticed a shift over the last years. As an illustration, they compared the front-page image of two Gender Equality documents from the same institution, one in 2000 and the other in 2007. The first one had an image from the women’s movement; the second had a woman in a line to vote. They concluded that in relation to political empowerment there has been a shift from “having a voice” more than a decade ago towards a more instrumentalist and formal approach today.

In terms of economic empowerment, the authors defend a recent increase in the popularity of this term since 1995. Economic empowerment has been closely linked to

economic growth. As the World Bank put it: “The empowerment of women is smart economics... studies show that investments in women yield large social and economic returns” (World Bank video⁶, n.d. cited by Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:293).

According to its Annual Report 2008, the bank is the “world’s largest funder of education; the world largest external funder of the fight against HIV/AIDS; a leader in the fight against corruption worldwide; a strong supporter of debt relief; and the largest international financier of biodiversity, water supply, and sanitation projects”(World Bank, 2008).

In September 2006 the World Bank group launched its Gender Action Plan (GAP) for the years 2007 to 2010 called “Gender Equality as Smart Economics”, whose objectives were “to advance women’s economic empowerment in Bank client countries by making market works for women (at the policy level) and empowering women to compete in the markets (at the individual level). The World Bank GAP team focused on four key markets: land, labor, agriculture and finance, as well as infrastructure which underpins access to all markets” (World Bank, 2009). The Gender Equality as Smart Economics plan is criticized by feminists such as Zucherman (2007) and Wichterich (2007), for:

- ignoring a women’s rights approach to its plan;
- ignoring the effects of the Bank’s policy of conditionality on the feminization of poverty and undermining the achievement of MDG’s;
- focusing just on integrating women in markets (like WID) and the fact that ‘women’s economic empowerment pays off’ (Wichterich, 2007:1), instead of livelihood, income, food security and rights.
- ignoring causes of poverty and discriminatory economic structures.

⁶ Available at http://worldbank.wmsvc.vitalstreamcdn.com/worldbank_vitalstream_com/091907gender.wmv Accessed March 15, 2009.

A discourse similar to ‘Women as Smart Economics’ was also conveyed in a recent message from the Director General of UNESCO saying that “Gender equality is smart and just economics for many compelling reasons. It can act as a force for economic development and for improving the quality of life of a society as a whole” (Matsuura, 2008:1).

Another point noted by the authors was the fact that currently economic and political empowerment are taken as separate goals. They highlight the fact that “development agencies have separated political and economic empowerment into different programs and budget lines, thus marginalizing a political economy approach to the structural changes required for women’s empowerment” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:293). Moreover, the authors concluded that “linking economic empowerment to growth reflects a broader discursive shift back to women working for development rather than development working for women”(Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:294).

Women’s empowerment for development? As mentioned before, Eyben & Napier-Moore realized that with the revival and importance of economic growth in the development agenda, women’s empowerment instead of being seen as an end in itself, is now again (as in WID) understood as “a means to a complementary end such as economic growth, poverty reduction, democracy, human rights, peace, conflict prevention, HIV/AIDS reduction and the MDGs” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:294). In this framework not supporting women’s empowerment is seen as inefficient. The authors also found that the current instrumentalist, efficient and evidence based ⁷ development agenda omits words like “social justice” that would imply a focus on women “developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change to create a more just

⁷ Meaning as well Results Based Management. (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:294).

social and economic order” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:294). Moreover, it repeats the mistakes from the Women in Development approach.

A seeming triumph of the 1990s had been that social justice was seen as a sufficient reason for efforts to secure gender equality. Women’s and girls’ well being was an end in itself. Although the argument for equality based on justice and fairness is not entirely neglected, the past few years have seen a strong shift back to the arguments of 25 years ago. This trend is indicative of a wider movement in development policies, away from the visions of global social justice articulated at the great United Nations conferences of the past decade towards a revival of market-led growth as the main engine of development. (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:296)

However, according to the authors the revival of the economic efficiency agenda does not produce the promised changes in women’s lives. “So we are finding the social transformation agenda being thrown away while the instrumentalist strategy is failing to deliver? (...) The growth/gender link, which harks back to the 1970s and 1980s, may well prove to be a pathway to nowhere”(Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:297).

Another consequence of this new (old) agenda is that it not conducive to social mobilization. The authors argue that it emphasizes the individualistic theory of development which has roots in rational choice and methodological individualism, and even when “collective action” appears it is a mere sum of people and not a collectivity aiming to challenge oppressive power structures (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:297). After all, the argument “that investing in women creates more wealth is hardly a rallying call for civil society action” (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:297).

In contrast a concept of empowerment committed to social justice is “expressed by notions of solidarity and power with,” (...) and derives from “relational notions of empowerment linked to the idea of our inseparability from social processes.” (...) It

means that women's empowerment is more about transforming society and less about making women more effective wealth producers (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009:297-298).

2.8. Final considerations about empowerment and participation

This brief overview of participation and women's empowerment in development aimed to bring to surface some considerations that are important for this research. First, it is possible to understand empowerment as a continuum between two poles of meanings. On one side is the meaning related to individual improvement. In this sense, empowerment means any kind of improvement in a woman's life whether it's a new job, access to resources, health improvements, education and so forth. Empowerment in this sense is individual. On the other pole, however, empowerment is conceptualized as social transformation, and therefore implies changes in the social structure to which women belong. This type of transformation implies group organization since social structures are quite difficult to change. In fact this type of empowerment points to a utopia, another possible world, likely not under capitalism, a place where gender equality becomes a reality.

Secondly, differences in the understanding of empowerment seem to be related to differences in understanding women's realities and position in society. Some perspectives seem to frame women's position in society as uni-dimensional, meaning that their position depends only on their access to education **or** only to paid work or not **or** only one condition or another. In this sense, one can talk about educational empowerment only, **or** economic empowerment only.. It seems implied that the improvements in this one dimension of women's lives will result in women's empowerment. From another

perspective, considering the subordinate position of women in society as complex and multidimensional implies a notion of empowerment that is also complex and multidimensional. In this sense, economic improvements for instance would be just one of the several advantages that define women's position in society; and in order to change women's position in society, several dimensions of women's lives need to change as well. Example of these dimensions include education, self-esteem, intrahousehold relationships, access to recourses and property, participation in groups and organizations, types of jobs, local politics, national politics, the international economic climate, etc..

A third aspect to be highlighted is the different perspectives in relation to purpose or finality of women's empowerment. As pointed out clearly by Eyben & Napier-Moore (2009), Batliwala (2007) and Papart (2009) there are visible differences between perspectives that frame women's empowerment as a requirement to social justice, in opposition to perspectives that see women's empowerment as a means or an instrument to achieving results such as economic growth.

Finally, although the term empowerment became so important to development policy, and is still a powerful tool to support and advocate for women world wide, at least in some parts of the development world where women are still suffering tremendously, maybe what they are seeking is not to be empowered, but to be respected, to have access to water and food, to be recognized as human beings, as workers, as intelligent, as having the right to health, and to a better self-esteem, all of which has to do with having rights. It is up to women themselves/ourselves to conceptualize how to improve ourselves and our world.

Clearly, we need to build a new language in which to frame our vision and strategies for social transformation at the local, national, or global level. I for one intend to do so not by re-reading Foucault or Gramsci or other great political philosophers, but by listening to poor women and their movements, listening to their values, principles, articulations, and actions, and by trying to hear how they frame their search for justice. From this, I suspect, will emerge not only a new discourse, but also new concepts and strategies that have not yet entered our political or philosophical imaginations (Batliwala , 2007:564).

The increased participation of women as stewards of water resources is crucial to any progress towards more responsible and innovative water management in poor rural regions of the developing world. While there has been some progress in acknowledging the need for gender equality in water management in the international development discourse (UN Millennium Development Goals, etc.), the practice of including and empowering women lags far behind. This is because the necessity of transformational or “deep” changes to gender relations to achieve gender equality has not been properly understood, let alone acted upon. Deep, meaningful participation involves social transformation and requires real shifts of power in cultural, economic, social and political terms. Is participation leading to women’s empowerment in water possible? The next chapter will investigate more closely the challenges of gender and water, and why it matters.

Chapter 3. Gender and Water: Why does it matter?

3.1. Introduction

Gender and water, why does it matter? With the intention of answering this question, the present chapter does a literature review of authors discussing the importance of linking gender to water, and specifically to water development and policy. Ben Crow (2001) looks at global inequalities on water and how even among the poor, it is women who 'carry' the weight of water. Wijk-Sijbesma (1998), benefiting from his many years in development, describes in detail the roles and responsibilities of women in water or the sexual division of labour in water management in third world countries. Researching specifically Latin America, Zwarteveen and Bennett (2005) denounce the existence of dichotomies in water by contrasting the power differences between the management of domestic water and irrigation. Finally, Wallace and Coles (2005) ask the question: Although gender is recognized in water policy, why is it still so difficult for women to actively participate?

3.2. Social inequalities on water

According to the sociologist Ben Crow (2001) gender matters in water because there are global inequalities in water access. While the wealthiest nations, cities and people enjoy cheap abundant public piped water, a great number of the rural poor in developing countries have to struggle to access limited amounts of water. Crow defines two main forms of water supply: social and individual. The social form involves the public infrastructure of piped water provided by private or public companies. The individual form exists in regions where there is no piped water and therefore individuals

have to arrange their own water supply (Crow, 2001:8). Each form has a different quality of end user supply, as seen in the table below:

Table 3.1. Form of water supply and end user by level of industrialization

	Social form of water supply	End user supply
Industrialized	socialized and homogeneous	secure, cheap , little labor input
Non – Industrialized	individualized and multiple sources	insecure, expensive, high labour input

Source: Crow 2001: 8

The sociologist argues that the social form is most common in first world countries, but it is also common in urban areas of third world countries. However in the rural areas of poorer countries the individualized form is the prevalent type of water provision, and it remains “largely an individual or household responsibility” (Crow,2001:8).

This situation reinforces inequalities because individual access to water is contingent on access to land, to surface and underground water, and to pumps and /or reservoirs –which all cost money. Therefore, the less money one has, the more difficult and expensive it will be to access water which augments the likelihood of sickness and poverty. Crow thus argues that “contrasts in the social form and end-user supply of water have far reaching implications for health and economic activities and for inequality” (Crow, 2001:10). Therefore, the type of water provision can be understood not only as a consequence of poverty, but as a cause of poverty as well. The author adds that:

In the global South, absence of socialized water adds substantially to the work of maintaining the home. Water has to be collected and carried, often long distances, for all home based activities, from washing and cooking to bathing, sanitation and livestock care. The division of work between men and women in most parts of the world allocates this water carrying work

primarily to women and girls. Along with the collection of fuel wood, water collection consumes one of the largest segments of women's work time (Crow 2001: 10).

It is true that public distribution of water could still happen without pipes, for instance by use of "community faucets, water truck deliveries, village wells and irrigation ditches." However those forms also involve "multiple transfers before consumption" and therefore extra time and energy for water provision – identifying closely with Crow's non-industrialized category. Still, the management of water for the household continues to be mostly women's responsibility. But it is not any kind of women, but low-income women from Third World countries that carry this load.

3.3. Gender roles in water management.

According to Wijk-Sijbesma (1998), gender matters in water management because "gender divisions in indigenous management of water and waste exist in all cultures and have important consequences for health and socio-economic development" (Wijk-Sijbesma, 1998:31). Moreover, women not only manage domestic water and waste, but also water for production. However, the roles, interests and resources of women are not recognized in water management and policies often overlook or depreciate women's roles in water.

In rural communities of developing countries, women work more than men because they are responsible for both productive and domestic work. For rural women and girls this includes fetching water from wells or ponds, managing drinking water, cooking, washing, cleaning and caring for babies, children, the elderly and the sick. They

are responsible for managing their family's health and hygiene in addition to agricultural tasks such as managing gardens and caring for animals.

The responsibility of fetching water is mostly in women's and girls' hands. From an early age, girls help their families collect water which often interferes with their school attendance. In Tanzania for instance 40 percent of children fetch water, and in Sierra Leone the percentage is 60 percent (Wijk-Sijbesma,1998:31). The author affirms that although boys also help in the collection of domestic water at an earlier age, as soon as they go to school or get involved in productive work, it is the girls that assume the responsibility of fetching water because it is considered part of their female role (Wijk-Sijbesma,1998:31). As young men grow, they might collect water for "small business enterprises" to sell, or from "sources that are far way or hard to reach" in which case they use auxiliary means of transportation such as animals, bikes, etc (Wijk-Sijbesma,1998:32).

Water collected by women and girls are also used for personal hygiene and sanitation. It is a female task to clean latrines and train children in their use. In addition, women and girls have different needs and are more affected by the lack of sanitation than men. Sometimes they have to walk distances for community waste disposals, or even wait for appropriate and safe times (Wijk-Sijbesma, 1998:32). The lack of proper sanitation also affects girls' education: "about 1 in 10 school age African girls do not attend school during menstruation or drop out at puberty because of the absence of clean and private sanitation facilities in schools (Khosla & Pearl 2003: 4).

The time and energy women and girls spend in water collection and waste disposal have implications for health and socio-economic development. Wijk-Sijbesma

state that carrying water is a high energy demand activity, as is agricultural work. In average women and children carry as much as “18 to 25 kilograms weight of water on their heads or hips in a single journey”(Gill and Wahida, 1982; INSTRAW, 1984; Parker, 1973 cited by Wijk-Sijbesma: 1998:32). But this high-energy demand is not balanced with nutrition. In fact, ‘gender biases in eating customs demands that women and girls eat what remains after the men in the household have been served (Wijk-Sijbesma:1998:33) so women’s food intake are often insufficient, especially if they are breastfeeding.

Girls and women spend a lot of time collecting water. It is estimated that worldwide “they spend as much as 8 hours a day carrying up to 40 kg of water on their heads or hips” (CAP-NET GWA, 2006: 12). Women’s work collecting water leaves them less time for other activities (Wijk-Sijbesma, 1998:31) including reproductive work such as childcare, breastfeeding, food preparation, and cleaning as well as productive work such as working in agriculture, or even recreation, socialization, education.

But it is not only water collection that consumes women’s time. They also do most of the work and make most of the decisions concerning water management in the household. “They decide which water sources to use for various purposes, how much water to use, and how to transport, store, and draw the water” (Wijk-Sijbesma, 1998:35). Women do have knowledge about how to use water from different sources for different uses as well as how to use it efficiently.

According to Wijk-Sijbesma, the criteria adopted by rural women for selecting water sources are threefold: First, there are economic demands: “ Women prefer reliable sources that require the least time and energy” (Wijk-Sijbesma,1998:36); second, there is the perceived water quality:”Women choose the nearest source of a perceived good

quality even though this may not be the nearest source of any kind” (Wijk-Sijbesma,1998:36); however, it depends on the purpose of the water needed. The third criteria are social relationships. Some villages in Bangladesh, for example, during the drier season when water is scarce choose safety over convenience as when “the poorer families tend to choose sources which are of worse quality but which are closer and at which quarrels are less likely” (Briscoe et al.1981:179 cited by Wijk-Sijbesma, 1998:38). Besides, in many parts of the world it is common for women to recycle water: In Yemen for instance:

Women preserve the cleanest and freshest water (preferably from a spring) for drinking, personal washing, cooking and washing drinking glasses, food and floor grinding stones. Grey water is saved for washing and rinsing clothes and for watering plants. Water used for washing food is given to poultry and cattle, and water used for clothes washing is reused to clean floors and wash dishes. (Ansell, 1980 cited by Wijk-Sijbesma, 1998:38)

Women not only know how to manage water but share knowledge with each other and with other community members. Wijk-Sijbesma points out that rural women often get together while working, for example, while washing clothes in a water source or even when fetching water. On those occasions information is shared about water sources, quality and technologies. In addition, because of their knowledge of “good water sources” women also play a key role in preserving the environment on which they depend. (Wijk-Sijbesma, 1998:36)

Women also use and manage water for small-scale agriculture directed towards household consumption, which is an essential resource for household food security and health. It is important to note that in some parts of the world there are sharp differences between men’s crops (cash crops generally irrigated) and women’s crops (for household

consumption, health and market). In addition, women grow the majority of the world's food crops (FAO, 1997). A proportion of it is used and processed for household consumption and another proportion is sold or exchanged in markets.

Women also depend on water for livestock management of small (chickens) and bigger (cows) animals used for home consumption or for the market. Therefore, water needed by women is also consumed for productive activities that are transformed into income. As reported by Wijk-Sijbesma: "Gender sensitive studies have revealed a much more active role of women in irrigated agriculture, livestock care and fisheries than had been assumed" (Wijk-Sijbesma, 1998:39).

Despite being the major managers of water in the household, having an essential role in preserving water sources, being the major producers of food crops and the managers of household health, in reality women have less access to resources, less access to land, less access to credit, less access to agricultural input, less access to training and extension; less access to decision making, less access to research and technology and less sources of income.

FAO studies confirm that while women are the mainstay of small-scale agriculture, farm labour force and day-to-day family subsistence, they have more difficulties than men in gaining access to resources such as land and credit and productivity enhancing inputs and services. (FAO Focus, n/d)

3.4. Gender dichotomies in water

To Margreet Zwarteveen and Vivianne Bennett (2005) gender matters in water management because water worlds are divided in two: the domestic half associated with women and the irrigation and productive half associated with men. Supported by their research in Latin America, Zwarteveen and Bennett argue that there are gender

dichotomies in water management policy. Drawing upon the differences between domestic water and water for irrigation they are able to describe clear differences in policy, planning and management.

Domestic water issues are framed in contexts of social rights and welfare, health and hygiene, and basic needs; and irrigation is framed in terms of production and economic efficiency (Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:13).

According to the authors, those distinctions have a direct connection with gender.

The link of domestic water with social welfare and basic needs explicitly recognizes women's demands for water and the legitimacy of women's presence in the drinking water and sanitation policies despite their lack of voice in water management decisions or any guarantee of rights (Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:13). Domestic water is therefore connected to women's traditional reproductive roles. On the other side, irrigation policies are linked to production and economic efficiency – spheres mostly associated with men farmers and where women's roles are invisible (Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:13).

However, women do farm and do irrigate. In Latin America alone, women head 26 percent of rural families (Vargas 1998, quoted by Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:19) and are responsible for managing their farms and their water for reproduction and production. Women also assume those responsibilities when their partners migrate in search of temporary paid work which is very common in areas struggling with an inadequate water supply, such as the Brazilian Semi-Arid.

In fact, Zwarteveen and Bennett noted an indirect relationship between prosperity and women's involvement in irrigation and farming. The smaller the farmland and its production, the greater is women's participation in production and commercialization. As

a result, “active female involvement in farming and irrigation is much more common in poorer households with smaller farm holdings and it is often driven by poverty rather than greater gender equality or emancipation” (Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:20).

Women’s work in agriculture is often considered as “help,” and as such it is not recognized as work, neither by agencies nor by communities themselves.

Even when women do irrigate and farm, governmental agencies often imply that the men are the farmers and as a consequence women are excluded from resources and rights, such as credit and technical assistance. This perspective in water management assumes a model of gender relations where intrahousehold⁸ relationships and power are balanced and fair. “Men are seen as the heads of the households and often also the ones who deal with extra household matters, but they do so on behalf of the rest of the family” (Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:21).

This perspective ignores the different knowledge, resources and needs that women have for irrigation. First, they use irrigation not only for crops, but also for gardens and animals. Secondly, they use different types of water (quality and quantity) for different purposes, as already suggested by Wijk. Third, because of their time commitments for domestic roles women have less flexibility than men in terms of time. Therefore, in terms of methods, “...women prefer the flexibility of a continuous water flow though it might increase the total time spent on irrigation (while) men may prefer nonpermanent rotational turns of water that enable them to irrigate with a larger flow in less time” (Hendrix, 2002 cited by Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:23). The authors argue

⁸ For more on Intrahousehold relationships see Quisumbing, A and McClafferty, B. 2006. Using Gender Research in Development. International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington.
<http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/fspractice.sp2.asp>

that women are “reluctant to irrigate at night” not only because of fear of gender violence, but also because it would affect negatively their status as women.

When policies ignore the roles of women in irrigation, they contribute to making invisible women’s roles and needs, and assume that men “are the ones who deal with extra household matters”. This means that it is men’s role to participate in irrigations associations and other community meetings where decisions about irrigation are made. Memberships in associations are linked to titles of land and water – and since men traditionally own those titles, control of irrigation is in their hands. Water control is power. Irrigation is power and traditionally power is associated with masculinity. As mentioned by Zwarteveen and Bennett: “Leadership positions in water–user associations are often important political positions, offering opportunities for expanding political relations and social standing at regional and state levels” (Rap, Wester and Prado, 1999 cited by Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:24). If women lack representation and voice in decision making about irrigation, their priorities are also made invisible, and their claims and rights are not recognized. Therefore, the underrepresentation of women in irrigation users associations are not detrimental to women, but to the efficiency of irrigation projects who often ignore a great proportion of their users, women.

It is interesting to note that gender bias to women’s involvement in decision making about irrigation characterize not only water agencies but also communities of men and women. Zwarteveen and Bennett report that in Latin America, irrigation itself is identified as a “typically male domain and activity.” Therefore, “for women, claiming irrigation rights would imply explicitly challenging these norms and thus also challenging

the power and ability of their husbands to properly carry out their manly roles – and doing so comes at high costs”(Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:22).

Therefore, women’s gains toward more control over water and irrigation would imply not only a need to change the related policies and laws, but also “water cultures.” Water cultures are defined as “deeply rooted and culturally embedded associations between irrigation and masculinity” (Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:22). At least in Latin America, but probably in most of the developing world, males, (usually professional male engineers) are associated with irrigation. Therefore, men are obviously the ones who possess the perceived necessary knowledge and skills for irrigation, i.e., “technical dexterity, physical strength, spatial orientation, and mathematical skills” (Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:25). This association creates several barriers to women, which range from difficulties for female engineers to the recognition of non-engineering backgrounds.

Finally the authors agree that the task of changing the water cultures and water worlds attitude towards the recognition and participation of women is a complex task:

It requires changing divisions of labor that allocate water responsibilities to women without granting them the associate rights, and it requires changing existing routines of public decision making to allow women to participate. It requires changes in laws, infrastructure, and organizations. It also requires changing the terms of water policy discussions because reducing the gender gap in control over water is not just a direct struggle over the resource of water, but it is also and importantly, a struggle over the ways in which water needs to be defined. In both the domestic water and irrigation water sectors, albeit in very different ways, creating legitimate discursive, legal, and organizational spaces for women to articulate and defend their water interests means that deeply embedded cultural and normative associations between water and masculinity need to be challenged. This is necessarily a long and often a difficult process and it may be one that is painful and risky. However, not making the attempt may well come at an even higher price: that of human misery, deprivation,

and poverty as a result of ineffective, inefficient, and inequitable water management (Zwarteveen and Bennett, 2005:29).

3.5. The gendered development of water policies: the international agenda

Gender matters in water because “gender shapes who has control of water, who gets access, the different needs and positions of women and men and their rights” (Wallace and Coles, 2005: 1). For these authors “water is gendered in every society” (Wallace and Coles, 2005: 1), and the understanding of gender in water is crucial for development. In order to understand the gendered nature of water development Wallace and Cole reviewed its history as follows:

Until the 1960s water development was supported by centralized governments who run public sector departments. “Projects were run by male engineers following models used in wealthier countries” (Wallace and Coles, 2005: 2). Women were not to appear as engineering was a masculine profession. During the 70s and 80s women began to be recognized as “managers of domestic water and the usual carriers of it” and started to be included as water users. In parallel, rising environmental concerns saw women as potential “guardians of the environment” (Wallace and Coles, 2005: 3). The authors contend that the water sector was one of the first to recognize the potential contribution of women to development (Wallace and Coles, 2005: 3) because of women’s clear role as domestic water managers.

The 1980s were declared by the United Nations as the development decade of water which aimed for “clean drinking water and sanitation for all by 1990” (Joshi 2002:49 cited by Wallace and Coles, 2005: 3). The inclusion of women in water

development projects and water management was seen as increasingly important, although policy makers were more concerned with the economic efficiency of projects. Women were trained as “caretakers, health educators, motivators and hand pump mechanics” (Gosh 1989 cited by Wallace and Coles, 2005: 3).

The neo-liberal economic agenda of the 1990s had a significant effect on water policies. The provision of water shifted from the public sector to the hands of the private and non-governmental sectors that were expected to make water management more efficient. Structural adjustment programs also supported the neo-liberal agenda imposing public sector cuts. Governments were supposed to only regulate the public sector (Wallace and Coles, 2005: 3). The prices and provisions of water were to be controlled by consumer demands. (World Bank 1993 cited by Wallace and Coles, 2005: 3). Despite these constraints, there was a growing consensus recognizing the need for water for all through an approach that included “community participation, gender (usually meaning the inclusion of women) and empowerment”(Wallace and Coles, 2005: 3).

In 1992, the International Conference on Water and the Environment in Dublin, Ireland established four principles to guide actions towards Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) including an environmental, a participatory, a gender and an economic principle. The “Dublin principles”⁹ were formally endorsed in 1999 by more than 100 countries (Wallace and Cole, 2005:3). They are:

Principle No. 1 - Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment

Principle No. 2 - Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels

⁹ The Dublin principles are widely available. Such as in <http://www.gwpforum.org/servlet/PSP?iNodeID=1345>

Principle No. 3 - *Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water*

Principle No. 4 - Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good

Despite a number of other meetings about international water policies, the four Dublin principles continued to be a consensus. In 2000 for instance, the 2nd World Water Forum in La Hague converged around the need for better governance and integrated water resources management (based on the four principles). Later, the United Nations declared 2005-2015 the international “Water for Life Decade” with the aim to "halve by 2015 the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water (World Water Council, 2008). Similar to the four Dublin Principles, the goals for the decade were:

- *Focus more on water-related issues at all levels and on the implementation of water-related programs and projects*
- *Ensure the participation and involvement of women in water-related development efforts*
- *Deepen the cooperation at all levels*

Among the UN Water for Life Decade priorities were issues related to scarcity, sanitation access, disaster prevention, pollution, trans-boundary water issues, water, sanitation and gender, capacity-building, financing, valuation, integrated water resources management, and Africa as a region. (World Water Council 2008)

Gender is recognized in water policy, but in practice, how does it work? According to Wallace and Coles, despite the recent focus on poverty alleviation and women’s empowerment “the potential disjuncture between the economic and social

goals, and the complex challenges of water provision in contexts of inequality were not widely discussed within the sector” (Joshi 2002 cited by Wallace and Coles, 2005:4). The criticism of concrete water policy on gender will be explored in the next section.

3.6. The complexities of gender in water

According to Tina Wallace and Anne Coles (2005) it is important to understand the evolution of gender theory in development in order to contextualize gender in water policies. The authors distinguish between different approaches to development. The welfare approach dominant in the 1950s and 1960s, saw women as passive recipients or beneficiaries of development. Starting in the 1970s different perspectives on women started to appear, bringing new ideas and perspectives such as:

- the distinction between sex (biological) and gender (cultural);
 - the early Women in Development (WID) approach that defended women as actors in development recognizing their roles in reproductive, productive and community activities;
 - the Gender and Development approach (GAD) bringing women’s subordination to men into perspective; and
 - gender analysis; the idea of women’s empowerment; and gender mainstreaming¹⁰.
- (Wallace and Coles, 2005:6).

However, there is an intrinsic complexity in gender theory because gender relations are complex. “Gender relations are shaped by history and geography and are rooted in different social, cultural, economic and political structures” (Wallace and Coles, 2005:6).

¹⁰ For an overview of theoretical perspectives on Gender and development see Connelly, Ly and Parpart 2000.

It was in response to those complexities that gender frameworks, methods and analysis¹¹ were created, with the goal of facilitating the understanding of gender issues in ways that institutions could work with. According to the authors:

Institutional packages were developed ‘to mainstream gender’, which included the adoption of frameworks, training disaggregated data collection, the recruitment of gender specialist advisers and sometimes the establishment of gender units. (Wallace and Coles, 2005:7)

However, they noticed that “over time gender became increasingly regarded as a technical problem” and the concept of empowerment “lost its focus on social transformation” and its “feminist transformative purpose” (Wallace and Coles, 2005:7). Gender mainstreaming was criticized (Joshi, 2002:42 , cited by Wallace and Coles, 2005:7) for reducing the complexities of gender, power, ideology and subordination to focus only on women/men. Walker (1993:2, cited by Wallace and Coles, 2005:7) argues that it is in fact characteristic of dominant cultures to incorporate new demands into their mainstream discourse without being threatened and without structural changes. Therefore “bringing gender into the mainstream will result in absorption, dilution being carried away”(Walker 1993:2, cited by Wallace and Coles, 2005:7).

Another critique relies on the sole focus on communities and disregard of “gender hierarchies within organizations,” which reinforces in the internal insensitivity to gender in those organizations. Even when there are in fact improvements for women in local communities with the implementation of gender frameworks, Wallace and Coles argue that projects often skip the preliminary stages of gender analysis where women and men are expected to collectively design the implementation project itself. For the authors,

¹¹ Wallace and Coles mention the following authors as writers of gender frameworks (Moser 1993, Molyneux 1985, Kabeer 1994, Levy 1998); methods (Longwe 1991) and gender analysis in PRA (Welbourn 1991, Guijt and Shah 1998)

while “gender is a term that is widely used, it is often poorly theorized and ill defined, and gender policies are weakly implemented” (Wallace and Coles, 2005:8). The question remains: How is gender used in water policies?

In relation to water politics, the authors affirm that “gender is often equated with women in the water sector” and women are defined as “essential providers and users of water.” Therefore, women “are expected to play the role of provision of water, sanitation, improved health and increased productivity” (Wallace and Coles, 2005:8, citing World Water Forum 2003:1). While focusing mostly on the ascribed gender roles women play in relation to water in the poverty context, policies leave behind the analysis of their social and cultural roles, their subordination and barriers for participation in decision making levels, as well as their rights to water.

As a result, if in principle gender equals women, gender is increasingly being conceptualized simply as “women and men” which means involving and benefiting both, which in practice means benefiting mostly men. Therefore “gender concepts of power inequality and the importance of transformation to ensure that women achieve positive and lasting changes in status are largely absent” (Wallace and Coles, 2005:8 citing Joshi 2002 and Gender and Water Alliance, 2000). A classical example in international water management is privatization which is endorsed by the water sector for providing water for all. The focus on privatization and the economic value of water does not fit well with values such as ‘water as a gift from God, or a public good, or a human right’. On the contrary:

From a gender perspective, evidence increasingly shows that the private sector is not regulated or bound by the global commitments to gender equality, women’s empowerment and water for all. Water is a highly lucrative sector and water companies have limited interest in meeting the

needs of the poor, including women. (Wallace and Coles, 2005:9 citing Polaris Institute 2004, and Aegisson, 2002)

In fact is no surprise that the private sector could not fulfill its promise to improve the efficiency and access to clean drinking water for the poor. Instead “privatization is one aspect of the world water crisis that is having a deeply negative impact on the livelihoods of women” (Grossman et al, 2004:1 cited by Wallace and Coles, 2005:9). But it is not only internationally that the water sector affects women negatively. At the national level:

(...) the water sector, like all development sectors, currently delivers support to countries through direct budget support to national governments. How the money is to be used is agreed upon through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans (PRSPs), which aim to ensure aid reaches the poorest. These plans while officially owned by developing country governments, follow the parameters set out in structural adjustment programs and may be heavily donor-led. (Wallace and Coles, 2005:9)

Still, governments do have the tools for promoting gender equality and the participation and empowerment of women in water. The next chapter will give a closer look at inequalities in the Brazilian Semi-Arid in order to define where and when inequalities occur as well as the meaning of women participation in in the program One Million Cisterns.

Chapter 4. The Context of Inequalities of the Brazilian Semi-Arid Region

4.1. Introduction

The context of the case selected for this research – the participation of women in the P1MC – were bounded by space and time. In space, P1MC women were bound to the rural municipalities of the Semi-Arid, the organizations involved and the program itself. In time, they were bound by the period from 2003 to 2008 where most events related to this research happened. However, there is also a larger context that directly affects the understanding of the case analysis of results provided by this research. This larger context is the history of social inequalities in Brazil and particularly the history of droughts and poverty in the Semi-Arid region as well as the social and development policies dealing with them.

As a result, this chapter will (using what Saussure (1986:89-90) called synchronic and diachronic analyses) look not only at the “extent to which an event exists” (synchronic) but also the evolution of it over time (diachronic). Assuming there is a direct link between social inequalities in water and gender, and the participation of women in the P1MC, this chapter will visit social inequalities in Brazil and the Northeast region. It will look not only to the long-term history that explains the inequalities in the country and region, but it will also look at more recent events – such as the democratization of the country – that puts into perspective the emergence of the Articulation of the Semi-Arid (ASA) and the Program One Million Cistern (P1MC).

Considering the complexity of describing such context, it is clear that more needs to be left out than is included. This selection aims at focusing on the most important issues for this research.

The chapter starts with a brief description of some general characteristics of Brazil, the Northeast and the Semi-Arid, focusing on socio-economic challenges, inequalities, poverty and its history. It will continue with a look at past development policies and the process of democratization of the country which produced and continues to produce socio-political changes and continuities. It is in this complex context that ASA and the PIMC can be better understood. They will also be described here.

4. 2. The Brazilian paradox: wealth and poverty

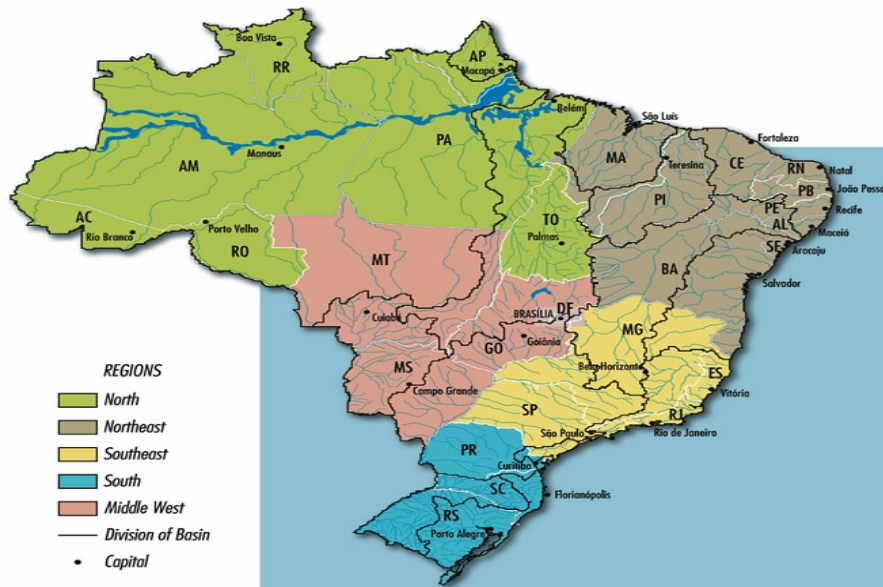


Figure 4.1. Map of Brazilian Regions
Source: ANA, 2004

Brazil is rich in resources. The country has the world's fifth largest area with 8,511,965 sq km, and a population of 169,799,170 inhabitants as counted in the last census (2000). Brazil is also considered to be the world's tenth largest economy (CIA, 2010). Geographically, the country shares boundaries with all South American countries, except Chile and Ecuador. Brazil is the largest and mostly populated country in South America, where it is considered an economic power and regional leader. The country is divided in five regions based on climatic and physical characteristics: north, northeast, southeast, south and center-west (ANA, 2004).

Table 4.1. Brazilian Regions: land, population and states

Region	North	Northeast	Southeast	South	Center-West
<i>% of Brazil's land area</i>	45.3%	18.2%	10.9%	6.8%	18.9%
<i>% of Brazil's population</i>	7.6%	28.1%	42.6%	14.8%	6.8%
<i>Characteristics</i>	Largest tropical /humid area. Most of Amazon Rainforest. Rich in water resources and sparsely populated.	Semi-arid has very irregular annual average rainfall, and the population there is the poorest in Brazil, with many serious social problems.	It is the most highly industrialized region, with the highest agricultural production in Brazil.	Region with the best social development rates in Brazil.	Where the country's agricultural frontier is still expanding.
<i>States</i>	Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima and Tocantins.	Alagoas, Bahia, Ceará, Paraíba, Maranhão, Pernambuco, Piauí, Sergipe, Rio Grande do Norte.	Espírito Santo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo	Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina	Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Goiás and the Federal District

Source: ANA, Nacional Agency of Water, 2004.

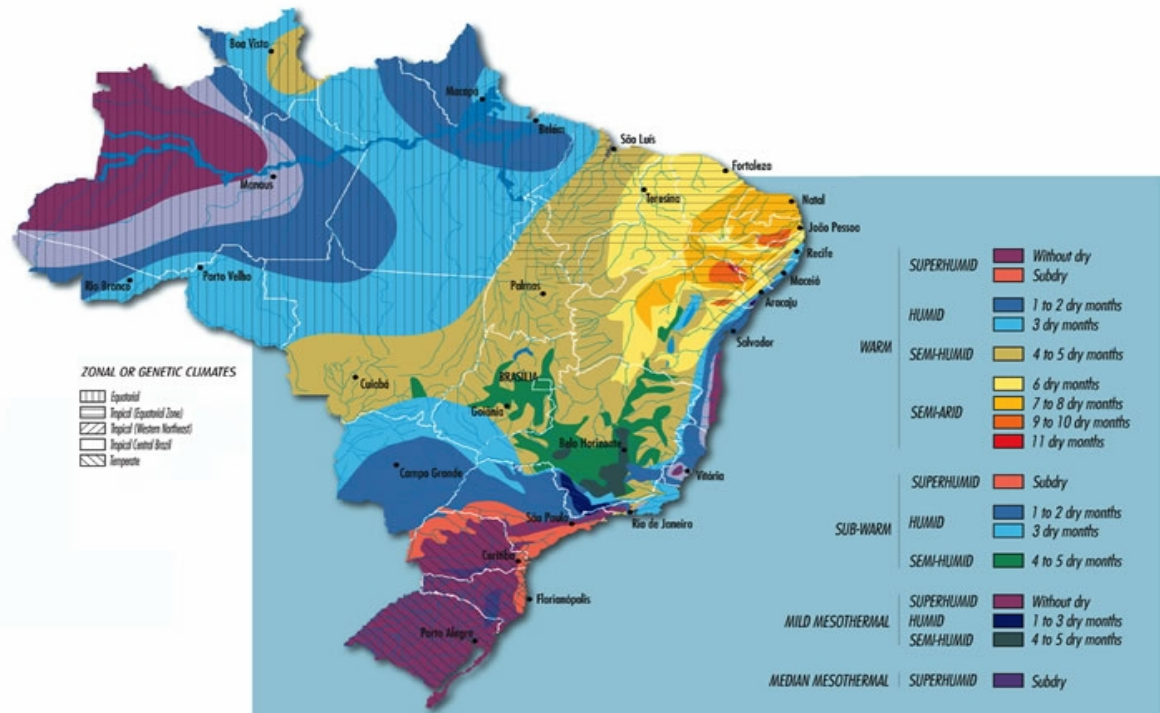


Figure 4.2. Map of Climates – Brazil
 Source: ANA, Nacional Agency of Water, 2004.

However, Brazil has a lot of poor people, and poverty and inequalities are some of the country's biggest problems. The World Bank (2003) estimated that 21.5% of the Brazilian population lived below the national poverty line in 2003. Indeed, national statistics were higher: the Brazilian Applied Research Economic Institute (*IPEA – Instituto de Pesquisa Economica Aplicada*) estimated that in 1999, 14% of the Brazilian population lived in families with an income below the *indigence* line¹² and 34% of families were below the poverty line (Barros et al:2001:2). This means that in 1999, 53 million Brazilians were poor and between them, 22 million Brazilians were miserable/indigent – receiving just enough income to buy the minimum food or less; and still worse is the fact that this number has been more or less stable for decades.

¹² The indigence line is regionally defined by the structure of costs of the food supply - caloric consumption of an individual usually around 2,000 k/day. The poverty line includes food, but also basic dress, housing and transportation.

Despite the fact that there are a lot of poor people in Brazil, an international comparison in terms of per capita income puts the country in the richest third of world countries. 64% of countries have income per capita inferior to the Brazilian one, and 77% of the world population lives in countries with an income per capita inferior to that of Brazil. However, national levels of poverty are higher than in other countries with similar income per capita (Barros et al: 2001:5-6).

In Brazil the poor represents around 30% of total population, while in countries with similar income per capita this percentage is around 8%. The difference of 22% can only be attributed to the high level of inequality in the distribution of national resources. In parallel, the Brazilian income per capita is significantly superior to the value of poverty line (Barros et al, 2001:2). This can only be explained by the association of poverty with the concentration of wealth.

Therefore national poverty is not derived from lack of resources but from unequal distribution of resources. Furthermore, the high levels of poverty find their main determinant in the structure of Brazilian inequality: a perverse inequality of distribution of income and opportunities for social and economical inclusion. The level of inequality in Brazil is one of the worst in the world. Only South Africa and Malawi have a level of income inequality greater than Brazil. Inequality, in particular, inequality of income, is such a part in Brazilian history that it has “acquired a forum of natural thing” (Barros et al, 2001:11). In fact social inequality in Brazil is as old as the country and has its historical roots in its colonial past, as this chapter will describe. For now, a closer look to the Brazilian Northeast region will follow.

4.3. The Brazilian Northeast: general characteristics

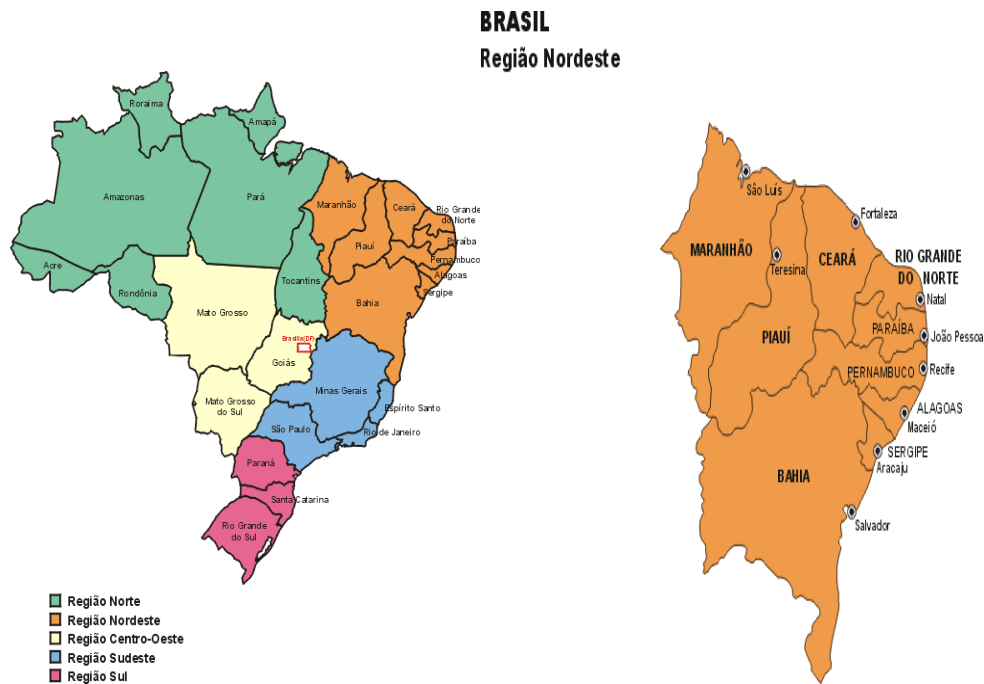


Figure 4. 3. Map of Brazil Political & Northeast: States and Capitals

Source: IBGE – Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics

As seen on the map above on the right (*Regiao Nordeste*), the Brazilian Northeast region consist of 9 states: Maranhão, Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe e Bahia. The region extends through an area of 1.539,000 square kilometers, comprising 18% of the Brazilian territory (Duarte, 2001:425). In 2004, the region had 50,427,274 inhabitants (IBGE, 2004), which is equivalent to 28% of the Brazilian total population. Nevertheless, half of the Brazilian poor live in the Brazilian Northeast (Duarte, 2001:425).

In rough terms, the Brazilian Northeast has four main sub-regions and climates, as seen on map 4.4. below:



Figure 4.4. Map of Sub- regions of the Brazilian Northeast

Source: Curso Objetivo. n/date

(1) The Middle North (*Meio Norte*) extends from the Semi-Arid to the Amazon region, being a sub-region of transition. It has humid equatorial climate and vegetation¹³.

(2) The Forest Zone (*Zona da Mata*) is a 200 km line extending from the coast of Rio Grande do Norte to the Coast of Bahia. Its climate and vegetation are humid or tropical with frequent rains. The native vegetation was tropical forest, that has been gradually replaced by sugar cane plantations.

(3) The *Agreste* is a region of transition between the humid Forest Zone and the Semi-Arid.

(4) The *Sertão* has a semi-arid climate and is also called Semi-Arid.

¹³ There are more detailed and complex maps. Some considered this region also as part of the Bioma Cerrado . Please see IBGE

http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/presidencia/noticias/noticia_visualiza.php?id_noticia=169

For the purpose of this research we will further explore the Semi-Arid region or the Sertao.

4.4. The Semi-Arid, droughts and people

The Brazilian Semi-Arid region was first delimited in 1991, by EMBRAPA¹⁴, and comprises the ecoregion (*biome*) where the different types of *Caatinga*¹⁵ vegetation (tropical dry forest) occurs. For this reason, the region is also called Caatinga.



Figure 4.5. Map of the Semi-Arid - The 2005 Delimitation

Source: MIN- Ministry for National Integration, 2007.

Since 2005, when there was a new delimitation (MIN, 2007) the Semi-Arid extends over an area of more than 900 thousands square kilometers, comprised of 1,133 municipalities from the states of Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe, Bahia and north of Minas Gerais. Its population is over 20,858,264 inhabitants, 44% of them live in rural areas (MIN, 2007).

¹⁴ EMBRAPA - *Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária*, in English: Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation

¹⁵ The name "Caatinga" is a *Tupi* (one of the languages of native Brazilians) word meaning "white forest" or "white vegetation" (*kaa* = forest, vegetation, *tínga* = white). In English it would refer to Thorny Scrub vegetation.

The average annual temperature of the Semi-Arid is around 26°C, which is high. The Semi-Arid has two distinct seasons: a dry one that could last from 6 to 11 months; and a humid season, with irregular rains ranging from 300 to 800 mm on annual average (MDS n.d.). The region suffers from an accentuated water deficiency due to the effect of three main elements: the limited, irregular and uneven distribution of rain during the rain season; the intense evaporation during the dry season; and the high rates of surface runoff (MDS, n.d.). The rural poor suffer from limited access to good water in sufficient and regular quantities and the region has already experienced many droughts..

In fact, regular droughts are reported since the Portuguese arrived in the 1500s¹⁶. They happened in an average of 10 years apart and could vary in degree. The longer ones, that cause famine and death, occur when there are a number of successive years with irregular rains. Droughts take place in the region with a regularity of about 9 to 12 years. This regularity, for some scientists from the CTA¹⁷ (Technological Aero Spatial Center) reflects the association between droughts and solar explosions (sunspots) that happen every 11 years (Garcia:1999:66). The severity of droughts has also been associated with climate change. Freitas (2008) states that precipitation in the Northeast is dependent on “global climate phenomena, such as the inter-tropical zone of convergence, the El Nino, and the South Oscillation” (Freitas, 2008:5).

¹⁶ There are historical references to droughts in the region since the 1587, and continuing in the 1600's (1603,06,14,45, 52,92), 1700's (1707,10/1, 21/27, 30, 36/37, 44/47, 51, 54, 60, 66, 71/72, 77/78, 83/84, 91/92), 1800's (1804, 08/09, 14, 24/25, 29/30,33, 44/45, 70, 76-78, 88-89, 98. One of the worst droughts was the one of 1877, that killed more than 50 thousand people, half of the population of the Semi-Arid by then (Garcia:1999:66). During the 1900's there were droughts on 1900,03,15,19,32,42,51/53, 58, 66, 70, 76, the worse of the century between 79 and 84.

¹⁷ CTA- Centro Tecnológico Areospacial in Sao Jose dos Campos, Sao Paulo.

For the purpose of this research, droughts are defined¹⁸ as “a deficit of humidity that produces unfavorable influences to plants, animals and people of a determinate region” (Freitas 2008:10 citing Warrich, 1975). Indeed, authors such as Garcia contend that droughts are not just climate phenomena, but a socio-economic one since what defines a drought as such is the ‘insufficiency of the harvest and its consequences, and not the quantity of rain itself’ (Garcia: 1999:53). He also argues that crops planted in the region for subsistence, mostly corn and beans – are originally from the humid tropics, and therefore are ecologically inadequate to the area, because they depend on regular rains to grow (Garcia: 1999:54). The region however is site of a respected number of endemic species of plants and animals that adapted to the region climate and land. *Caju, umbu, mamona*¹⁹, as well as xerophytes and cactuses are just a few examples.

Even though droughts are natural phenomena, its consequences are not and seem to affect the most vulnerable rural populations of the Semi-Arid such as the landless and small landowners. In effect, for the rural poor whose livestock depend totally on the climate, the consequences of droughts are twofold: either they depend on assistance through the government Emergency Work Front (*Frente de Trabalho de Emergencia*) or they migrate to the South or to the Northeast’s bigger cities like Recife, Salvador, Fortaleza.

According to Duarte (2001:426) the vulnerability of the Semi-Arid rural poor can be partly explained by the conditions of ownership and land use of the sub-region in addition to the instability of temporary work predominant in the region. In relation to

¹⁸ For several other definitions of droughts please see Freitas, 2008.

¹⁹ Some fruits typical in the region.

land ownership, Duarte cited data from INCRA²⁰ 1992, reporting that properties with land smaller than 50 hectares, occupied 12% of the region, accounting for 75% of the properties. On the other hand, properties with land larger than 200 hectares occupied 68% of the region with 7% of the properties.

Furthermore, in the smaller properties (50 hectares or less) the owners worked mostly directly on the land, while in the larger properties (200 hectares or more) the use of temporary work was predominant. However the two types of properties also had *parceiros*²¹, rural workers who ‘rent’ land and pay with a parcel (part) of its production. Both the system of *parceria* and even the temporary work can be easily dismissed. Duarte argues that the vulnerability of the rural poor is aggravated by the ongoing work instability.

Moreover, Duarte cited data from research done in the 70’s and 80’s about the participants in the Emergency Work Front. In both years, approximately 66% of the workers who registered at the Fronts did not own any land as almost half were *parceiros*. And from the remaining 33% who were of landowners, the great majority had properties smaller than 20 hectares. Duarte concluded that the small land owners and the workers without land are the ones who most feel the consequences of droughts. (Duarte, 2001:427)

The other alternative for the rural poor during droughts is migration. According to Isabel Guillen (2001), the image of the Northeast immigrant travelling on the back of a

²⁰ *Instituto Nacional de Colonizacao e Reforma Agraria* – National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform

²¹ *Parceiro* – is a rural situation where a worker rents land, and pays with products (a half is called *meeiro*, a third is called *terceiro*, etc). It is different from a rural tenant (*arrendatario*) where payment of land rented is done with money.

truck, called *pau de arara*,²² with other migrants (*retirantes*²³) escaping from drought and hunger is recurrent in the Brazilian social memory. As a historian, Guillen contends that the several migratory movements from the Brazilian Northeast were not documented enough suffering from ‘historical invisibility’ (Guillen, 2001:1). This is not surprising, since the history of the poor are often untold everywhere. However, affirms Guillen, images of the *retirantes* are often portrayed in popular art (as in sculpture pictured below), and their stories are often told in popular literature, such as the *cordel* (string literature traditional in the Northeast of Brazil) and in Brazilian music²⁴, literature²⁵ and cinema²⁶.



Figure 4.6. Retirantes.

Source: <http://www.arara.fr/BBDIVERS.html>

²² “Pau de arara is a Portuguese term that literally translates to "parrot's perch". The term originates from the habit of tying birds to a pole for sale, where they also hang for transportation. By analogy, the term has gained two distinct meanings: it can refer to an irregular flat bed truck used to transport migrant workers and to a torture device develop during the Brazilian military dictatorship”. In the case used here: “Pau de arara is a designation given in the Northeast Brazil to a flat bed truck adapted for passenger transportation. The truck's bed is equipped with narrow wooden benches and a canvas canopy. The term refers to long metal rails extending lengthwise under the canopy where passengers would hang on to when standing. This form of public transportation is still found in rural areas, but no longer available for interstate travel. In past decades, it was widely used by migrant workers fleeing periodic drought conditions in their home region. In the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, their most frequent destination, Pau de arara also became a derogatory slang term referring to them. There are frequent references to the Pau de arara in Brazilian literature and popular song, used as a symbol for the plight of the Nordestino (Northeastern) migrant”.

From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pau_de_Arara accessed March 8, 2010.

²³ Retirante: the poor migrant leaving the Sertao

²⁴ One of the most popular songs in Brazilian culture is “Asa Branca” from Luiz Gonzaga and Humberto Teixeira in 1947. It tells the story of a man leaving his land and love in the sertao.

²⁵ Such as “Grande Sertao Veredas”, from Guimaraes Rosa.

²⁶ Such as “Vidas Secas”, from Nelson Pereira dos Santos.

Everywhere, the most common image of the Northeast people is their association with droughts, and migration to escape from poverty and hunger. Marco Antonio Villa (2000) argues that it is as if the 'region has no history'. In his own words:

Conservation factors transformed the Semi-Arid into a region apparently without history due to the permanence and immutability of its problems. As if for decades nothing had changed and the present was an eternal past. On each drought, and even in between one and the other, a million of northeasters had abandoned the region. Without the hope to change the history of its cities, they went to search elsewhere the solution for the survival of their families. The personal power of the coronels, petrified during the populism and by the migration of millions of northeasters to the south, remained unchanged on the *sertões*. (Villa, 2000: 252)

In fact the region has a lot of history which is very important to Brazil and which starts in the Brazilian Colonial period.

4.5. Colonial Past

Brazil began in the Northeast. In the 1500s the first Portuguese explorers arrived on the coast at what was later called the city of *Porto Seguro* in the south of *Bahia* state. Soon after arriving, they started to barter with the Tupi speaking Indians, exchanging trinkets for brazil wood (*pau-brasil*), a tree that produced a red dye. Brazil wood was abundant on the coast and it was the only product the Portuguese found in the new territory that would be valued in Europe at that time. The name of the tree later became the name of the country, and brazil became Brazil.

The land where later Brazil was established was occupied by Indians for more than five millenniums. Several groups of Indian nations coexisted on the Brazilian territory and it is estimated that more than 170 different languages were spoken by Brazilian Indians. Four big groups of languages were later classified: the *Tupi*, the *Jê*, the

Karib and the *Aruak*. The number of inhabitants in the year 1500 is estimated between 1 million and 8,5 million (Caldeira, 1997:8).

Tribes organized themselves according to kingship relations. All members of a group were relatives. Intra-marriage was forbidden since marriages could happen only between members of different groups. Each marital union created a new kingship relation - as well as an alliance between groups (Caldeira, 1997:14). In summation, tribes had either relatives or enemies.

The Indians had the custom, mainly the tupis, of offering a wife to any stranger accepted into the tribe or a husband for every woman incorporated to the tribe. With this, the stranger could become a relative for the whole group, developing an important role in the tribe and participating in their activities. This custom enabled the alliance between different groups and secured the identity of each one. (Caldeira, 1997:16).

The result was clear: the first Portuguese settlers that survived in the Brazilian land were the ones that married Indian women. This was also facilitated by the fact that for a long period of time only Portuguese men came to Brazil with no family or community commitment. So if the main reason for colonization was the search for wealth, a fundamental cultural reason that enabled colonization was miscegenation.

Soon, news about the existence of vast quantities of brazil-wood on the Brazilian coast spread all over Europe. Other foreign countries, such as France, began to port in the Brazilian coast to get it. This challenged the Portuguese monopoly of the brazil-wood trade. Until this time, the Portuguese had only established trading posts off the coast. However, in 1532 the Portuguese crown decided on a systematic occupation and protection of the territory and the official colonization began. King Don Joao III installed a system that was a mix of feudalism and capitalism. He divided the Brazilian territory

into “15 parallel strips of land bordered to the east by the sea and to the west by the line of the Treaty of Tordesilhas” (Page,1995:39). The so-called hereditary captaincies were donated to “distinguished noblemen or commoners who had rendered outstanding service to the Crown” (Page,1995:39). They could tax, impose law and justice, distribute the land in the form of *sesmarias* (Motta, 2005), and were to protect the land in the name of the monarch to whom absolute authority was a duty. The colonization of the *captancies* was made at their own expenses. Although the monopoly over brazil-wood continued with the Portuguese Crown, the captaincies had the right to profit from their agricultural enterprises. During this period systematic agriculture began, using Indian labor and having sugarcane as the main product for export.

Within the 15 captaincies only two succeeded and for the same reasons: good soil and interaction with the Indians. The captaincy of Pernambuco in the northeast took advantage of the presence of Vasco Lucena, a Portuguese married with an Indian, who served as a mediator between the *Tabajara* Indians and the Portuguese. By mid-century, 50 mills were producing enough sugar to load annually 40-50 ships for Europe (Burns,1993:29) (Caldeira,1997:25). Together Pernambuco and Sao Vicente (another captaincy with similar success) “implanted the sugar industry in Brazil” (Burns,1993:29).

Despite these two successes the king decided in 1549 to establish a centralized government in Brazil. With the help of *Caramuru*, another Portuguese integrated into the Indian life, Don Joao III installed the General Government in Salvador, captaincy of Bahia. For the king, “this improvised system of alliances and wars, marriages and slavery was precariously maintained” (Caldeira, 1997:41). In 1563 the Village of Salvador

suffered an epidemic of smallpox killing thousands of Indians and leaving the Portuguese with a massive deficit of labor force for the sugarcane industry. Such epidemics also happened in other captaincies. In order to maintain production, the Portuguese began to import African slaves (Caldeira, 1997:42).

In seventeenth century Europe, work was still organized in a medieval way, while in Brazil the organization of work was based on slavery. For the sugar mill owners, business was excellent as productivity was high and the profits were huge. However for the slaves, this rhythm was devastating. On average slaves couldn't survive more than eight years of work, ending up dead or incapable. Indians succumbed even faster (Caldeira, 1997:51). Consequently the Portuguese increased the import of African slaves.

There is no consensus about the number of African slaves brought to Brazil, but estimates vary from 3 to 18 million (Wagley: 1971:19) (Burns, 1993:43) (Page, 1995:61). The country received more slaves than any other country in the Western Hemisphere (Skidmore, 2004:139).

Slavery was abolished in 1888. Around the same time Brazil began to receive large numbers of skilled European immigrants to work in the emergent coffee production. This left the recently freed slaves without a work place or land. Not surprisingly, until recently the majority of the poor are of African and/or Indian origin.

It is also important to note that attached to this hierarchy was the power and authority of the Portuguese patriarch. He was not only a man but a Portuguese man, in everything superior to his White, or Indian, or African women and his *Mazombo*²⁷ or mestizo sons and daughters (Moog, 1993).

27 Sons of of Portuguese born in Brazil (Moog, 1993:100)

Besides the problem with land, since the very beginning of colonization, Brazil was defined by Portugal as a source of precious metals and agricultural products. So Brazil passed through cycles of exporting Brazil wood²⁸, then sugar, gold and coffee. On the other hand, industry, printing presses and even universities were forbidden in the country by the Portuguese. As a result, the Brazilian elite often studied in Europe²⁹ and identified themselves with the European culture and not with their own people and culture which were regarded as inferior.

In summation, Brazil has a long history of producing social inequalities and inherited from its colonial past a tradition of miscegenation as well as land concentration, racism, Catholicism, and external dependency that helped in the creation of a patriarchal and authoritarian nation with a governing elite that did not identify with its own people, as well as a majority of people excluded from the benefits of the nation's resources.

The colonization process that lasted until 1822 obviously had profound effects on the Northeast region. The first settlements in the region only grew with the introduction of sugar cane plantations and the expansion to the interior that followed the cattle industry creation.

Sodre (1990: 122-125) suggests there were three phases of the cattle expansion in the Brazilian Northeast, according to the degree of proximity to agricultural activities. At first cows were brought by the Portuguese to support food needs and transport items locally. Both activities happened in the same sites on the coast. Secondly, with the growth of cattle and agriculture, the two activities started to separate as agriculture continued to concentrate on the coast, while cattle creation began to produce not only

28 From which the country gained its name.

29 The Country's first official national University was funded in 1932 in Rio de Janeiro.

meat, milk and transportation but also leather. Finally, with the growth of cotton production at the coast (mostly in the 1700s) and the continued expansion of cattle into the interior, the two agribusinesses completely separated, and according to Sodre (citing Antonil, 1923), this third phase of expansion (that mostly followed river paths) had the following effects:

- the interior of the Northeast was conquered, from Bahia to Maranhao;
- the internal exchanges started between agricultural and cattle areas and between cattle and mining areas;
- there reappeared an accommodation between colonizers and the remaining Indians;
- land appropriation expanded extraordinarily;
- feudal-like relationships in cattle production were generated due to its incompatibility with slavery. (Sodre,1990:123-124)

Afterwards, other settlements on the coast were founded in order to defend the territory against the French and Dutch explorers. But the first centuries of colonization created conditions of land concentration and relationships of dependency between landowners and rural workers that remained fairly unchanged all over Brazil, and especially in the Northeast.

It was only in the second half of the 19th century that the industrialization process in the Northeast started. “It was linked to the agriculture of sugar cane and cotton developing the implementation of sugar plants and spinning and weaving factories” (Andrade, 1988:22). Despite industrialization, the process promoted “growth without development” (Andrade, 1988:25), as we will see in the following brief reconstruction of

development policies in the Northeast.

4.6. Development and SUDENE

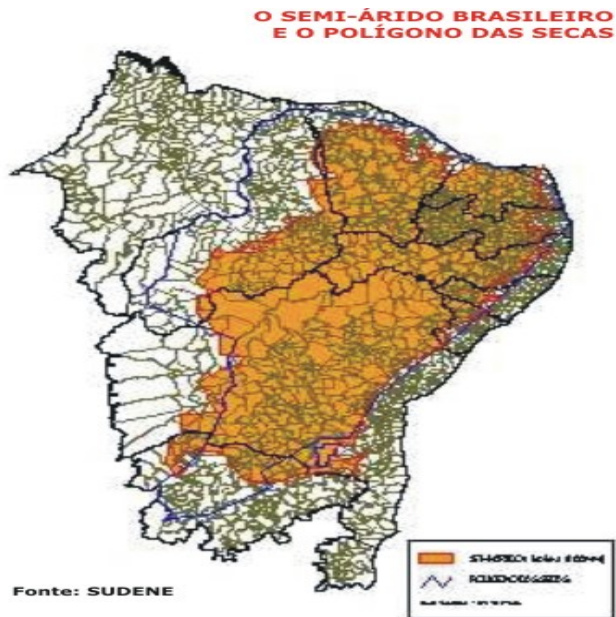
According to Manuel Correia de Andrade (1988:5), the concept of Northeast first appeared in 1941, created by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) under President Getulio Vargas' national policy of "diminishing the autonomy of states and promoting national integration through strengthening central power" (Andrade, 1988:5).

Andrade argues that as a result of the Drought of 1952, the Federal Government created a program for the region to be executed by the *Banco do Nordeste do Brasil* (Brazilian Bank of the Northeast) and re-drew the area called *Poligono das Secas* (the Drought Poligono)³⁰ that would be eligible for assistance. From the beginning of the 1950s, the Drought Polygon included most of the states of the Northeast region cited before, and included also the states of Sergipe, Bahia and part of Minas Gerais (Andrade,1988:6).

Figure 4.7. The Draught Polygon

Source: SUDENE - published at the website of Fundacao Joaquin Nabuco.

³⁰ The first delimitation of the Poligono das secas was done in 1936 (law 175/36) and its extension was revised in 1951 (law 1348/51).



In 1958 the region suffered another drought and the federal government decided to create a commission to develop the *Operacao Nordeste – Openo* (Operation Northeast) and proposed the creation of a work group for the development of the region. This group, called *GTDN – Grupo de Trabalho para o Desenvolvimento do Nordeste* (Working Group for the Development of the Northeast) prepared a report about the region and argued that its biggest problem was not climate but the economy. To coordinate the economic development of the region, the government created in July 1959 the *SUDENE- Superintendencia para o Desenvolvimento do Nordeste* (Superintendence for the Development of the Northeast) with the goal of “planning and orienting the actions of government bodies in the region” (GTDN, 1957 cited by Andrade,1988:8).

Garcia (1999:80-81) argued that all other attempts to develop the Northeast and the consequent creation of institutions to do so emerged right after a drought in the

region. It was after the first drought in the beginning of the 20th century, that the National Department of Works Against Droughts³¹ was created. After the drought of 1932, a minimum of 4% of the national budget was destined to be used to fight droughts (later reduced). Following the drought of 1942, the Commission for the development of the Sao Francisco³² valley was created; and in the beginning of the 50s the Northeast Bank was launched after another drought. SUDENE was no different in this respect.

However SUDENE was created in a promising time during the government of Juscelino Kubitschek who had a vision for Brazil based on modernization, industrialization and regional integration. He was the president who moved the capital of Brazil from Rio (Southeast) to Brasilia (Central region). And to coordinate SUDENE, Juscelino invited the economist Celso Furtado, native from Pernambuco, a Northeastern state, who had participated in the GTDN and shared his vision that the development of the Northeast was possible with the right coordination of investments.

Between other innovations, they created a tax incentive system where national and later international companies could reduce their taxes by investing in industrial or agricultural projects in the Northeast or in the Amazonian region. However in 1964 Brazil suffered a military coup³³ and Furtado, and his vision were displaced from SUDENE.

Even the tax incentive system was replaced by another one under which the central government made the decision about where tax collections should be invested. And according to Garcia (1999:91), the military government invested massively in the

³¹ Departamento Nacional de Obras Contra as Secas - DNOCS

³² Comissao de Desenvolvimento do Vale do Sao Francisco

³³ Juscelino Kubitschek was the president from 1956-1961; then Janio Quadros was elected in 1961 but soon renounced; and Joao Goulart assumed the presidency from 1961 until 1964 when the military coup happened, and Castelo Branco instituted the military regime that lasted until 1985.

Center-South regions, and the inequality between them and the North and Northeastern regions remained.

Since there were no direct elections and governors were chosen by the military themselves, there was no opposition or demands from northeastern governors – as there was in the past during the populist governments of Vargas, Kubitscheck and Goulart. From the past civil governments, there was a growing grassroots organization both in urban areas with unions and associations as well as in rural areas (Andrade,1989:49-57) which demanded agrarian reform. With the new authoritarian regime, Brazil was back to a repressive relationship between state and society where only the elites would thrive.

4.7. The Democratization process

As previously mentioned, it was mostly only after the country's first experience with democratic ideas that social inequalities began to appear as a problem. During the period of 1945-1964³⁴ Brazil experienced a fast process of urbanization and industrialization followed by political and economic development.³⁵ From hereon emerged the first social movements demanding a more democratic, and just society.³⁶

But the military coup of 1964 drastically broke this emerging experience with democracy in Brazil. The coup eliminated political freedom, depoliticized the country and institutionalized a dictatorial government that lasted until 1985. However, there were several 'new social movements' that reorganized in order to resist and confront the dictatorial government.

34 Data on income distribution began to be collected in 1960 (Skidmore, 2004:134)

35 Just to give an idea of how fast was this process: in 1900, 80 % of the Brazilian population was rural, where as in in 2000, 80% lived in urban areas.

36 About this period, please see Burns, Bradford E. 1993 A History of Brazil. 3rd Edition. New York. Columbia University Press. Pp 381-432.

Among them was the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil that in the 1970s and 1980s created around 80,000 community reflection groups known as *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* or church grassroots communities (Krischke, 2001:115). It is estimated that those communities mobilized around 2 million people in Brazil, mostly workers and peasants. The progressive church in Brazil also influenced the creation of groups associated with agrarian reform (such as the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra*), popular education (*Teologia da Libertação*), and youth and student groups (such as the *National Students Organization – UNE*).

Despite political repression and persecution, the resistance to the dictatorship grew during the 1970s and served as a means of convergence and emergence of several other movements and public associations such as Metal Workers Union (presided by Lula in the 1980's), Progressive Church, Black Movement, Women's Movement, Neighborhood Associations, and so forth. As a result, the 1980s saw the formation of important new Brazilian democratic institutions such as The Worker's Party (*Partido dos trabalhadores/PT* -1980) and The Brazil Landless Workers Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra/MST* - 1984). In 1986 Brazilians voted for members of the constituent assembly, and in 1988 the new democratic national constitution was approved.

Brazilians voted for president in 1989 and impeached the elected president in 1992 based on accusations of corruption – another of the country's major problems. Moreover, with the end of the authoritarian regime and the start of the democratization process, some important transformations affected the relationship between government (the state) and social movements (society). Of great importance were the emergence of

citizen NGO's, and the institutionalization of public participation in the new Brazilian constitution – which foresaw new forms of political participation besides voting.

The return of democracy in Brazil was a process in which mass movements were actively involved. With democratization, some of the leaders from the social movements were elected to participate in the government or became leaders of NGO's (Silva, 2003). As a result, emerging NGO's were not anti-state, but had a complementary new role in democratizing Brazilian society. As Silva mentions, in the 1990s 'popular manifestations were redefined approaching the form of campaigns whose principal protagonists were the NGO's. They turned to questions of ethic-moral character and individual solidarity where "civil society" was invoked to look for alternatives to poverty, violence and corruption (Silva, 2003:42). Illustrative of this period are the Movement for Ethics on Politics, The Action of Citizens against Misery and for Life (Ação da Cidadania contra a Miséria e pela Vida), and the movement Live Rio (Viva Rio)" (Silva, 2003:41), a great number of them under the leadership of civil right leader, Betinho³⁷.

In parallel to the growth of NGOs, there were changes in government composition³⁸ and some leaders of social movements³⁸ ascended to power. One illustrative example is the election of Lula from the emergent Workers Party as deputy with the highest number of votes for the National Constitution Assembly in 1986. The election of leaders identified with the social movements for the construction of the new constitution brought to government participatory and deliberative legislation. The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 states that popular sovereignty could not only be exercised through

37 For more on Herber the Souza – Betinho, please see IBASE's Website.
http://www.ibase.br/betinho_especial/luta_cidada.htm

38 Not underestimating the 'bionic' survival of traditional representatives of the Brazilian elite at all levels of government and power. Bionic meaning that they would re-create their selves and their imagines, and in order to continue in power.

the vote but also through popular initiative, and cities were required to include the participation of representative associations in their policies (Avritzer, 2002). One example of a policy that took advantage of this new legislature was Participatory Budgeting.

Participatory Budgeting (PB) appeared in the city of Porto Alegre during the administration of Mayor Olivio Dutra³⁹ from the Workers Party – PT in 1989. PB is a sovereign and self-regulated institutional design where regional and thematic assemblies (through universal criteria of participation) decide on budget allocations and priorities⁴⁰. Currently being adopted in more than 200 municipalities in Brazil and serving as inspiration for several experiences abroad,⁴¹ participatory budgeting has been (at least in some conditions) having high levels of participation among the poor and consequently shifting public spending to the more needy.

A researcher of PB, the sociologist Avritzer (2002). argued that although the access of the poor to public goods increased in Porto Alegre and other cities, the PB's largest impact was to change the political culture and establish a new pattern of interaction at the political level creating an alternative to *clientelism* where access to public goods is mediated by politicians (Avritzer, 2002:14). Another important factor noted by his research on PB was that the success of program was increased in places where there was a high tradition of associations of the poor – such as in Porto Alegre. In cities with low tradition of association of the poor, Avritzer concluded, PB depended more on the unity of the administration.

39 Who was also one of the founders of the Workers Party.

40 There is a vast bibliography in English on PB available at <http://www.chs.ubc.ca/participatory/resources.htm>

41 Including Toronto- Canada.

Despite the variation on PB results, it can be considered a redistributive democratic innovation⁴² that deals with the problem of inequality through distribution of power and access to public decisions and goods. If the problem of Brazil is not lack of resources, but unequal distribution of resources, PB is one policy that aims to augment public participation in the allocation of resources (budget) and to change political culture to a more just and direct form.

Another important feature of the democratization process in Brazil was the election of Lula for president in 2003, and his re-election for the period of 2007-2010. A man from the Northeast himself, Lula had migrated to Sao Paulo in search for work, like many other *nordestinos*, and it was in Sao Paulo that he participated in the creation of the Workers party as a Union leader. The election of Lula, by itself, was a singular event in Brazil, which had never had a chief of state not coming from its elite. As Samuels (2006), well explains:

Lula carries the marks of his humble origins with him to this day – the half of his finger lost in an industrial accident, his unrefined Portuguese. The ascension to power of a poor, uneducated, migrant worker who worked as a metal lathe operator, became a nationally-prominent union leader and helped found the PT is symbolically significant: It suggests that average Brazilians can not only legitimately participate in *selecting* the nation's rulers, but also that they can *become* one of those rulers. This embodies everything the PT claims to stand for: ordinary Brazilians can grab the reins of their own political destiny. (Samuels:2006:2)

Another unique characteristic of the Lula presidency was bringing to power a party that was traditionally in the opposition, the Workers Party (PT). According to Samuels, the PT in power generated a lot of expectations for changes in politics. Of great importance was the 'workers party way of governance', (*modo petista de governar*)

⁴² Within others in Brazil, such as Economy of Solidarity – a new approach and revival of cooperatives to counter attack unemployment.

which had three pillars: “greater popular participation in setting government policies; an *inversion* of government policy and investment priorities towards the poor; and greater government transparency and honesty” (Samuels, 2006:6 citing Magalhães *et al.* (eds.) 1999 and Nysten 2000).

Despite criticism from left and right, and corruption scandals here and there, it is possible to affirm that both public participation and investments toward the poor have increased over the last years under the Lula presidency and with significant results.

Rocha (2009) reminds us that Brazil is one of the countries on track towards achieving its Millennium Development Goals especially in “reducing extreme poverty and malnutrition” (Rocha, 2009:51). In fact “the poverty rate, measured as the share of the population with a per capita income below R\$ 121 (approximately US\$ 60) per month, fell by 19.18% between 2003 and 2005 reaching 22.7% that year which was a historic low” (Neri, 2006:3 cited by Rocha, 2009:52).

Moreover a “4% reduction in income inequality between 2001 and 2004” (Rocha, 2009:53) was also observed in the country. Indeed, “in 2006, the average income of the poorest 50% of the population increased 11.99% against a rise of 7.85% for the average income of the richest 10% income group” (Neri, 2007:43 cited by Rocha, 2009:53).

The Gini Coefficient⁴³ in Brazil also fell significantly from 0,6005 in 1995 to 0,5693 in 2005 (Barreto et al. 2009:7). The Brazilian Northeast, however, continues to be one of the most unequal regions of the country with a Gini coefficient of 0,5708 in 2005 despite its reduction from 0,6040 in 1995.

⁴³ ‘Differences in national income equality around the world as measured by the national [Gini coefficient](#). The Gini coefficient is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds to perfect equality (where everyone has the same income) and 1 corresponds with perfect inequality (where one person has all the income, and everyone else has zero income).

According to Rocha, those achievements in the country could be partly explained by “innovative government policies” such as the Zero Hunger (*Fome Zero*). Strategy and “popular participation and local democracy from participatory budgeting to local tripartite (government, private sector and civil society) social councils” (Rocha, 2009:51).

Coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development (MDS-Ministerio de Desenvolvimento Social) the Zero Hunger strategy has been supporting programs of food access as well as initiatives towards strengthening family agriculture and income generation besides promoting partnerships and civil society mobilization.

(Rocha,2009:54). One of the programs that the Zero Hunger supports (although does not administrate) is the Program One Million Cisterns that will be described in detail later in this chapter. Another relevant program is the *Bolsa Familia* – or Family Grant which is a cash-transfer for families in poverty of about R\$95 towards contributing to their food security. It is significant to the success of the program that the “money is usually transferred to the mother of the family, via an electronic card” (Rocha, 2009:55), a policy that acknowledges the role women play in food security (FAO, 1997). In terms of magnitude of investments and results, in early 2007 the Bolsa Familia(...) was estimated to be reaching 100% of its target of 11.1 million families (about 45 million people or a quarter of the country’s population) with a budget of over US\$4.1 bn (Britto,2008; FAO,2006; MDS,2007) becoming the largest programme of its kind in the world (Rocha, 2009:55).

The case of Food security is also a good illustration of the greater participation of civil society in governance in Brazil. Over the last years a number of councils (not only in food security) were formed in Brazil to support government in the definition of their

policies – at the local, state and national level. Members of councils and other representatives often meet in larger forums and conferences. Councils are often formed by representatives of civil society, government and other public/private stakeholders. For a number of programs in food security, social councils need to be created at the local level before federal resources are transferred, so they can control and monitor federal funds, but they do much more than that (Rocha, 2009: 59). Therefore, currently in Brazil there are many Local Councils of Food Security as well as state councils of Food Security and one National Council for food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), that advises the President on policies and guidelines for food and nutrition security (Rocha, 2009:60).

Recently the CONSEA established the National Law on Food and Nutritional Security (LOSAN) that establishes the Right to Food as an obligation of the State and the CONSEA as a permanent institution (Rocha, 2009:61). This represents significant support for the consolidation of a democratic food policy in the country. Although in terms of design the space for public participation was created with such councils, the need for training and education of representatives is identified as a challenge for effective and democratic participation (Rocha, 2009:60).

Another example related to this research of a policy where the participation of civil society has been significant is water management. In comparison with other countries, Brazil is in a privileged position in relation to water resources and policies. First, the country has “the world’s largest resources of renewable fresh water” (UNESCO, 2003 cited by Moraes & Perkins, 2007:486). Nevertheless, “45 million Brazilians still do not have access to clean drinking water” (Moraes & Perkins,

2007:491). The uneven distribution of water resources and access is significant. For example:

in the city of Sao Paulo, for instance, 98 per cent of houses had access to treated water in 2000, while in the city of Redencao in the Northern state of Para', the figure was only 7 per cent (IBGE 2006 cited by Moraes & Perkins, 2009:486)

Secondly, the country adopted in 1997 an Integrated Water Management System that is participatory, decentralized and territorial (based in watersheds) where decisions about water are made through Watershed Committees composed of a mix of civil society organizations, government representatives and other stakeholders. As with the Food Security Councils and Health Councils, Rural Development Forums, Education councils and other participatory spaces of governance in Brazil today, one of the challenges of the watershed committees is the effective participation of civil society members. Women in general and specifically low income women are under-represented in watershed committees (Moraes & Perkins, 2007:490) despite their role in water management at the household level.

The ongoing process of democratization in Brazil has been a complex mix of innovations and continuities. Regarding agricultural policy for instance, the current government is sometimes criticized for having two concurrent policies which translates into two agriculture ministries. The Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA- Ministerio do Desenvolvimento Agrario) for instance is responsible for the administration of family agriculture "which consists of 4.2 million properties and 70% of the active agricultural population" (Sabourin, 2007: 2). On the other hand, there is the much bigger Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food (MAPA- Ministerio da Agricultura, Pesca e

da Alimentacao) which deals with the agribusiness that consists of 550,000 properties, and occupies 70% of the agricultural land (Sabourin, 2007: 2).

However, authors such as the Zander Navarro (2001:91) claims that the heterogeneity of rural and agricultural activities in Brazil actually requires a diversity of approaches towards rural development; and mentioning specifically the Northeast region, he argues that because of its high numbers of rural poor and dramatic social indicators, the region needs strong policy interventions. According to the author, this would mean agrarian reform towards a more equal land distribution besides programs towards education, health and wages. This is not only to diminish the poverty rates of the region, but also to eliminate the political domination which is the root of its problems (Navarro, 2001: 92).

To summarize, it is in this context of complexities, continuities and innovations, public participation and powerful elites, wealth and poverty, domination and hope that the Articulation of the Semi-Arid emerged.

4.8. The Articulation of the Semi-Arid

The Articulation of the Semi-Arid -ASA⁴⁴ established in 1999 is a forum of more than 700 civil society organizations fighting for social, economic, political, and cultural development of the Semi-Arid. Members of ASA are civil society organizations such as catholic and evangelical churches, development and environmental NGOs, rural and urban workers associations, community associations, unions and federations of rural workers.

⁴⁴ See ASA's website at <http://www.asabrasil.org.br/>

ASA has an executive coordination composed by two members of each state of the Semi-Arid as well as Forums in each state (the State's ASA) and Working Groups (Grupos de Trabalho-GTs). As of February 2010, the current actions of ASA are: The Program One Million Cisterns (P1MC); the new program One Land and Two Waters (Programa Uma Terra e Duas Águas or P1+2, since 2007); and the Program Popular Water Pump (Bomba D'Água Popular or BAP).

The articulation was first created in July 1999 during the preparations for the Forum of NGOs that took place November 15-26, 1999 in parallel to the Third United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification COP 3⁴⁵ in Recife. The idea of a parallel Forum of civil society organizations came from a similar experience done at the Rio 92 UN Earth Summit⁴⁶ when 17,000 NGO members formed a Parallel Forum. It was by the end of COP 3, on November 26, 1999 that the *Declaration of the Semi-Arid*⁴⁷ was produced as a synthesis of the demands, ideas and expectations of the civil society organizations of the Semi Arid, around the general theme of “rights towards an adequate public policy for the Semi-Arid”⁴⁸(ASA, 1999). By February 2000, ASA was consolidated having as constituent documents “The Declaration of the Semi-Arid” (ASA,1999) and the “Letter of Intent”(ASA, 2000)⁴⁹.

The Declaration of the Semi Arid is a “proposal for the coexistence with the Semi-Arid and fight against desertification” (ASA, 1999). It states that from the one billion people of the world living in areas susceptible to desertification, 25 million are in

⁴⁵ For more on COP3 – please see <http://www.unccd.int/cop/cop3/menu.php>

⁴⁶ Please see: <http://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html>

⁴⁷ The Declaration of the Semi-Arid is available at the ASA website in Portuguese at http://www.asabrasil.org.br/Portal/Informacoes.asp?COD_MENU=104 Accessed February 18, 2010.

⁴⁸ “O Semiárido tem Direito a uma política adequada!” Subtitle of the Declaration of the Semi-Arid.

⁴⁹ All members of the articulation agree and join those two documents.

the Brazilian Semi-Arid, and that the current policies are not adequate for its people and environment and sustainability. The declaration defends based on members' experiences that **'the coexistence with the Semi-Arid is viable**, and the coexistence with droughts are possible in the region". For that to happen, the 'great diversity of the region should be taken into consideration', as well as its natural resources, such as the use of rain water (ASA, 1999). The declaration starts with two key premises. The first is the need for conservation, sustainable use and recomposition of the Semi-Arid's natural resources; and the second is the need for a break of monopoly in access to land, water and other means of production. (ASA, 1999)

The Declaration was written during a period when the region was suffering from another severe drought (1998-1999); therefore, it clearly contends that "emergency measures against droughts have to continue and be reinforced during droughts" (ASA, 1999). However other policies have to start taking place in order to avoid recurring need of emergency measures which were the only policies towards droughts in the past.

In order to develop a sustainable program for the Semi-Arid region, ASA proposes a Program for the Coexistence with the Semi-Arid through six principal points:

1. *To coexist with droughts.* Taking into consideration the region that there is no rain for more than half a year; that draughts are natural phenomena impossible to avoid but possible to live with; that Brazil had agreed to fight against desertification and poverty... ASA proposes the following strategies: the focus on strengthening family agriculture, guaranteeing of food security; using adequate technologies and methodologies; universal water access though cheap and simple technologies (such as the rain water cisterns); articulation between production, extension, research and technical and scientific

development adapted to local realities; and access to credit and commercialization.(ASA, 1999)

2. *To orient investments towards sustainability.* Considering the need for investments not only in rural areas, but also in small and medium size urban centers; the program proposes: the decentralization of policies and investments; the prioritization of social-infrastructure investments and policies, such as health, education, sanitation housing and leisure; more investments in economic infrastructure, such as transport, communication and energy; stimulus for processing units of production and non-agricultural production; and regulation of public and private investments based on the principle of harmony between economic efficiency and environmental and social sustainability (ASA, 1999).

3. *To Strengthen Civil Society.* Acknowledging the historical political structures of domination in the region, as well as the lack of formation and information of its people, ASA proposes: the reinforcement of the process of organizing social actors; as well as important changes in the education policy including eradicating illiteracy in 10 years, providing elementary education for youth and adults with curriculums connected to local realities, the articulation between elementary education, professional formation and technical assistance and the valorization of local knowledge. ASA also proposes the creation of a program of generation and diffusion of information and knowledge to facilitate the understanding of the Semi-Arid across Brazil (ASA,1999).

4. *To include women and youth in the development process.* Recognizing that although women are 40% of the labor force in rural areas and work an average 18 hours per day with more than 50% of girls starting work at the age of 10; the majority of women are responsible for the water of the house and small animals; and rural women remain invisible as citizens, often having no documents and being underrepresented in unions and counsels. Therefore ASA proposes compliance with existing laws that support wage equality for similar work; that women become eligible and benefit from agrarian reform

and land ownership; that women gain access to credit and education (in appropriate times and with adequate curriculums), and finally, that women and youth have access to training in order to participate in public counsels.

5. *To maintain, rehabilitate and manage natural resources.* Taking into the consideration the natural diversity of the Caatinga (with over 20,000 plant species, 60% being endemic) and the need for preservation, rehabilitation and rational management of its resources, ASA proposes: a precise socio-environmental zoning; the creation of a Water Management Plan for the region; Campaigns and Social Mobilization towards the fight against desertification and the dissemination of ways of living with the Semi-Arid; Incentives towards sustainable agriculture and livestock; protection and expansion of conservation areas and recovery of degraded areas and springs; and finally the close monitoring of deforestation, soil, extraction of soil and sand, and pesticide use. (ASA, 1999)

6. *To finance the program for coexistence with the Semi-Arid.* Taking in consideration that Brazil had signed the UN Convention, and agreed to allocate resources to fight desertification; and that the costs of emergency measures to deal with droughts are higher than investing in living with it, ASA proposes that the program to coexist with the Semi-Arid be financed by four basic mechanisms: “(1) donations, managed by civil society organizations; (2) reorientation of existing credit lines and incentives towards this program; (3) the creation of a new fund for activities not funded by existing credit lines; (4) a special line of credit to be executed by the Constitutional Fund for Financing The Development of the Northeast” (FNE - Fundo Constitucional de Financiamento ao Desenvolvimento do Nordeste⁵⁰), (ASA,1999).

The other constituent document of ASA, the “Letter of Principles” (ASA, 2000) defines the organizational principles of ASA which include its non-partisan character;

⁵⁰ For more on the FNE – see http://www.bnb.gov.br/Content/aplicacao/Sobre_Nordeste/fne/gerados/fne.asp

rules respecting the identities of members; principle of shared leadership and networks; commitment to contribute to the implementation of actions, the sensitization of civil society and public decision makers, and the formulation and monitoring of public policies towards a sustainable Semi-Arid; and finally its commitment to strengthen the participation of civil society and articulation with national and international forums against desertification. Within the Brazilian context, and the history of this region, this is a revolution. Or as Kuhn (Kuhn, 1970) would refer to scientific paradigm change, a change in paradigm in the history of the Northeast. Therefore the Program One Million Cisterns constitutes a watershed in development policies.

4.9. The Program One Million Cisterns – P1MC



Figure 4.8. Construction of a Cistern

Source: ASA website

The main goals of the P1CM can be read from its title “Program of Formation and Social Mobilization towards the Coexistence with the Semi-Arid: One Million Rural Cisterns.” Through building one million cisterns, the program aims to give around 5 million people in the Semi-Arid access to water to drink and cook. Besides, one condition for receiving the cistern is to participate in a two day training/mobilization about the

Semi-Arid, its ecosystem and people, water and cistern management which is one of the key components of the formation and mobilization goal.

Each plaque cistern has the capacity to store 16 thousand liters of rain watercollected during the rainy season. When rainwater falls on a house's roof, it is collected by gutters that are connected to a filtering system and a pipe that leads the clean water to the cistern. The water stored during the rain season, could last to up to 8 months for drinking and cooking. Families who receive the cistern are trained in water management by community members trained by the program.

The plaque cisterns are built by construction workers (*pedreiros*) trained and paid by the program who follow specific guidelines. Workers are paid by cisterns built and receive an average of R\$ 165 reais for each one built. The process of construction also includes the contribution of the benefiting family. First they need to dig a hole where the cistern will be built (plaque cisterns are half buried to diminish evaporation). Secondly, they need to allocate at least one family member to work as a volunteer-assistant to the construction worker from the program. And third, they need to provide water and sand for the construction.

A cistern takes about 5 days to build and costs around 1000 reais (ASA, 2002). This technology was originally created in the semi-arid region by a small farmer (*campones*) known as Senhor Nel (nick name for Manoel Apolônio de Carvalho). In 1955, at the age of 17 and escaping from the consequences of the last drought, illiterate Nel left the interior of Bahia looking for a job in Sao Paulo, where he found work as a construction worker. In Sao Paulo, Nel worked building swimming pools with plaques, and it was there, that he had the idea of collecting rainwater and storing it in a swimming-

pool-like cistern made of plaques. Nel was soon fired and went back to his region. There, he talked about his idea and a friend of his father provided the material for him to build the first cistern. After that he built several more, and the knowledge of the cistern spread over the Northeast. Nel was honored by ASA during one of their annual meetings (ASA, 2002).

Meanwhile, several adaptations of cisterns were created in different localities, such as the ones of '*pintada*' and '*fuba*' types. Some cistern constructions had support from local governments and NGOs. The cylindrical version currently used by the P1MC and the result of decades of experiences, discussions, and research involving a number of NGOs, was the result of a consensus where the current one was chosen as the best alternative. They took into consideration economic costs (estimated US\$ 333), technical (applicable for all types of soil), political concerns (independence from politicians and large land owners), social concerns (participation of families), and environmental aspects (no negative effect) (ASA, 2002).

Although the program One Million Cisterns, as it is, was officially created in 2003, prior phases of the program did exist. During the Forum of NGOs⁵¹ in Olinda for instance, a first model of a plaque cistern was built. The program only started with the first phase where 500 cisterns were built with the support of the agreement between ASA and Ministry of the Environment (MMA – Ministerio do Meio Ambiente). According to Mario (personal interview attached), it was during the COP3 in Olinda that a group from ASA convinced the then Minister of the Environment to look at the model cistern they

⁵¹ The NGO Forum that took place on November 15-26, 1999, in Olinda, in parallel to the Third United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification COP 3 in Recife.

constructed outside the building of the parallel forum and talk about its viability. It worked.

The successes and experiences of this first project generated the possibility of a new agreement (Convenio 0019/2001 with the National Water Agency (ANA - Agencia Nacional das Aguas) for the construction of 12,400 cisterns. During this period, there was a major improvement of the process of building the cistern itself, in addition to significant developments of the capacity of building strategies for technicians, construction workers, instructors, institutions and families, as well as training of administrators in resource management. This stage was called the Transition phase since the goal was always to build One Million Cisterns. It also helped to strengthen several civil society organizations members of ASA in different states (ASA, 2002: 8).

After that, the P1MC started a new phase in 2003 which coincided with the election of Lula as president of Brazil shortly after the launching of the Zero Hunger Strategy at the MDS. Until 2007, from a total of 221,000 cisterns built in the Semi-Arid by ASA, 167,000 were funded by the MDS (Fome Zero, 2007).

Although cisterns built by ASA were also supported by other Partnerships such as FEBRABAN⁵² and OXFAM, just to name a few, the MDS through the Zero Hunger strategy has been its main partner. In fact, it is a goal of ASA that the P1MC becomes a government policy.

Although the P1MC was officially approved in September 2001, during the second National Meeting of ASA (ASA, 2002:7), the program, at it is started in 2003. But since before that it had already defined its goal, which is to:

⁵² *Federacao Brasileira de Bancos* , Brazilian Federation of Banks.

Contribute, through an educational process to the social transformation towards the preservation, access, management and value of water as an essential right for life and citizenship, amplifying the comprehension and practice of sustainable and solidary coexistence with the Semi-Arid ecosystem. (ASA, 2002: 12)

This goal is central to the program's seven specific objectives, which are:

- (1) the mobilization of civil society for the implementation of the program
- (2) the creation of mechanisms that promote the participation of all actors involved in the management of the project and social control;
- (3) to provide the decentralized access to water for human consumption to 1,000,000 families;
- (4) to improve the quality of life of 5,000,000 people in the Semi-Arid, specially children, women and the old;
- (5) to strengthen the organizations of civil society involved in the execution of the program;
- (6) to implement a process of education towards the coexistence with the Semi-Arid and the participation in public policies;
- (7) to disseminate in the Brazilian society, a correct comprehension of the Semi-Arid region. (ASA, 2002:12)

The P1MC has nine guiding principles:

- (1) Shared management, from the conception to the management of the program;
- (2) Partnerships between ASA, government, NGOs, business, etc;
- (3) Decentralization and participation for the execution of the program though an articulated network;
- (4) Social mobilization and institutional strengthening;
- (5) Citizen-Education that situates critically the historical-cultural reality of the Semi-Arid;
- (6) Affirmation of population social rights to access and manage water;

- (7) Sustainable development affirming the viability of the Semi-Arid;
- (8) Strengthening and consolidation of social movements;
- (9) Emancipation by building a new political culture that breaks the secular domination of elites through the control of water. (ASA, 2002:12)⁵³

How does the program work? A very important step is the selection of households to receive the cisterns. The selections of localities need to follow certain criteria which include:

- Primary identity of the localities, in reference to existing secondary data, such as from the IBGE (Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics), SUS (Unified Health System), and HDI (Human Development Index).
- Existence of children and adolescents in risk situation, children's mortality rate, etc

And the selection of families in the locality selected are expected to follow the criteria below:

- Households headed by women
- Number of children from zero to six
- Children and adolescents at school
- Adults with age equal or superior to 65
- Mental and physical disabilities

So far, the following results were achieved.

Table 4.2 P1MC Results

Built Cisterns	287.767
Mobilized Families	294.817

⁵³ ASA documents were originally in Portuguese, the translations are responsibility of this researcher.

Families trained in Management of Water Resources	273.074
Municipal Comissions capacitated	6.397
Construction workers re-capacitated	5.520
Source:ASA Brasil - Data updated in 06/01/2010	

4.10. Gender relations in the Semi-Arid region

The predominant means of production in the Semi-Arid region is family agriculture. The major food crops produced are corn, beans and manioc. The whole family participates in this production, independent of sex and age, although the old and the young participate less. Women work less hours in the field than men because they accumulate domestic activities. However, despite the fact that women are active both in productive and domestic activities, none of them are considered work. (Melo, 2006:177)

While doing a diagnostic of gender relations in the Region of Pajeu, for instance, Santos and Almeida (2003) noted that women were active both in the agricultural as well as the non-agricultural production. They grow corn and beans; they raise chicken, goats, pigs, cattle; produce medicinal plants, potatoes fruits and herbs for consumption or medicinal use. They also knit, sew, and produce a number of arts and crafts. (Santos and Almeida, 2003:45)

Conversely, rural women hardly access credit for production, due to lack of documentation, lack of information about credit, and lack of technical assistance. (Santos and Almeida, 2003:45). Access to credit is done mostly by men who also control the

money of the household. This situation of economic reliance of women on men in the region is reinforced by policies directed towards the head of the household, generally the man. According to Santos & Almeida (2003:35) this situation fortifies gender vulnerabilities, and women are less likely to report cases of domestic violence due to this subordination to men.

Despite growing exceptions, specially related to the families where women are the head of the household, relatively speaking, the distribution of work in the family in the Semi-Arid region is still mostly marked by a patriarchal sexual division of labour, where women concentrate the domestic/reproduction activities, while men are identified with production.

Table. 4.3. Sexual Division of Labour Matrix

Woman	Man	Woman & Man
Wash and iron	Prepare the land	Take care of animals
Take care for family health	Access credit	Plant
Cook	Build cistern	Clean bush
Take care of children	Decide about money for production	To coal
Take care of cistern	Benefit from technical assistance	
Make garden	Member of the association	
Carry firewood on head	Enjoy leisure times	
Organize house	Participate in outside meetings	
Carry water on head	Commercialization of products	
	Decide about production	

Source: Santos & Almeida, 2003:19

This distinction also carries a subordination; ‘production has more value than reproduction, and men’s production has more value than women’s production’. (Silva e Portella, 2006:136)

As shown in Table 4.2. the care for water for the household is mostly a women's responsibility, as it is considered an extension of the domestic work. This includes knowing where water sources are for each use, and fetching water, storing it, saving it and recycling for different uses guarantying its safety. However, it is mostly men who are included in decision making about water for the community.

Agricultural women, despite assuming the responsibility of water provision for family consumption, is absent from the decisions of the programs created to solve the problem of water in the region. This fact reveals the unequal social treatment given to agricultural women in the Semi-Arid region. (Melo, 2006:179)

Fisher and Albuquerque (2002) noted that the situation of food insecurity and poverty that affect the population due to structural inequalities is only amplified during periods of droughts. Women are generally responsible for managing and distributing the food in the household, and in times of scarcity it often means preparing the plates of men and children first with what is available and then their own plate, which is normally less. Men, on the other side, are expected to produce food. Since in situations of scarcity both are incapable of performing their roles properly, the feelings are of anguish and impotency (Fisher & Albuquerque, 2002)

During droughts, it is common for men to temporarily migrate to urban centers in search for work. Women are left with children and the old to manage production and reproduction. In the region those women are called 'widows of living husbands' (Sakamoto, 1999).

In relation to political participation, rural women participate in several different types of organizations, such as community association, union, mothers group, women's groups,

religious group and so forth. Nevertheless, men occupy the majority of leadership positions. (Santos and Almeida, 2003:45).

In conclusion, although rural women work both in production and reproduction activities, most of their work is invisible or undervalued. In addition, despite their roles, women are also underrepresented in decision-making about the community, such as in relation to water. As Gouveia puts it: ‘A lot of work and no power mark the lives of rural women’ (Gouveia, 2003).

4.11. Conclusion

This chapter described historical and regional elements of the context in which ASA, and the P1MC are immersed, as well as the network and the program themselves. It also briefly explained gender relations in the Brazilian Semi-Arid region. The methodology used in this research will be detailed in the following chapter, following the focus on the participation of women in the P1MC.

Chapter 5. Research Design and Methodology

5.1. Introduction

Throughout the discussions about participation and empowerment, and specifically about women in water development, problems related to the subordination of poor women in water were raised, supporting the idea that gender inequalities reinforce water inequalities in development. So, what would be some of the conditions for the deep participation of women in water development?

In order to respond to this question, methodological choices were made and are described in this chapter, starting from general assumptions to the specifics of the research design.

5.2. Philosophical perspectives

Burrell and Morgan (1979) in their book “Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis” wrote that it was possible to understand the nature of social sciences according to four types of debates: (1) ontological assumptions about the nature of reality or whether reality is considered objective or subjective; (2) epistemological assumptions about the nature of knowledge or if it is positivistic or anti-positivistic; (3) assumptions about human nature and its relationship with the environment, and therefore, whether it is deterministic or voluntaristic (free will); and finally (4) assumptions in relation to methodology or how to differentiate between the ideographic method (first hand) and the nomothetic method (hypothesis testing). (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Following these categorizations, two philosophical assumptions are clearly embraced by the current research: (a) an anti-positivistic epistemology and (b) a non-

nomothetic research approach which means that this study is not concerned with testing a hypothesis or explaining and predicting selected phenomena through regularities and causalities among its elements (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

This study is interested in actors and social meanings, or more specifically in how women explain changes in their lives as cistern builders and commission members. In this sense, this research is ontologically subjective. However, this research also aims to reflect on women and development by raising elements involved in the transformation of women's lives. Therefore, the interest here is not only in portraying women's voices but also using them to reflect upon or contribute to the discussion of gender and development in its structural-material dimensions.

In this respect, this research adopts a philosophical understanding of the world as objectively conflicted or conflictual since historical inequalities, while socially constructed, have an independent, material existence - even if not all actors involved acknowledge it. In other words, social inequalities are socially constructed realities, and are at the same time objective and subjective.

5.3. The case study

The methodology of choice for this research was case study. There are disputes about the definition of case study, depending on the philosophical paradigm adopted by the researcher. "Case study can be positivistic, interpretative, or critical, depending on the underlying paradigms of research" (Myers, 2009). However, what mostly defines the case study type is the case itself (Luck at al. 2006:104).

What is the case a case of? One way of defining the case is using the dichotomies proposed by Ragin, 1992 (Luck et al., 2006:104). The author suggested that a case has “either empirical units or theoretical constructs and these are either general or specific.” Empirical units would comprise for instance specific groups of people; while theoretical units would focus on abstract concepts such as participation. (Luck et al. 2006:104). In the case of this research, one could consider the participation of women in a development program as a theoretical construction rather than an empirical unit. The other categorization proposed is between specific and general cases. The present case is specific because it deals with the participation of women in specific rural settings, specifically in three localities of the Program One Million Cisterns.

Another question refers to how much the case should be defined prior to research. Luck (2006:105) notes two opposing positions. One of them argues that the researcher needs to know the case well before doing research in order to identify variables and seek causal relationships. This demonstrates affinity with a positivistic paradigm. The other position would argue that openness is key because it allows “the case to emerge inductively,” which corresponds to a more interpretivist perspective (Luck:2006:105). For the current dissertation research the choice made was the one that presumes openness which enabled the researcher to see even more elements of the case than predicted (such as previously unknown forms of participation).

One characteristic that seems to be embraced by different perspectives is that case studies are “bounded by time and space,” are undertaken in “real life situations” and are “used to gain knowledge of contextual phenomena about an individual, group, organization, institution, social, or political event or a situation where people, or a group, share a

particular contemporary phenomenon” (Langford 2001; Yin 2003; Dempsey and Dempsey 2000 cited by Luck, et al 2006:105).

The focus on context is interesting because while the case is bounded, limited, and particular, its explanation resides in the complexities of its context. Stake identifies three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and collective (Stake 2000, cited by Luck: 2006:105). The *intrinsic* type is characterized by being a study in itself, meaning that the researcher is not interested in generalizing or theory-building. The *instrumental* type is interested in raising insights about certain phenomena. Along the same lines, the *collective* type of case study is also concerned about understanding a certain phenomenon that is not the case itself through collecting data from a number of cases. (Stake 2000, cited by Luck at al, 2006:106) Cases could be both instrumental and collective.

Accordingly, the present case study of women’s participation in the One Million Cisterns program (P1MC), could be categorized as a collective type of case study because it used three different localities (Afogados da Ingazeira, Mossoro and Fortaleza).

Another typology is that case study could be descriptive, explanatory or exploratory. The current research defines itself as exploratory because its aim is to explore the conditions involved in the participation of women in the P1MC. It also discusses whether or not the participation observed could be considered deep or transformative.

The analysis of case studies proposed by Luck at al. (2006) demonstrates the richness of the debate around case studies - not only across disciplines but mostly across paradigms. This richness translates into the fact that case studies can use several different research methods. Moreover, some researchers contend that case studies could be used as

a bridge between the two paradigms (Luck at al 2006: 103). Yet, for the purpose of this research a qualitative paradigm will be used which will be described next.

5.4. Qualitative and feminist perspectives

According to Cresswell (1994:145), there are six major assumptions of qualitative research, all of which match the current research. They are:

1. *A concern with the process.* The current research is not trying to prove a hypothesis, but is instead looking to describe, raise elements, and understand how the process of social change works for women participating in water development,

2. *A concern with meaning.* This investigation is not trying to test or apply a theoretical concept in the real world. On the contrary it is looking for how women and their advocates define their own process of change and, therefore, is interested in meanings that actors associate with their behavior.

3. *The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.* The basis of the current research was fieldwork with interviews and participant observation performed by the researcher who also was responsible for the analysis of the data collected.

4. *Involves fieldwork.* Mentioned above.

5. *Is descriptive.* This is an important aspect of this research that will describe how change works in order to identify contributing conditions and challenges for change.

6. *Is inductive.* Different from a more positivistic approach (deductive), the current work aims at describing phenomena in order to gain an understanding about it and not test preconceived concepts, as mentioned before.

Besides using a qualitative paradigm, this research assumed a feminist approach. Firstly, it is feminist because it is concerned with giving visibility to their voices and describing the lives of women. Since the management of domestic water is considered part of the housework it is often invisible. This research recognizes that historically, institutions are dominated by a male perspective (patriarchy) which creates gender inequalities and invisibilities that have to be considered as important producers of social inequalities, and hence as obstacles to development.

Feminist perspectives developed as a way to address the concerns and life experiences of women and girls, who, due to widespread androcentric bias, had long been excluded from knowledge construction both as researchers and research subjects. (Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2006:25)

Secondly, the study also acknowledges the diversity of feminists. This implies that the white middle class western feminists do not necessarily represent the struggles and demands of feminists from the South, but come from a diversity of colors, classes, ages, abilities, sexualities, etc. (Marchand, 1995:70). Women occupy different social positions and therefore have different standpoints.

Women and men occupy different social positions (even more complicated by race, class, and sexuality) that produce different life experiences, differential access to the economic, cultural and political reward system, and thus, ultimately different standpoints. (Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2006:29)

In recognizing the diversity of social positions and standpoints, this research wanted to give visibility to those non-dominant voices in development and to show how change is conceptualized by them on the ground.

The question arises how women from the South can undermine, resist and transform this power/knowledge nexus and become full participants in the Gender and Development enterprise (Marchand, 1995:70).

One important factor considered in this research was the contexts of not only gender but also of social inequalities that produce those standpoints. Another factor included was the motivation and standpoint of the researcher, which according to feminist research, should also be included in order to enhance objectivity.

Qualitative methods require the researcher to be deeply engaged with the data in order to extract meaning, understand process, and modify the project as appropriate (Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2006:28).

As a matter of fact, the motivation of the researcher seems to be essential for the understanding of the purpose of this research. How then was the idea for this dissertation born?

The motivation for the study derived from the previous experience of the researcher in a development project about water management in Brazil.⁵⁴ Although this project had a gender component, in practice it was very complex to implement. Several challenges were involved, among them the resistance and misconception of male staff about working with a gender perspective; the perception of the gender agenda as coming from abroad (top-down); the fact that the project already worked with another transversal theme (water/environment); and the absence of the gender discussion in grassroots community groups that were much more concerned with flooding and pollution. In spite of using data disaggregated by gender and working with community health agents (mostly women) and training staff on gender sensitivity, it seems fair to say that this

54 Sister Watersheds: Capacity Building for Civil Society Participation in Water Management in Sao Paulo Brazil. From 2004 to 2008. A CIDA funded project in partnership with York University, University of Sao Paulo and Ecoar Institute for Citizenship, Brazil. For more see the Canadian website <http://www.yorku.ca/siswater/> or the Brazilian Website http://www.ecoar.org.br/website/download/publicacoes/Balan%C3%A7o_do_Projeto_Bacias_Irm%C3%A3s_VERS%C3%83OFINAL.pdf

project did not have the gender impact anticipated. However, this was not a rare case. Further discussions on gender and development revealed that this in fact was the norm. Even among feminist groups, the success of gender mainstreaming was considered to be very limited at best.

Later on, this researcher heard about the case of women building cisterns in the Program One Million Cisterns (P1MC) in the Brazilian Semi-Arid. They received media attention exactly because they were not only achieving access to water, but they were also “breaking taboos,” and “exchanging the cooking spoon for the construction spoon;” in other words: they were participating in new opportunities and gaining not only income but also status. Could the case of women in the P1MC be considered a successful story of women’s empowerment through participation in a water development program? How? What changed in their lives? What barriers and challenges did they face? What supported them? In an exploratory paper about the women cistern builders (Moraes, 2007) the researcher realized that in all localities where women cistern builders were reported, they were in connection with feminist NGO’s. What role did they play? This would lead to this dissertation’s research questions.

5.5. Research questions

Inspired by the general research question, *What are the conditions for deep transformatory⁵⁵ participation of women in water development?* the present research developed the following specific research questions that guided the investigation with the women associated with the P1MC:

⁵⁵ The terms ‘deep’, ‘transformatory’ and ‘empowering’, referring to participation, are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

1. What was the context of emergence of the P1MC? How it is organized? What are the possible avenues for public participation for men and women? How did women enter the program's agenda?

2. How do women participate in the program? **How did the first cisterneiras (women cistern builders) appear in the program?** What changed in their lives? What helped them? What barriers and challenges did they face? What role did feminist NGOs and the feminist movement play in their case?

3. What other forms of deeper participation of women can be observed in the program? **How did the women commission members appear in the program?** What changed in their lives? What helped them? What barriers and challenges did they face? What role did feminist NGOs and the feminist movements play in their case?

4. In a cross-case analysis, what were the recurrent themes and ideas mentioned by poor women and their supporters that could shed light on the conditions for their own development? Was their participation a successful story of deep participation? How?

5.6. Research procedures

Selection of Cases

Field work was conducted in two stages. The first stage was an exploratory one in April 2008, when the researcher went to Recife and conducted interviews with key participants from ASA national and some feminist organizations. The national office is located in Recife as well as offices of some other organizations visited. Both men and women were interviewed at this time with the intention of understanding the function of the program and women's participation in it.

The second stage, the actual fieldwork, was done in June and July 2008 when the researcher travelled to the selected regions. The first two regions were selected because they were the sites where the first and the second group of cisterneiras appeared: respectively Afogados da Ingazeira and Mossoro.

Cisterneiras existed also in other states of the Semi-Arid, but because this study was concerned about conditions of emergence, it was important to visit and understand the first and second case. In this respect the selection was *purposeful*. The researcher was looking for the first cistern builders and their supporting systems.⁵⁶

The choice of the third locality, Fortaleza in the region Sertao Central, was different. Fortaleza was attractive because it is in a different state, Ceara, and it is a big metropolis in the Northeast and also the capital of the State. The municipality of Fortaleza has close to 2.5 million inhabitants while Mossoro has 260,000 and Afogados da Ingazeira has 36,000. Although the focus of the research was on rural women living in rural areas, those rural areas and the micro-regions they belonged to were close to different municipalities of different sizes. In addition, Fortaleza was attractive because there were prior reports (Joao Amorim, from ASA) not only of the existence of women cistern builders but also of the strong participatory role of women there in the commissions and as health agents.

Table 5.1. Selection of cases by locality

Selection of Cases	First	Second	Third
Locality Region State	Afogados da Ingazeira Pajeu Pernambuco	Mossoro Apodi Rio Grande do Norte	Fortaleza Sertao Central Ceara
Reasons	It was where the	It was where the	Had cisterneiras and

⁵⁶ This did not mean that the researcher was assuming that cisterneiras meant deep participation.

for choice	first group of Cisterneiras emerged	second group of cisterneiras emerged	women as commission members + partnerships with health agents/ commissions
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Originally this researcher had intended to visit two other types of communities. The *Quilombolas* Afro Brazilian Communities formed originally by ex-slaves that exist in several states in the Northeast. The researcher had information about “Black cisterneiras” in a Quilombo close to Natal, capital of Rio Grande do Norte.⁵⁷ The other group of interest for this research was the women cistern builders in the settlements of the MST – Landless Rural Workers. The researcher had information that there were women cistern builders in a settlement in Ouricuri, Pernambuco. Due to time constraints it was not possible to include them in this study. Fortaleza was chosen instead.

Data Collection Tools

In order to proceed with the above research questions, the following data collection tools were used:

1 – *Semi structured interviews* which consists of interviews with open ended questions aiming to start a conversation but not to limit it. The researcher goal was to have a guideline to follow and at the same time be open to people’s interpretations about their story and life changes related to their participation. Interviews were done with (a) staff from the Articulation of the Semi–Arid (ASA), the body that coordinates the P1MC nationally, (b) staff from NGO members of ASA, (c) staff from feminist organizations involved with rural women who participated in the P1MC, (d) women cistern builders, and (e) women commission members.

⁵⁷ For more info see <http://www.mineiropt.com.br/noticias/mineiro-visita-negras-cisterneiras-de-bom-jesus/>

A protocol with questions was developed for each group (see Appendix 1) that guided the interview. However, the researcher was concerned about developing a rapport and about listening to what the person had to say and wanted to say about the participation of women in the P1MC or their participation and life experiences.

Interviews lasted on average for one hour and were conducted in different places--sometimes on the premises of the institution of the interviewee (in the case of NGO workers) -- other times in the house of the women or in the community center of their settlement. Interviews were recorded in Brazilian Portuguese, then transcribed and coded. Quotes from interviews were translated only after citations were selected. The great majority of interviews were conducted individually although there could be some interviewee friends or relatives circulating in the house or office. When interviews were done in the houses of rural women or their communities NGO members took the researcher there and stayed around but did not interfere with the interview. In fact, because of their introduction, the interviewee appeared to have more confidence knowing that the researcher was not a government person or authority.

The fact that the researcher was Brazilian and spoke Portuguese guaranteed good communication although the researcher realized the conversation with NGO members was easier than with rural workers, probably because the first ones were more used to talking about their participation in the program. The conversation might have been facilitated by the fact that the researcher was a woman – when interviewing women.

The researcher had written a paper before about the women cistern builders and already knew the names of the first ones, as well as the name of the NGO coordinators

linked to them. Cistern builders were contacted through NGO members. Commission members were asked to be interviewed during a meeting where all were present.

In total, 23 interviews were conducted. However 36 (22+12 +2) people were interviewed. This happened because in the community of Independencia, 12 women came to the community center to be interviewed at the same time. Because this group interview worked more as a focus group, they are mentioned in this research only as group Independencia instead of by their individual names. Two interviews were done with two people together. One interview was done by phone, and notes were taken. All other interviews were taped and transcribed. Quotes from interviews were translated by the researcher after they were selected to be used. Below is a list of people interviewed as well as their localities, groups or organization, and some background information (notes).

Table 5.2. List of People Interviewed

	Name	Time	Place	Org./group	Notes
1	Graciete	April 2008	Recife	Casa da Mulher do Nordeste (RE)	Coordinator of Casa in Recife.
2	Mario	April & July 2008	Recife and Afogados da Ingazeira	Diaconia UGM P1MC Pajeu	At ASA since the beginning. Was interviewed twice, the second time About women in committees (insignificant there).
3	Vitor and Omar	April 2008	Recife	Oxfam	Vitor, contacted through friends, indicated Omar who has been with ASA since the beginning
4	Ligia and Isaura	April 2008	Recife	Fundacao Joaquim Nabuco	Peer interview, not used in the analyses. Two profs that worked in the region dealing with similar issues
5	Joao Amorim	April 2008	Recife	ASA - National	Manager at ASA

6	Jose Aldo	April 2008	Recife	Instituto Sabia AP1MC ASA National	Was one of the directors of AP1MC at the time. At the Institute since the beginning. Now is the Executive Secretary for Family Agriculture for the State of Pernambuco ⁵⁸ .
7	Chaguinha	June & July 2008	Mossoro	Cisterneira	2 nd group of cisterneiras. Interviewed at home.
8	Linda	June & July 2008	Mossoro	Cisterneira	2 nd group of cisterneiras. Interviewed at CF8.
9	Conceicao	June & July 2008	Mossoro	Centro Feminista 8 Marco	
10	Independencia	June & July 2008	Mossoro	Cisterneiras	Group of 12 women interviewed together at their community centre.
11	Claudia	June & July 2008	Mossoro	Centro Feminista 8 de Marco	
12	Rejane	June & July 2008	Mossoro	Centro Feminista 8 de Marco	
13	Nilta	June & July 2008	Fortaleza	Micro-Regional Committee - Sertao Central	Interviewed after meeting in Fortaleza at Esplar.
14	Betina	June & July 2008	Fortaleza	Micro-Regional Committee - Sertao Central	Interviewed after meeting in Fortaleza at Esplar. Also a pump maker (pregnant)
15	Fatima Abreu	June & July 2008	Fortaleza	Micro-Regional Committee - Sertao Central	Interviewed after meeting in Fortaleza at Esplar.
16	Raimunda	June & July 2008	Fortaleza	Micro-Regional Committee	Interviewed after meeting in Fortaleza at Esplar.

⁵⁸ <http://www.agricultura.pe.gov.br/interna.php?p=noticias&d=2011-01&id=nova-secretaria-executiva-agrada-movimentos-sociais>

				- Sertao Central	
17	Adriana	June & July 2008	Fortaleza	Esplar Gender Group	Interviewed at Esplar – part of the Gender Section
18	Fatima Loira	June & July 2008	Caninde	Local commission	Interviewed after training course.
19	Malvinier	June & July 2008	Fortaleza	Esplar UGM Sertao Central	Since the beginning at Forum Ceara.
20	Selma	June & July 2008	Fortaleza	Cetra Feminist Org.	
21	Elzira	June & July 2008	Fortaleza	Esplar UGM Sertao Central	Since the beginning at Forum Ceara.
22	Marli	June & July 2008	Afogados da Ingazeira	Casa da Mulher do Nordeste – Afogados da Ingazeira	
23	Lourdes	June & July 2008	Afogados da Ingazeira	Cisterneira	1 st Cisterneira.

2 – *Participant Observations* were adopted so the researcher could develop a perspective as close as possible to the people interviewed. This meant participating in events that they participated in, and trying to experience some of their experiences. Although this was not ethnographic research, participant observation was done having been inspired by the work of Geertz 1989 that defends the engagement of the researcher or following the anthropological principle of “When in Rome, do like the Romans” (Geertz, 1989:281) During the field work the researcher was open to any event/ occurrence that could help her understand the context or atmosphere of the places visited.

Therefore the researcher drank rainwater from the cisterns, travelled by motorcycle, participated in trainings and meetings (but unfortunately did not have the chance to participate in the construction of a cistern). Notes were taken after every event. Some of the key events were:

Table 5.3. List of events and places visited

	Event	Time	Place	Notes
1	First National Conference for Rural development	June 2008	Olinda, PE	ASA was very active there. Jose Aldo was member of the organizing committee. Graciete was part of the women's strategy there. New contacts in Fortaleza (Cetra). Different Unions and Groups on family agriculture. Researcher got acquainted with main themes discussed
2	Visit settlements for interview	June 2008	Mossoro	Physically saw the difference between settlements and communities. Saw the first cisterns up close. Drank water from it.
3	Preparatory Meeting for Rural women's meeting	June 2008	Mossoro	Saw staff from CF8 organizing meeting of rural women workers from different communities. Met members of the Solidarity network Xique Xique
4	Visit store/office Xique Xique Network	June 2008	Mossoro	Saw artisanal products sold by cooperatives. Followed meeting of cooperative producers.
5	Popular Restaurant of Maracunai	June 2008	Maracunai / Fortaleza	Went to the inauguration and helped with organization of first day. 500 people came to eat an entire meal for \$1,00.
6	Municipal Secretary of Social Development	June 2008	Maracunai / Fortaleza	Visited new office of social services, introducing new social policies in the municipality.
7	Water resources training	July 2008	Caninde/ Sertao Central	Participated in weekend training for people who were going to receive cisterns. Stayed in the house of a family in the community for the weekend. No water or light. Drank more rainwater.

8	Community of Riacho Doce	July 2008	Community of Riacho doce/ Afogados da Ingazeira	Looking for Cidinha for interview, could not be found. Visited other houses and families with technical person. Talked with women about house, gender, water, crops and school (no running water there)
9	Community of	July 2008	Afogados da Ingazeira	Visited the community where Lourdes, the first cisterneira, lived.
10	Working House	July 2008	Afogados da Ingazeira	Visited working house of the Women Producers of Pajeu. Learned about their history and how they produce. Saw their solar panels, two cisterns, round bathroom - all new technologies for the Semi-Arid.
11	Store	July 2008	Afogados da Ingazeira	Visited store in Afogados da Ingazeira where the network of women producers in the region – Rede Xique Xique – sell their crafts.
12	Street Market	July 2008	Mossoro	Visited the famous Sunday street market of Afogados da Ingazeira – where women from the Women Producers of Pajeu sell their organic jams

3. *Collection of academic and non academic documents.* Documents were collected from different sources about the history, description, context and participation of women in the program. Among them were academic works, governmental and non-governmental publications, manuals, evaluations and databases. Thesis and dissertations were investigated related to the program and the participation of women such as Silipandri, (2009), Melo (1999), Soares (2009), Assis (2009).

Publications from ASA and other NGOs were important to understand not only the history and function but also the context of women's participation. All three NGOs visited (Esplar, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste and Centro Feminista 8 de Marco) had published a diagnosis of gender relations in their regions (Marco 0), and later a Marco 1, showing changes after the Project Dom Helder Actions were introduced. There were also

publications about the cisterneiras i.e., “Constructing Cisterns, Deconstructing Taboos.” – one of the first publications to call attention to the fact that women building cisterns raised gender issues. There were also government and private evaluations of the program that were consulted as well as routine reports on training and databases of the programs. At that time there were not many statistics including gender, so the researcher often had to deduce gender from name – which is not 100% accurate. The precise number of women cistern builders was not available for the whole program at that time.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was done in two steps. The first one consisted of a detailed description of the cases presented in Chapter 6. The focus of this chapter was to describe the levels of participation of women in the P1MC and to present in details of how cistern builders and commission member appeared and what changed in their lives. This is consistent with a “first level of analysis as being true to, respecting and capturing in detail the individual cases being studied” (Patton, 2002:362)

A second level of analysis was done in chapter 7, where a cross-case analysis was made focusing on changes from an individual view towards a more macro perspective, following the information given by the people interviewed. Here the research used what Patton called an *inductive analysis* which he described as:

Immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes and interrelationships (...) guided by analytical principles rather than rules, and ends with a creative synthesis (Patton, 2002:362).

Other principles of qualitative research mentioned by Patton in relation to data analysis were also followed such as the holistic principle:

The whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than a sum of parts; focus is on complex interdependencies and system

dynamics that cannot be meaningfully reduced to a few discrete variables and linear cause-effect relationships. (Patton, 2002:362)

The complexity of women participation in development, already discussed in chapters 2 and 3, was again assumed for the analysis done in chapters 6 and 7. And the goal of this analysis was in fact to identify ideas about the diversity of elements involved in this complexity. In order to improve the analysis, a comparison between the cases was also done in chapter 7 that summarizes the findings. This comparison of commonalities in case studies is suggested as a way to construct composite portraits able to represent the cases suggesting implications for future research (Ragin 1999:1141). *Validity and Reliability*

According to Creswell (1994:158), qualitative researchers might use either the concepts of Validity and Reliability (generally more associated with quantitative research) or Trustworthiness and Authenticity (generally more associated with qualitative research). This research will use the first ones but accepts the latter ones which means basically the same in qualitative research.

Validity is ascertained by examining the sources of invalidity. The stronger the falsification attempts a proposition has survived, the more valid, the more trustworthy the knowledge (Kvale, 1996:241 cited by Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2006:62).

Validity in this research was sought by using the principles of reflexivity and feminist objectivity. Reflexivity means the continuing and constant search for understanding the process, and questioning every apparent conclusion. For instance, the word *sair* (to leave) was mentioned several times with similar meanings, and the researcher looked for cases where it had a totally different meaning. Another example was to include and acknowledge the conflicting perspectives explaining the history of how gender was constructed to become part of the program's agenda. Reflectivity was also used to adjust the research to include new questions and even groups, such as the commission members that were not originally the focus of this research. In sum,

reflectivity and objectivity were supported in feminist research by assuming knowledge as situated (Haraway, 1988:581 cited by Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2006:26).

Another important type of checking involves going out of your way to provide alternative theoretical explanations for your given findings and attempting to critically examine the relative strengths and weaknesses of your argument and alternatives to your argument. (Kvale, 1996:241 cited by Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2006:64)

Creswell also calls this type of validity external validity or the discussion of the “limited generability of findings” (Creswell, 1994:158). This is an important part of this research, and it is presented in more detail in Chapter 8 where results are discussed. Because this research was looking for cases of “deep” or “transformatory” participation in order to describe the conditions under which it could occur, this research is biased in the sense that it deliberately went to investigate cases where this process might be happening. The obvious limit is that this type of deep participation (if found) could not be generalized to the rest of the program studied. However, the value of this study lies in its ability to look for elements of deep participation not at the core of the program, but at its margins.

Reliability refers to the “limitations of replicating the study” (Creswell, 1994:158). This case study is bound in time and space; therefore, it aims at producing partial truths about those specific times and places. It assumes that the program as well as the participation of women keeps changing over time. However, because it tried to follow a chronological order reconstructing how events emerged and unfolded (such as entrance of women on the agenda of the program, also known as the cisterneiras or women cistern builders), it could potentially be replicated. Nevertheless, the existence of different perspectives in relation to the program acknowledged in this research implies that a

different choice of people (for example, only men) could potentially produce different versions or standpoints.

Nevertheless, a detailed description of how the data was collected was produced in form of personal notes.

Risk Assessment and Protection of Human Subjects

This research entitled “Gendered Waters: The Participation of Women in the Brazilian Program ‘One Million Cisterns’ in the Brazilian Semi-Arid Region.” was certified as "Exempt" as it pertains to human subjects from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri Columbia. This classification was updated.

The protection of human subjects was guaranteed by reading the Oral Consent Form (see Appendix 2) which was also taped at the beginning of the interviews. An oral consent was preferred to a written one because in the context of rural Brazil to ask for a signature would have raised unnecessary suspicion with rural women. All the organizations visited gave a written permission for research which was attached to the Institutional Review file.

All people interviewed chose (on tape) to have their names used in this research, which might seem to them like a form of public recognition. Anything said that might pose a risk to any of the people interviewed was removed.

5.7. Final remarks

This chapter described the methodology of this dissertation, from its philosophical assumptions to the specificities of its research design. A case study approach of the participation of women in the program One Million Cisterns in The Brzilian Semi-Arid

region was adopted and three case study areas were selected: Afogados da Ingazeira, Mossoro and Fortaleza. Participant observation, semi-structural interviews and document analysis were used to gather data. Analysis was done in two steps to provide a more descriptive and a thematic analysis that will be presented over the next two chapters.,

It is very important to emphasize that this was not an evaluation of the entire program. Instead, the present study looked at the cases of cistern builders and commission members in three selected micro-regions as potential cases of deep participation and then asked the questions: Is there social change? If yes, what helped it? What were the conditions contributing to it? What were the barriers and challenges for women?

The next two chapters will start responding to those questions.

Chapter 6. The Participation of Women in the P1MC

6.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the data collected through this research and aims at providing a comprehensive description of the participation of women in the Program One MillionCisterns or P1MC. The information presented in this chapter is mostly based on documents and interviews.

First, the different levels of participation that both men and women could potentially have in the program will be explained. Secondly, the question of how women entered into the P1MC will be explored. After that, a brief description of the participation of women as beneficiaries of cisterns will be offered. Although, this was not the focus of this research, it is nevertheless important to consider. Subsequently, the three cases will be presented (Afogados da Ingazeira; Mossoro and Fortaleza) discussing the emergence of the women cistern builders (*cisterneiras*) and the women commission members as well as the changes in their lives.

6.2. Reconstruction of the participation of women in the P1MC

When talking about the participation of women in the P1MC, one must first introduce diversity as a first assumption or observation. The program is broad in scope; therefore, the level of participation of women will depend on many elements, many of them being related to the context in which the program is implemented. Nevertheless, there are some common locations in the program where civil participation happens. In theory, both men and women could and should be included at all levels of civil society participation in the P1MC. From bottom up, these are:

Beneficiaries – These are the people who receive the cisterns adjacent to their houses. If they are interested in receiving a cistern, they are asked to register with a member of the local commission and participate in a two-day training on Semi-Arid water management and the cistern technicalities. After that, they need to contribute to the construction of the cistern by digging a hole for it in the approved spot; by working during the construction as assistant to the mason (cistern builder); and by providing water and sand for the construction. In addition, they must provide food, water and accommodation for all workers during the construction phase (which lasts from 4 to 7 days). The estimated number of beneficiaries in July 2008 was 126,730 women and 82,093 men.⁵⁹ As of July 2010 289,524 cisterns were built benefiting the same number of families (ASABrasil, 2010).

Members of local commissions – These are volunteer members from the communities or localities receiving the cisterns that are responsible for assisting the implementation of the program on the local/community level.

In the communities where cisterns are constructed we form a local commission, a community commission. The local community commissions need to have a minimum of one woman, from three people, a minimum of one woman to help receive the material, to maintain alive people's excitement, to encourage people to dig, to teach people to dig the correct way, at the right site..." (Joao Amorim, ASA, 2008).

Also working with the local commissions, are the people who prepare the food (mostly women) for the new beneficiaries participating in the P1MC training. In addition, there are also the volunteers who help with mobilization by finding space for meetings, etc.

⁵⁹ This information was obtained in July 2008 by the ASA Office in Recife. I was told that the number was not 100% precise because some UGMs had not recorded sex.

Masons (construction workers) and pump builders – These are paid workers that took a training course offered by the program in order to learn the specifics of building the program’s plaque cisterns. Also included are the people trained and hired to assemble pumps – which are used in the cisterns of some states, as well as the instructors, both for cistern and pump builders.

Microregional Management Units (*Unidades Gestoras Microregionais* /UGM)

- The UGMs are NGOs members of ASA that were selected by the State ASAs to manage and implement the program. Therefore, they have a contractual relationship with the program through the APIMC (Association One Million Cisterns Program) and for that they each hire their own technical team (including monitors, masons, instructors). As for 2008, there were 60 UGMs. They are the executive arms of the program, and they count with the support of the Municipal commissions in order to make decisions about the program. Their numbers are expected to grow in the next few years⁶⁰.

The Municipal Commissions – Each of the 60 Micro Regional Management Units are assisted by volunteer members of ASA institutions that represent the municipalities of the territory (micro-regions) forming what is called the Municipal Commissions.

Members of the Municipal Commissions are representatives from organizations of civil society, unions, churches, forums, etc. as well as members of ASA. The Micro regional Management Units and Municipal Commissions together form the **Micro Regional Forum** that decides about the selection of communities and families to receive the cistern. As for July 2010, 6.397 members of municipal commissions were included in the program. (ASABrasil, 2010)

⁶⁰ See http://www.seedinit.org/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=att_download&link_id=79&cf_id=42

State ASAs – Up to 2008 there were 11 state ASAs that coordinated the implementation of the ASA programs at the state level. Each state had two executive coordinators, each from a different institution. As mentioned before, state coordinators are responsible for the selection of new prospective ASA members. Each state ASA has its own dynamics, but all 22 executive coordinators participate in and form the ASA Brasil.

Central Management Unit (Unidade Gestora Central/ UGC) – Located in the office of ASA Brasil, the Central Management Unit is composed of a group of 22 executive coordinators from the 11 states. They compose the **Association of the Program One Million Rural Cisterns (Associação do Programa Um Milhão de Cisternas/AP1MC)**. It is an OSCIP (Organização da Sociedade Civil de Interesse Público), a Civil Society Organization of Public Interest. It was created in 2002 to manage the program One Million Cisterns, and since 2007 it also manages the Program One Earth Two Waters (Uma Terra e Duas Águas P1+2). The AP1MC is a non-profit, educational, philanthropical, charitable, environmental, civil society organization. It has a technical team covering the areas of communication, information, administration and finance. The AP1MC has a contractual relationship with the UGMs and donors. Currently the board of AP1MC is composed of 22 members, 11 full members and 11 substitutes. From the 11 members, two are women and nine are men; and among the 11 substitutes six are women and four are men. The president is a woman, and the vice-president is a man (ASA Brasil, 2010)⁶¹.

⁶¹ See ASA Brasil website - AP1MC: Estatuto AP1MC. <http://www.asabrasil.org.br/> Accessed 30 September, 2010.

Articulation of the Semi-Arid - ASA – As mentioned in the previous chapter, ASA is an umbrella organization composed of members from a diverse number of organizations and institutions. Among them are churches, unions, nongovernment organizations, associations, etc. Currently there are more than 800 organizations that participate in ASA.

6.3. Women in the program's agenda.

A quick look at the features of communities and families that received cisterns demonstrates that women are included in the agenda of the P1MC. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the criteria for the selection of communities are *(a) Primary identity of the localities, in reference to existing secondary data, such as from the IBGE (Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics), SUS (Unified Health System), and HDI (Human Development Index); (b) Children and Adolescents in risk situations, children's mortality rate, etc.* (ASA, 2002) This means that communities are first selected based on existing data about their needs including statistics about poverty and child malnutrition and mortality, all of which could be related to water access.

After communities are defined, the criteria for the selection of families at the local level are very inclusive of women. They prioritize according to: (a) households headed by women; (b) number of children from zero to six; (c) existence of children and adolescents at school; (d) adults with age equal or superior to 65; and (e) Mental and physical disabilities.

It is therefore clear that women are included as beneficiaries of the cisterns. How did this happen? How did women enter on the agenda?

Women are the main keepers of food and water management at the household level. Since the P1MC is concerned about providing access to drinking water, and drinking water is part of the domestic realm, it is almost natural that women are included. But it is not only as beneficiaries of the cisterns that those women are included. In fact, there is a statement in the Declaration of the Semi-Arid insisting on the inclusion of women in the development process. Members of ASA in accordance with the Declaration agreed to:

Include Women and Youth in the Development Process⁶²

Women represent 40% of the workforce in rural areas, and more than half begin to work at 10 years of age. In the *Sertao*, they are often responsible for water for the household and small animals,⁶³ aided in this task by the young. Despite strenuous working hours of more than 18 hours, rural women remain invisible. There is no public recognition of her importance in the production process. Worse, many do not even exist on the public record. Without a birth certificate, identity cards, social insurance, voter registration and under-representation in unions and councils, rural women cannot exercise their citizenship.

Inspired by these considerations and Article 5 of the Convention to Combat Desertification, in which Brazil has committed to “promoting awareness and facilitating the participation of local populations, especially women and youth,” the Brazilian Articulation of the Semi-Arid advocates :

- compliance with the ILO Convention 100,⁶⁴ which provides for equal pay for the same productive function;
- that women are eligible as direct beneficiaries of agrarian reform and land ownership;
- that women have access to agricultural and livestock production credit programs.

I asked Omar⁶⁵ from Oxfam Recife, who participated in the emergence of ASA, how women were included in the Declaration of the Semi Arid, and he responded that:

⁶² My translation from original in Portuguese, available at the Asa Brasil Website.

http://www.asabrasil.org.br/Portal/Informacoes.asp?COD_MENU=104 Accessed September 30, 2010.

⁶³ At the National Rural Development Conference in Olinda, 2008 I heard a group of women commenting on the assumption that ‘women are often said to be responsible for the care of small animals’. Small animals such as chicken, goats, cows... Therefore they asked: which big animals were men responsible for? Elephants, whales?

⁶⁴ For more on the ILO Convention 100, see <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C100>

⁶⁵ Interviewed in Recife, PE, at the site of Oxfam on June 2008.

It was evident that one of the immediate principles of the cistern was to alleviate the workload of women in the Semi-Arid. (...) But the fact that gender had entered the Declaration of the Semi Arid does not mean it was incorporated in ASA. It took many years for ASA to develop a work related to women. (...) In the beginning it was a political articulation, very diverse, and with a lot of distrust (...) The Declaration of the Semi-Arid itself was written by one of our (Oxfam) consultants (...). He was able to reconcile the perspectives of the environment movement with the union movement (...). What was interesting was that later, both movements withdrew from the leadership of ASA (Omar, 2008).

According to Omar, at the beginnings of ASA, during the Parallel Forum in 1999, among the exciting discussions was a table called Women and Water where the weight of women in managing water at the local level was recognized. In the first years of the articulation he assisted with the coordination of ASA as a representative from Oxfam. He also mentioned that AFA was a member of UNICEF, Fabio. Both international institutions had funds available to help develop the vision of ASA as a program, which according to Omar, was very important because other NGOs had a more local vision.

Omar also suggested that in the following developments of ASA, Oxfam supported the discussion on the relation of gender and poverty, which was already part of Oxfam International's agenda. However, there were not too many women in the first years of the formation of ASA, both at the leadership and at the NGO levels. In the words of Omar:

The majority were men. There were very few women, really few. (...) Gradually there were new compositions of the executive commissions and in these re-compositions, more and more women began to appear. (..) The NGOs normally are units of technical assistance, and in general they have more agricultural technicians, that tend to be more men than women. Today that is changing, right? But 8 years ago this was the tendency, it was very masculine this thing at the NGOs (Omar, 2008).

Nevertheless, representing Oxfam, Omar was part of the of the emergent gender working group of ASA that created a project called "Men and Women Building New

Relations in The Semi-Arid.”⁶⁶ They also counted on the support of OXFAM consultant Telma Castelo Branco . Omar described this process:

We tried for a long time to create a working group of gender at the National Meeting of ASA. But there were still few women. Until one day there was a meeting of the extended executive commission of ASA in which there was a significant number of women. These women decided to do a little parallel meeting and from this, the working group was created. They asked for support from Oxfam. We discussed it inside Oxfam and realized we were very motivated to do work also with men.(...) Gender as a women’s issue gets isolated from the movement, and we did not want that. A project was elaborated by this group which also included me and three or four other men (Omar 2008).

This project was approved by ASA and Oxfam and received financial support from Oxfam. The idea was really to create “a program with men and women,” said Omar. However it was difficult to involve other men, get them to participate, and the group ended up being composed mostly of women. Furthermore, with time, the advisor of the group as well as the orientation changed.

At a certain point Telma was moving away from being a consultant here and this group of women decided to adopt the advisor of SOF (Sempre Viva Organizacao Feminista) from Sao Paulo. Miriam Nobre assumed the leadership. She is a very combative figure; she is from the Women’s World March. From that time the advisory and orientation became extremely feminist which is not a problem but with that, they forgot men. So there is a group with the majority of women with a gender project approved by us (Oxfam). They did an excellent gender seminar at the ASA National Meeting, but because of this feminism thing, there is resistance at ASA⁶⁷(Omar, 2008).

As part of the Gender group at ASA, Graciete Santos, coordinator in Recife of the Casa da Mulher do Nordeste also acknowledges this conflict of visions at ASA in respect to gender. She argues that:

⁶⁶ “Homens e Mulheres Construindo Novas Relacoes no Semi-Arido”.

⁶⁷ He also mentioned that there was a peak moment in 2006 with the presence of the group at the ASA meeting in Sobral. But in 2007 the group lost the momentum, probably, I would think, because the program as a whole experienced a break at this point.

Conflicts exist and derive from a vision – a vision that is not feminist - of gender with the meaning of complementarity. It does not derive from a vision that recognizes inequality (Graciete, 2008).

Furthermore, Graciete sees that if inequality is a concern of ASA in theory, in practice it is more complex. Partly because of a how family is conceived as a homogeneous unit, not only for the P1MC but also in other family agricultural programs.

It is a concept of family that assumes that there is no conflict; where the relation of complementarity is fundamental for the existence and survival of this family; and considers family relations as homogeneous. It does not consider that differences and inequalities exist. It is cool that differences exist. But inequalities, not only in the gender issue but in the generational aspect, that is a very serious problem. (...) To say that women are important (...), it is undeniable. But which place is this? (Graciete, 2008).

Specifically in the relation to the organization of production of water, Graciete sees that normally women and men have different “places” and the place of women is often subordinated or unrecognized.

Women are fundamental for water management because women are the managers of water. There are the ones that manage the water to drink, to eat, to bathe the kids. They walk miles to supply the household with water – it is not the men who do those tasks. (...) So these are the conflicts that exist [at ASA] about the place of women. There is a sexual division of labor that determines the place, the task of women and men. The thing is that in this story, women work much more than men, and they have no recognition, neither economic, nor social, nor by the family itself; and this is a big debate (Graciete, 2008).

This conflict of visions will be even clearer in the case of the *cisterneiras*. But before going deeper into this discussion and into the different perspectives on gender, feminism and even family, the participation of women as recipients of cisterns will be explored where coincidentally, there seems to be less conflict⁶⁸.

⁶⁸ One idea I heard in a bus from an INCRA officer was that the P1MC was the cistern of women, while the One Land Two waters was the cistern for men.

6.4. Women as beneficiaries of cisterns

As mentioned by Omar in the previous section of this chapter “One of the immediate principles of the cistern is to alleviate the workload of women in the Semi-Arid” (Omar, 2008). It is common sense, not only in the Brazilian Semi-Arid, but in the majority of countries of the developing world that women are the managers of domestic water. In the Brazilian Semi-Arid this is no different. As a result, receiving a cistern has positive consequences for women in particular in terms of time, health, citizenship, and food security although it has limits and challenges too.

The recipient of the cistern needs to sign a receipt/declaration. For this purpose the individual has to present his or her social insurance card (CPF⁶⁹) and women in rural areas of the Semi-Arid are still more likely than men to be undocumented. Joao Amorim, from ASA Brasil, explained:

Initially we only selected families who had ownership of the land, but from 2006 on, we started to open space for families that reside in the land, and according to the Brazilian law of *usucapiao*⁷⁰ have the right to that land. (...) But we also face the issue of documentation (...). It is common for women not to have documents, although we try to encourage all to get them (Joao, ASA, 2008).



Figure.6.1 Family with Cistern Figure 6.2.Cistern Number 1
Source: Website of ASA Brasil

⁶⁹ CPF= Cadastro de Pessoas Físicas.

⁷⁰ Under the principle of **usucapiao**, an individual who occupies a parcel of land for a certain number of years could apply for land title. For more see:
<http://www.colegiodearquitectos.com.br/dicionario/15/02/2009/o-que-e-usucapiao/>

Even before officially receiving the cistern, as seen in the picture above, families must participate in the two-day training on Managing Water Resources offered by the UGMs. The estimates about who participates in the training vary.⁷¹ According to the person interviewed:

(...) we perceive that men and women go to the meetings, and then in one year go the men and not the women, and in the other one go the women but not the men. (...) We see the equal participation of women and men, sometimes there is even more women because men are in the fields (roca) (Joao Amorim , Asa Brasil, 2008).

(.) The women stay just with the part on community awareness, the course about water resources as they call it, and about how to handle the cistern (Conceicao, CF8, 2008).

(...) in the courses they (women) were included because of the understanding that this was a women's issue. The care and health of people is a women's job (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, 2008).

(...) For a family to have a cistern, a condition is to participate in the course on Management of Water Resources. We hoped that the ones attending were women, since they are the managers of water resources. But several times it was the head of the household⁷² [men] who went because it was a political thing to secure the right of the cistern. So this guy goes, is minimally interested, does not transmit anything about the cistern, and the knowledge about the cistern, and the varnish of citizenship ends up fading (Omar, Oxfam, 2008).

Part of the reason why there is divergence about whether there are more men or women may reside in the complexity and diversity of the many different communities and settlements that received the cisterns.⁷³ But part of it could also be explained, as suggested by Marli, by the fact that the cistern water is for drinking; therefore, there are not different interests between men and woman.

⁷¹ Gender segregated data was not available by the time of my research in June 2008.

⁷² In Portuguese "donos de casa".

⁷³ This researcher had the chance to participate in one of these two-dayss trainings in the community of Longuinho, Municipality of Caninde, Ceara and the group trained that weekend was a mix of men and women.

The cistern is a good--so common (sense), the basis of the basic human survival, that around it there is no power dispute – from the point of view of the cistern to the family. (..) So it does not really matter in the name of who is the cistern, who has the ownership and power of it, doesn't matter. Because its water goes to the water pot and everybody drinks water the same way (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Afogados, 2008).

After the family is trained, the next step is to receive and organize the material as well as dig the hole for the cistern. This is part of the families' in-kind contribution to the cistern. Other required in-kind contributions include assisting the mason during the construction as hob carriers as well as providing food and housing for the masons. Women commonly do those jobs.

The heavy work in the construction of the cistern is the one of the hod carrier,⁷⁴ not the mason. It is the hod carrier that carries the heavy mass that puts the material at the feet of the mason. So the work of the mason is the intellectual work, it is him, the one who thinks, the one who has the geometrical knowledge, the knowledge about the technology and the materials to build the cistern. And the work of the hod carrier (is) the work of making food for the mason, of digging the hole; (these) are jobs where there is no intellectual requirement. Women can quietly do this job. But a work that needs elaborate thinking, specific knowledge about construction and masonry, this work is valued in the construction of the cistern. But people used to imagine that women could not do this (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Afogados, 2008).

If women contribute largely to the cistern, what do they gain? What are the benefits of the cistern for women? Although the benefits of having a cistern for the family and water for the household are quite self evident, it is worth describing the specific benefits to rural women in the Brazilian Semi Arid. The first of them is time.

When talking with the families we perceive the difference. The majority of women are fetching water 2, 4, 5, 10 kilometers away. They are the ones responsible for getting water for making food. And when the cistern arrives, that time that she used to fetch water, that she had to wake up at 5 or 4 a.m., she does not need to wake up that early. Or if she wakes up, she will have time to do other things. So this is a big difference with the arrival of the cistern there (Selma, Cetra, Fortaleza, July 2008).

⁷⁴ Or mason's assistant.

There were women that were carrying water 3, 4 kilometers and could reorganize their time to do other things: participate in the community association; take care of them, and reduce and break this paradigm that women are domestic, from the house. And this fetching of water had a strong impact on the lives of women, in the organization of their time.(...) So I think the P1MC is a revolution in this sense, in the organization of time and the place of women (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Afogados, 2008).

Women not only have to walk to fetch water, but sometimes depending on the conditions of the well or pond, they have to wait for the appropriate time. In a rural community close to Caninde, Ceara, for instance, women reported having to wait hours to get water from the pond of a landowner who let people in for only a few hours a day.

The second visible benefit of the cistern for women and her whole family is health. The cistern is an opportunity for the consumption of treated drinking water. Some state ASAs are already doing partnerships with health agents (such as Ceara) so families continue to receive support in relation to water quality. Lack of clean water and sanitation is still the major cause of death for children under age five in Brazil. Despite steady declines, in 2008 from 1000 births the country lost 21.8 kids under five, most of them in the poorer regions of the North and Northeast. Therefore access to cleaner drinking water is a strong benefit for women as well as for their entire family.

Intrinsically related to health is food security. Women are recognized as being key to food security (IFPRI, 2000) and because water is a basic necessity for cooking, washing, and cleaning, the access to water provided by the cistern directly benefits women's work in the household.

Another relevant benefit was in terms of citizenship. On the one hand, the P1MC provided a "break with old habits of personal favors as a link to the domination of the

Semi-Arid” (Bahia em Foco, 2010). Political promises, including promises of bringing water to communities, were traditionally made by several politicians in exchange of votes, but these promises were often broken. As Joao Amorim from ASA Brasil said, when the cisterns arrive in a community, it is because there is already the money and they will be built – and although there are several funders, none of them are the municipal governments. Therefore, the cistern is at the same time “the mobilization element and the result from this mobilization” (Joao Amorim, ASA Brasil, Recife). This is because the cistern brings with itself the right to water (that was previously denied) and therefore the right to dream of other rights, especially for women. A research about benefits of cisterns for women revealed that:

In their testimonials, women point (to) the cistern as an instrument that awakens the community to other rights that are also denied (...) Women began to perceive the importance of community organizing and start a process of fight to reach other projects that contribute to the local sustainability (Rede de Tecnologia Social/ RTS, 2010).

6.5. Women builders: the emergence of the first *cisterneiras* in Afogados da Ingazeira

Why was the idea of the *cisterneiras* born? Who thought that they would be possible? Who fought for it? In this section it is suggested that there were a number of key actors supported and inspired, but many more people and ideas. Nevertheless key actors and actions responsible for the appearance of the first *cisterneiras*. Among them are Marli (in Afogados da Ingazeira) and Graciete (in Recife), both from the Casa da Mulher do Nordeste; besides de *cisterneiras* themselves, such as Lourdes, Marli and Cidinha. Their stories in relation to the emergence of *cisterneiras* will be described next.

Casa da Mulher do Nordeste - House of Women of the Northeast⁷⁵

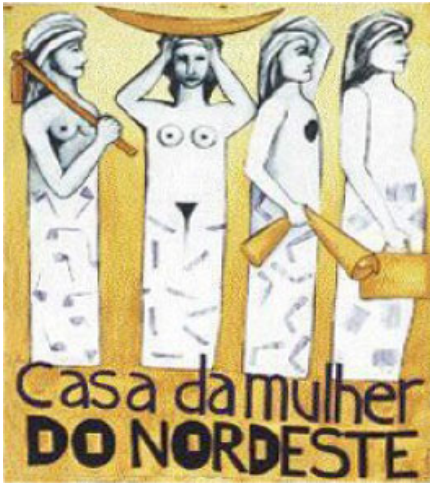


Figure 6.3. Casa da Mulher do Nordeste Logo.
Source: Casa da Mulher do Nordeste website

*Casa da Mulher do Nordeste*⁷⁶ is a feminist NGO founded in Recife, Pernambuco in the 1980's out of a feminist group called *Acao Mulher* (Frazer, 2006). Since its early days Casa had its focus on the economic autonomy of women which differentiated it from other feminists NGOs of the time more concerned with issues of sexuality and the body. Casa's main goal is "to contribute with the productive and political action of poor women in the Northeast towards gender equality in a perspective of sustainable human development"(CMN Website, 2010). It has two main programs of action, "Gender and Economy" and "Women in Rural Life", and maintains two offices, one in Recife and another in Afogados da Ingazeira in the region of Pajeu. Casa has several partners and is articulated with a number of networks. Among them is the *Rede de Mulheres Produtoras do Pajeu*⁷⁷, (Network of Productive Women of Pajeu) with is linked to the *Rede de Mulheres Produtoras do Nordeste* (Network of Productive Women of the Northeast). In

⁷⁵ The website of Casa is <http://www.casadamulherdonordeste.org.br/index.html>

⁷⁶ In English: 'The House of Women in the Northeast'

⁷⁷ The Rede de Mulheres Produtoras do Pajeu recently received a prize of Social Technology from the Banco do Brazil Foundation for their work. For more about it see <http://www.cese.org.br/index.php?menu=projeto&prefixo=det&id=32> accessed October 13, 2010.

terms of partners, during the past 30 years Casa developed partnerships with a number of international, governmental and non-governmental institutions. Among some of the international organizations are the German DGTZ,⁷⁸ the Canadian CIDA,⁷⁹ the Suisse *Terre des Hommes*⁸⁰, and nationally the Program *Don Helder*⁸¹, the Sebrae⁸², The Ministry of Agrarian Development, Ministry of Social Development, National Secretary for women, and others. Casa works in networks and the pyramid below illustrates a number of women's organizations that Casa is connected with.



Figure 6.4. Network Pyramid of Casa

Casa is also a member of ASA, and as so it participates in ASA's national meetings as well as in meetings of the State of Pernambuco and of the micro-region of Pajeu. It was through this participation at ASA meetings that members of Casa in partnership with other feminists, began to raise some questions about gender equality in the P1MC. As a feminist organization, Casa's goals at ASA are to contribute to

⁷⁸ The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) is a German federally owned organisation that works worldwide in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development. For more see <http://www.gtz.de/en/689.htm>

⁷⁹ Canadian International Development Agency. See <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/home>

⁸⁰ Please see <http://www.terredeshommessuisse.ch/sites/default/files/bre23034.pdf>

⁸¹ A partnership between the Brazilian Government and IFAD (The International Fund for Agricultural Development). For more see <http://www.projetedomhelder.gov.br/>

⁸² *Servico Brasileiro de Apoio a Micro e Pequenas Empresas*. Brazilian Service for Support to Micro and Small Business. See website <http://www.sebrae.com.br/>

strengthening the political empowerment of women and for that, Casa brought into the P1MC a discussion about how work is divided in the program.

While the program reaffirmed the historical role of women in the private domain... how much could it also contribute to strengthening women for the exercise of citizenship, for the exercise of political participation, and participation in the public world? (Marli, 2008).

The first question raised by Casa was about the political participation of women in decision making about the program. If the program affected the lives of women so much, why were they a minority in decision making about the program? In Marli's own words:

Before the technology itself starts there is this whole work of mobilization. So at the discussion of the political decision of where the cisterns were going to go, which community was going to benefit, the majority there were men. Although the cisterns have a great impact on women, the decision-making and political participation of them was very small. So we raised this. (...) We have these two moments of social mobilization: the chances to vote for the decision and the private place of caring for the water, and there was the division of labor. So it [the program] in fact strengthens this division. If the P1MC was concretely impacting the lives of women, then they should be participating in the political definition of the program (Marli, 2008).

A second question raised by Casa, was about the process of building the cistern and the roles of women and men in this process. Again, Casa's analyses showed that the roles of women in the construction of the cistern were invisible, unrecognized and unpaid while the activities developed by men were visible, recognized and paid. In addition, Casa denounced that women had no access to paid work as masons.

The other was the condition of the technology that also has several stages. Digging the hole to make the cistern is with the family, so there were the women digging the hole. After the hole is dug starts the phase of capacitating the masons. Capacitating only men, because there was this idea that women could not build cisterns. So women were out of the process of capacitating. They were not even invited, and when this was

questioned they said that women did not have interest in this activity. So we went to hear the women. And we noticed that no – that was not the case. What was happening in the program in this phase of capacity building was that the men were participating politically and making decisions about capacitating themselves to build the cistern, which in turn was paid. And women were participants as mason's assistants, who are not paid; they helped digging the hole, which is also not paid; and cooked for the masons who were building the cisterns in their houses. So what we saw in all this was that the activities related to the program as a whole were divided, maintaining the matrix of the patriarchal work. The men had the political participation, the political decision and the paid work. The women had the capacity to take (care) of the water in the private world and (do) all the unpaid work. Then we saw that the construction of cisterns in the Semi-Arid is fully political and economical, and this has everything to do with our mission (Marli, 2008).

When Casa asked at the State of Pernambuco Asa meeting why women were not included in the capacity building for masons, they were told by the present organizations that it was because women were not interested. Then Casa decided to ask the women themselves whether or not they were interested in being trained to build cisterns. At that time they were conducting leadership formation courses in Afogados da Ingazeira, and there they asked the women.

It was in these courses and in the contacts we had with the women that we started asking. And we found out that at that time, there were 14 women who did something: one has done an oven, the other a sidewalk, another has plastered her wall because her husband never did that, (...) and from these daily needs some women had developed abilities (..) that are a minimum requirements to work as a mason (Marli, 2008).

With a list of interested women in hand, they went back to the articulation of ASA Pernambuco and said: “Here it is, these women here, from these communities in those municipalities. They said they have the ability because they had already done this and that in the past, and yes, they would like to participate in the course for masons.” (Marli, 2008)

But even to reach this point they had to struggle. As Marli described:

It was not easy for us to put the construction of cisterns by women on the agenda [of the Asa regional meeting]. It took a lot of time, a lot of rejections, several times it was taken from the agenda of the meeting because there was no time; it was the subject that there was never time to discuss, and every agenda we included it but it was always the item to be cut (Marli, 2008).

But one day the item (mason training courses for women) was included and approved at the regional meeting, and subsequently, a partnership between Casa, Diaconia⁸³ and ASA was established to implement the course. Diaconia was the micro-regional management unit (UGM) of Pajeu and therefore was executing the program on the ground. Together with CASA, they offered the first course in 2003⁸⁴.

Casa mobilized women they knew and women from their leadership courses that might be interested. Among them was Lourdes who later became the first female mason instructor of ASA. She remembered the day she decided to participate in the training for cistern mason.

This story was that we were in a Seminar, and she raised the question “Who would like to participate in a class for masons?” Then I realized I was the first to raise my hand. We talked and in the meantime eight more appeared, (...) Later they diminished to six. Six worked in this course (Lourdes, 2008).

Lourdes is a single mom that had met Marli when she was looking for work. Among other rural houses, she went to Marli’s house offering to wash clothes. She ended up being invited to participate in a leadership course at the Casa da Mulher do Nordeste. Lourdes had already done a number of home improvement works in her own house and

⁸³ Diaconia – is a Lutheran Church Organization, created in 2000, and working in Brazil with community development. Members of Diaconia are involved in ASA since its beginning. For more see: <http://www.fld.com.br/>

⁸⁴ I could not find the exact date, but Casa Da Mulher do Nordeste reported that the first class happened in 2003. Please see: <http://www.casadamulherdonordeste.org.br/noticia8.html>

therefore did not hesitate to jump at the opportunity of learning to build cisterns. She had no fixed work and little money.

The first course had six women, and they chose to be in a class just for women. It happened at the community of Santo Antonio. The course was taught by a man, and the class received a lot of attention in the local media (where the women were interviewed), as well as from other organizations. According to Marli, this created some jealousy on the part of the instructor.

The guy was jealous because he wanted to be the protagonist of that moment, he was the mason, and it was him that was teaching. Therefore he expected to be the highlight of all that movement that was happening because of women building cisterns. (...) He had difficulty understanding why all that movement was around the women and not him (Marli, 2008).

From the six women who participated in the first course, three were capacitated. According to Marli, this type of “selection” often happens with men’s courses as well. The three first cistern builders were Lourdes, Cidinha and Elisangela. Elisangela, from the community of Santo Antonio, later died. Cidinha⁸⁵ built cisterns in her own community but had to stop.

Cidinha has a story that illustrates the trajectory of women and machismo. She is a very skilled mason. We even took a picture of her crying because of the emotion of knowing she could build a cistern. But her husband did not admit the possibility. She built several cisterns in the settlement (in which) she lives including her own cistern. But she was prevented by her family to continue the activity and build cisterns in other communities. (...) She talks about this with a lot of emotion. She liked to do it, and it generated income for her too. Besides, it contributed to water reaching other people too (Marli, 2008).

Despite family constraints preventing her from travelling to build cisterns, Cidinha (nickname for Aparecida) later became the president of the association of her settlement of *Riacho da Onca*, and also became active at the Rural Workers Union of

⁸⁵ I went twice to Cidinha’s house, in the settlement of Riacho da Onca, but did not succeed in finding her.

Afogados da Ingazeira (Agroecologia em Rede, 2003). With Lourdes it was a different story:

Lourdes has a story that has a whole new dimension, bigger than imagined. Lourdes built several cisterns in her own community, and others here in the municipality. She was the first women formed as an instructor. (...) After she became an instructor, Lourdes gained the world. She went to the Rio Grande do Norte State to train the women masons from the *Centro 8 de Marco*⁸⁶ in the region of Mossoro. She went to Ceara and capacitated the women masons of Casa Lilas. She also went to Sergipe. And she went to all micro-regions of Pernambuco. So, Lourdes was the teacher for all those women masons now there. At the time we did a survey with her, and according to her estimates she had already capacitated 70 women in the profession of cisterns (Marli, 2008).

After becoming not only a cistern mason but also an instructor, the life of Lourdes changed. She did not only start to receive a significant income for her and her family, but she also gained increased respect, admiration and self-esteem. She attributed her life change in great part to Marli and Casa da Mulher do Nordeste.

My name is Maria de Lourdes da Silva Oliveira, I live here in Santo Antonio Dois, and I became a *cisterneira* [cistern builder] through a person very important that is Ms Marli. (...) And thanks God, today I am where I am, thanks to the Casa da Mulher do Nordeste (Lourdes, 2008).

But if the first cistern builders were born in Afogados da Ingazeira, their growth was not only due to local support. In fact, Marli denounced that after the women masons were trained they had difficulties being hired for other jobs in the region. “The course happened, but women were not invited by the UGMs to build cisterns, understand?” (Marli, CMN, 2008). Nevertheless, a second course for women took place in Mossoro, in the Rio Grande do Norte state. How did this happen?

6.6. Women builders: the second group of cisterneiras in Mossoro.

⁸⁶ Centro Feminista 8 de Marco is the Feminist Center 8 of March, a feminist NGO in Mossoro.

One important factor to understand the emergence of the second course of *cisterneiras* in Mossoro, Rio Grande do Norte state has to do with the organization of rural women in this region. From the Meeting of Women Rural Workers of the West⁸⁷ in 1994 to the Campaign for the Documentation of Rural Women in 1995, the organization of women in the region did not stop growing. In 2000, a West Coordination of Women Rural Workers was created to contribute with the self-organization of women in the region, which together with the World Women's March⁸⁸ and Margarida March⁸⁹, all in 2000, helped to strengthen and consolidate women's organizations, groups, and exchanges (CF8,2006:19).

The West Coordination even won a consulting position at the State Institute for Agrarian Reform –INCRA.⁹⁰ Furthermore, in September 2003 a large delegation of west rural women went to Brasilia, capital of Brazil, joining 30,000 more women rural workers in the second National Margarida March. They marched in front of the Government Seat⁹¹ claiming the right to water, land, fair salary, health, and protection against violence (CF8, 2006:20).

⁸⁷ West of the State of Rio Grande do Norte.

⁸⁸ *Marcha Mundial das Mulheres* is an international feminist movement that fights against poverty and sexist violence. For more information about it see: http://www.marchemondiale.org/qui_nous_sommes/en/

⁸⁹ *Marcha das Margaridas* – Is a March organized by the Rural Workers Unions in Brazil in order to mobilize, guarantee and expand the rights of women agricultural workers. For more see: http://www.contag.org.br/imagens/f43Pauta_reivindicacoes.doc

⁹⁰ *Instituto Brasileiro de Colonizacao e Reforma Agraria*. Brazilian Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform, a national governmental institution.

⁹¹ *Palacio do Planalto*.



Figure 6.5. National Margarida March, 2003

Source: *Centro De Media Independente/ Independent Media Centre, 2003*⁹²

One month later in October 2003, the meeting of Women Agriculture Workers happened in the region, and water appeared as a main subject.

It was in the meeting of women rural workers in Mossoro in 2003 that the debate about water figured as a central theme of the agenda. Asked about their main difficulties relating to ‘living with’⁹³ the Semi-Arid, women pointed out that the difficult access to water of good quality for consumption was one of the urgent issues for the improvement of their lives. Therefore a discussion emerged that had as its goal to articulate partnerships and popular leaderships in the elaboration of alternatives that enabled this conquest (CF8,2006,20).

The West Coordination of Women Rural Workers and representatives of seven other settlements prepared a proposal to INCRA for the construction of plaque cisterns in the region (CF8, 2006:20). The proposal became a partnership between the Unit of Affirmative Actions of INCRA and the Association of Support for Country Communities

⁹² See <http://www.midiaindependente.org/pt/blue/2003/08/262029.shtml>

⁹³ In Portuguese *conviver*, means ‘to live with’, or co-exist. This idea is essential for ASA as discussed in the previous chapter.

of Rio Grande do Norte,⁹⁴ the Cooperative *CooperVida*⁹⁵ and the Feminist Center 8 of March (CF8). They were to use the same methodology to build cisterns as the P1MC/ASA. As an affirmative action for women conquered by women, the execution of the cisterns were discussed and expected to involve women in all aspects from planning, to execution to receiving the cisterns.

... it was agreed that they would be ahead of the several instances of the project.(...) Inspired by the three women capacitated in Afogados da Ingazeira (PE) the settlers from Rio Grande do Norte innovated, forming the first group of women masons in Brazil, in which they were responsible from the capacitation (instruction) to the construction (CF8, 2006:22).

The criteria for registration and selection also followed the same inspiration. Requirements included: be a resident of the settlement, have ownership of the land, be a member of the association, participate in the women's group, and do not be a beneficiary of cisterns from other projects (CF8,22). In parallel, the group also followed the ASA principles for selecting women: number of kids, women head of household, house with elders, and people with disability (CF8,22). This was a women's cistern from top to bottom. But how did this come to be? A look at the role of CF8 might shed some light.

The Centro Feminista 8 de Marco (CF8) was created in 1993 by people participating in the health movement, university professors and students. Over the years, CF8 got involved in several women's struggles in the region, among them the creation of the first police station for women. But it was only in 1998, with the help of an institutional evaluation and strategic planning, that CF8 defined its identity.

⁹⁴ AACC-RN Associação de Apoio as Comunidades do Campo do Rio Grande do Norte.
<http://www.aaccrn.org.br/>

⁹⁵ Coopervida Cooperativa de Assessoria e Serviços Múltiplos ao Desenvolvimento Rural.
<http://www.coopervidarn.org/>

We defined that we are an institution that supports the movement that supports the organization of women. (...) [Before] whatever the women's subject was, we felt responsible for doing it. But today we have a definition. We want to change the course, and to change the course, we have to change the lives of women. So how are we going to do this and with whom? So we have to have this very clear (Conceicao, 2008).

Currently, the work of CF8 is anchored in three pillars “feminism, organization and formation,”⁹⁶ (CF8 Website) and its activities aim to “promote the strengthening of women's organizations in social areas, especially rural women, offering support, advice and training on gender for women's groups, women's committees of rural unions, organizations of technical, managerial and organizational assistance that work in rural and urban areas of Mossoro and region”(CF8 Website) Another important aspect of CF8 is its global vision. Through their active participation in the *Marcha Mundial das Mulheres*, and *Marcha das Margaridas*, they connect rural women in the region with a much broader movement.

Our face is to contribute to the auto-organization of women from the popular movements and strengthening social movements. (...) The groups know that they participate in the Women's World March and they are proud of it. It is different from having a group with an immediate objective such as income generation. Then you get the income, you start getting problems and the group ends, because the objective is done. So we work with a group like this. The immediate objective is this one but we have a much more difficult one to reach, and we have to continue. Therefore (...) they have to continue strengthening this group towards a larger horizon. And the March represents this larger horizon. So the fact that they are from a community such as *Mulunguzinho*, *Cordao de Sombra*, and they go to the launching activity of the March in Sao Paulo... They visualize that bunch of women from several different states of the country. They know that there are women all over the world. This strengthens this group; they learn that they cannot falter because they have much to conquer. (...) We have to help women from the bases to conquer their immediate needs, but

⁹⁶ For more on CF8 principles see <http://www.cactustecnologia.com.br/cf8site/historico.php>

we cannot lose sight that they and us, we have a horizon to conquer⁹⁷
(Conceicao, 2008).

They are not alone and work with a number of national and international partners. Among them are: the Geneva Tiers Monde in Switzerland, Manos Unidas in Spain, the Ministry of Agrarian Development of Brazil, the Project Don Helder, the INCRA, and several other nongovernmental organizations, groups and networks such as the *Rede Economia e Feminismo/REF*⁹⁸.

We are part of REF. It is at the national level and they had given a lot of subsidies to us for the question of feminism and economy, about this thing of the sexual division of labour (Conceicao, 2008).

One way that CF8 supports the rural women's movement is hosting and assisting women's meetings⁹⁹. As mentioned previously, it was in one of the meetings that the women (who were already in leadership positions in their own communities) said that one of the important issues they wanted to address, which was a problem in women's lives, was water. There were communities with no water and communities with expensive or bad quality water. Women had to wake up early and walk long distances to get water that was not of good quality. In other communities women had access to wells, but the maintenance of pumps was expensive making water costly. There were also communities

⁹⁷ The emphasis is mine. It is important to highlight the commitment, the engagement of the women from the feminist NGO CF8 and the associations of rural women workers, from whom they are not that far away despite having more education and jobs. For instance, Conceicao told me how carefully his father treated his own cistern, like a jewel in the house. I also saw Rejane exchanging information about hers and the women's herbs. Not speaking about Conceicao or Claudia animating meetings. The fact that their communication and trust was reciprocal was visible. From my understanding, CF8 members are not only supporters of the movement, but they are also part of it. The same could be said about the work of Casa da Mulher do Nordeste with the rural women in Afogados da Ingazeira.

⁹⁸ For more on the REF see http://www.sof.org.br/rede_econ_femin.htm

⁹⁹ I witnessed one of their meetings while I was there. Rural Workers from different communities and settlements of the region were getting together to plan the next big conference of rural women, a big annual event for them. Isolda, from CF8, really facilitated the meeting, mostly asking questions and taking notes. All the ideas, initiatives, decisions were done by the women themselves. However CF8 offered concrete support for the meeting.

with brackish water. Women reported that in order to save good water they had to drink less. They were water insecure¹⁰⁰.

So we realized that this [water] was a theme that we had to take care of. (...) And then everywhere that deals with water we went after. A commission was formed and we were accompanying. Then they went to INCRA, who said they could build the cisterns but it was going to take some time; yet when available they would give priority to the women's group. And when the discussion about it started we began questioning the women. The project benefited women but it was only that. Yet the technologies, the question of infrastructure, the macro discussion, living with the Semi-Arid, the acquisition of new technologies adapted to our climate, all of this is the share of men. The women's share is only to raise consciousness in the community, the course in water resources about how to care for the cistern. Then we started to question this with the women. Why is it divided? That is where the sexual division of labour is, one share is done by men and the other share is done by women. (...) And then one, that I don't remember who was, said: "But we can also do this thing!"¹⁰¹ so let's go (Conceicao, 2008).

After this meeting, the group decided women would participate at all stages of the project including building the cisterns. CF8 members already knew of the existence of the women in Afogados da Ingazeira and contacted Casa da Mulher do Nordeste who contacted Lourdes. But even before that they had to convince the organization responsible for the execution to work only with women.

When the project was released, it was not released to the CF8, and neither to the women's associations. It was released to one of the entities that provide service to INCRA. They did not want to execute with the women because they said it was going to take longer because the women still have to learn. (...) I know it was a fight, a fight to get it there. (...) and they committed to do it, although they were a bit scared if it was going to work or not (Conceicao, 2008).

Due to the long process of approving it, the construction of Cisterns by Women in the region was delayed to February 2004, which coincided with the rainy season in the

¹⁰⁰ Water security can be defined as access by all individuals at all times to sufficient safe water for a healthy and productive life.

¹⁰¹ The emphasis is mine. In my opinion this moment was key in defining that women would participate at all levels, which was another important innovation in this initiative.

Northeast. Not surprisingly, it rained heavily. This extended the construction time considerably and women were blamed even before the construction.

All physical, climatic, bureaucratic barriers were attributed to their performance. The course was supposed to start in November but could only happen in February 2004 due to a disproportional rainfall that spread throughout the period (CF8,24).

When the training started, 14 women were registered, and eight or nine finished.

Within them were Chaguinha, Linda, Dona Isaura, and the group from Independencia.

How was this experience for them?

6.6.1. Being a Cisterneira: Chaguinha



Figure 6.6. Chaguinha with her granddaughter in front of her cistern, and Rejane from CF8

Chaguinha lives in the Settlement Cordao de Sobra in the micro-region of Mossoro. By the time she was interviewed in 2008, she was 46 years old and married. She had four kids aged 28, 21, 18, 16 and five grandchildren, one of them, a girl, living under her care. She got involved in the P1MC through her engagement in the women's group in her community and therefore in meetings of women rural workers at the CF8.

It was like this: I started going to the meetings at the CF8, then I heard about the cisterns that were coming to the most vulnerable settlements. Then I went and I said that our settlement did not have water, that we would like that they come to us. Then time passed, and we fought in all

meetings, we talked, we discussed. Then one day I received a phone call that there was going to be a meeting here [in her settlement] and that 30 cisterns were coming: 15 for this settlement and 15 for *Cordao Dois*.¹⁰² And a lottery was done (...) for 15 women. But for the cisterns to come we had to do a course. From here it was me and my friend Dona Eunice. The course was in *Independencia*¹⁰³ and lasted 17 days (Chaguinha, 2008).

Together with other women, Chaguinha participated in the training course for building cisterns that happened in *Independencia*. Due to the delays mentioned before, the course happened during the rainy season. And the difficulties were plenty, as described by Chaguinha:

We went and we stayed there 17 days. We worked during Carnival, we worked the whole time. I know that it was very difficult. I had never touched a [mason's] spoon before. You *get out from your house*, leave your kids, leave your husband and go to another settlement for 17 days. (...) I had never gotten out for that corner. We went and it was a fight. There the people did not believe in us. They said that nothing done by women was worth it. That the cisterns were going to fall, to leak. It was a lot of criticism towards us. They were making fun of us (...) There was a man who said "if this cistern does not leak you can cut my neck". And we build it. There was rain, rain and we ran, we stayed on the move, covered the cistern with a tarp, and it was an agony until we did it (Chaguinha, 2008).

They had to deal not only with the delay of the construction, the rain, the technical difficulties, their own insecurities, and their families, but also the discrimination of people from the community where they were working. But the fact that they did it became a source of strength.

I know we suffered a lot, we overcame several obstacles. We showed to men that we can not only sleep with them and wash dishes, we can also do what they can do (Chaguinha, 2008).

Even after the first cistern was built, during the construction of other cisterns in other settlements, Chaguinha had to hear a lot of criticisms:

¹⁰² Cordao Dois is the name of another settlement. There are *Cordao de Sombra* and *Cordao de Sombra II*.

¹⁰³ Also the name of another settlement.

I went to do a course in Mulunguzinho, and there were obstacles. There were some men criticizing us. But I said to them so many things that they left (Chaguinha,2008).

(...) There was a settlement where some men were upset saying we were taking the jobs from them. Then I said “Oh no, we also have the right to choose what we want, we also have the right to do what you do”. There was also one who said this was not a work for women, because it is too heavy. But I wanted to see the cisterns. I did with Dona Eunice; none of them leaked ... (Chaguinha,2008).

But Chaguinha, who grew up working hard was neither afraid of work nor of criticism.

Since I was little I worked, because my mom worked in mines, made charcoal and worked in the fields. My father was a mason, I did not work with him as a mason, but I always painted houses with him. Since I was 12, I painted houses.(...) I was raised working. My mother used to go to work and I took care of my brothers. (...) I do a little of everything (Chaguinha, 2008).

Besides criticisms, another barrier faced by Chaguinha was health. Both she and her work partner, Dona Eunice, eventually had health-related problems.

The second group here we did not do. I was sick, for me I was with heart problems, and then I did not do it. Then I had an X-ray, did other exams and it was nothing (Chaguinha,2008).

Thus, in order to become a cisterneira Chaguinha had to face a lot of criticism and accusations. On the other hand, having the cisterns built, she reported receiving a lot of affection and respect from the people from the places where she built cisterns.

I was well received there. Today they are still crazy for me. Every time they send me messages. (...) Wherever I go, everybody likes me, because I am sincere, when I want to say something I say. (...) I am feisty, I am not going to lie (Chaguinha,2008).

In parallel, to be able to go to other communities, and spend days there building the cisterns Chaguinha had to leave her house and kids who, although they were already big, still needed attention. She left both house and kids with her husband.

He knows how to cook, to clean. He knows how to do everything. He encouraged me a lot. But other friends had husbands who did not encourage. They fought with them (Chaguinha,2008).

Families and in particular men could be a source of support or a barrier for women's autonomy. In her own house, with the same husband, Chaguinha in the past was physically abused a number of times. Her husband used to drink and beat her. Episodes of domestic violence are not uncommon, and often these cycles are very difficult to break. But Chaguinha broke it twice. The first time with her own husband, but the outcome was positive and now she feels she has a more equal relationship. And building cisterns also helped in building this new relationship.

He used to drink, and used to like very much to beat me. And then when it was one day I gave him a stop (...) I was not going to get a beating for free. Then I said that if he was going to beat me, I was going to kill him.

(...)

This story of beating is finished. I won't leave him. I speak with him from equal to equal.(...) He used to say "I am the boss here." Now, the boss here is us. Now, the boss here is me as well. The rights are the same. I go wherever I want to go. If I want to go now, and say that I am going to Mossoro, I go. He does not say a word.

(...)

From the cistern I made more money than he did. He even worked with me as a mason's assistant. (...) I called him to work with us as an assistant and he learned. (...). I lent him my material. He does not have it (Chaguinha,2008).

The second time Chaguinha had to face domestic violence was with her granddaughter. When one of Chaguinha's daughter had her baby, since the first month of life, the baby girl was beaten by her own father because she was crying wanting to be fed. Chaguinha's daughter did not leave her husband so Chaguinha denounced him to the

“Conselho Tutelar.”¹⁰⁴. This Council gave the guardianship of the girl to Chaguinha who is now raising her.

This little one is the daughter of one of my daughters. (...) The Justice awarded her custody to me. I raised her since she was six months. The father used to beat the girl when she was one month (...) because she cried, because she wanted to be breastfed... I have never seen a father like this. (...) My daughter is with her husband. I would never be more on the side of a husband than a daughter. I am more for the daughter because an ex-daughter or ex-mother does not exist, but an ex-husband exists. I have all my kids. Never left one. Whatever happens I am always on their side (Chaguinha,2008).

The presence of her granddaughter at home slowed down Chaguinha a bit, because she could not travel as much as she was able to before.

The last time [opportunity to built new cisterns] I could not go because she [the granddaughter] was still small. But she is growing, and any of these days I am in (Chaguinha,2008).

But at the time of the interview, Chaguinha was planning to agitate the women’s group again, bringing a new possible opportunity.

Now the group of women is not working, the group finished. The women here they give up, because they don’t have patience to wait for things. But we are going to form a new women’s group. We are going to call the women back and let’s see. I am trying to get a course for making brooms with plastic bottles (...). It is already an income (Chaguinha,2008).

When I asked about what changed in her life after becoming a cisterneira, Chaguinha said “everything.” It was also very meaningful that she and others were publicly recognized in a TV documentary produced by Globo Rural from Globo Network¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁴ *Conselho Tutelar* – Tutelary /Guardianship/ Custody Council – These councils are formed by elected community members that serve as link between communities and the Justice system in order to guarantee the rights of Children and Adolescents (law 8.069/1990) are met. . For more see: <http://www.direitosdacrianca.org.br/conselhos/conselhos-tutelares>.

¹⁰⁵ This is the most popular and powerful TV network in Brazil.

It changed everything. It changed that everywhere I go I am known, everybody respects me: “Look at this women I saw on TV, that women mason”. (...) I know a lot of people. After this I met a lot of people. It was a very good experience for me, very difficult, I had lots of difficulties but it was also good (Chaguinha,2008).

Another positive outcome of the cisterns for Chaguinha was making money, and self-esteem.

(Ih a gente ganha dinheiro que nem presta)We receive a lot of money doing cisterns. It was a very good income. (...) It changed my self-esteem (Chaguinha, 2008).

Chaguinha also talked about her participation in the women’s movement, both at ASA as well as the Margarida March and World Women’s March.

First I met Claudia. She started coming here and doing some work with us.(..) And one day she called us to go to this movement, and we went. I went to Sao Paulo for the World Women March; I went to Brasilia for the Margarida’s March (...) I went to Recife to talk about our experience as cistern masons [at the ASA National Meeting] (...). When I was talking about my experience there was an old man that started crying “I cannot see you telling your story, it makes me start to cry” (Chaguinha, 2008).

And her participation in the movement also helped her shape her relationship with her husband.

[Our relationship] improved. He says that after I enter in this movement, I know everything, I want to be smart. I say, ‘Of course, in the old days I did not know my rights. Now I know more’ (Chaguinha, 2008).

6.6.2. Being a Cisterneira: Linda



Figure 6.7. Linda at the CF8

Linda was 22 years old when I interviewed her at the site of CF8 where she was to participate in a meeting. She is single and lives with her parents in the *Barreira Vermelha* settlement which is composed of 20 families and located 30 km from Mossoro. Her father was 86 and mother was 53 years old at the time of the interview. Linda told me she had at least eight brothers.

In my house it is like this: (...) My father got married [before] and had kids, but actually he does not know how many. My mother was 16 when she married my father; then they together and had seven kids. But she had a couple of kids before with another man, and now she has seven with my father (Linda, 2008).

Linda is the youngest. Since she was 12, she participated in a theater group at a neighboring community (called Barreira Vermelha community¹⁰⁶). She and other kids started the group by themselves, meeting every Saturday to play and do plays. They gave

¹⁰⁶ There is the settlement called *Barreira Vermelha*, and a community called Barreira Vermelha. The major difference between communities and settlements is that communities are old settlements, where people lived for longer years and members of families live close, since land is often divided in the following generations. Spatially, houses tend to be sparser. In communities, everybody knows each other and it is common to have relatives living close by. This makes a difference for women, both as a source of support or social pressure. Settlements are new communities, some created as a result of agrarian reform by INCRA. Families could come from different regions and are often not related. The houses are generally close to each other. There are Settlements from MST – The Movement of Landless Rural Workers, but I did not interview any women there.

the group the name of Lion's Den (Toquinha do Leao) and sometimes they did presentations. They asked the PDA (Plan for Development of the Area)¹⁰⁷ to bring an educator to them but did not get any. Then they started to go to the community of Jucuri, who had an educator. The PDA received support from World Vision, and they had a sponsor in Canada who financed some of the activities. Linda was also sponsored by World Vision through her own initiative. The group went to Jucuri by bicycle every Thursday, and after some time, the educator noticing the interest of the kids from Barreira started to come to Barreira.

It was through a registration that came to the community. In the beginning the mothers did not want us to register because they thought the people were going to take us away, carry us away. The one who registered me, was not my mom, it was myself. I arrived from school and asked the person responsible for registration what was necessary, and she said I would need the birth certificate. I looked for it at home, without the knowledge of my mom. Then I arrived there and said: "Look, my mom said that I could register, I brought my birth certificate." Then she did it. Today my mom is grateful because we have several activities and meetings ... and then through the PDA of *Jucuri* I started participating in the feminist movement.(...) So, it was through the PDA of *Jucuri* that I started to enter in the feminist movement (Linda, 2008).

Although she never left the theater group, soon Linda started to participate also in the women's group of her settlement. And it was from this contact that she heard about the training to build cisterns. She went to the training, just to see, but ended up getting involved and embracing this opportunity with a lot of will.

I started to know the women [from the feminist movement]. Someone said there was going to be training for building cisterns. I was thinking about going there just to see, not to make my hands dirty. (...) When I arrived there I became interested. I said "You know what? I am going to do it." Because it is like this, I always had the wish to plaster houses, do this type of stuff. I was always curious. A number of people in my house are masons. (...) Sometimes I used to get clay in the house, put it on the

¹⁰⁷ PDA- Plano de Desenvolvimento de Area. For more see:
<http://www.unitins.br/ates/arquivos/Novidades/PDAFolder.pdf>

wall, and grab a shovel and start passing it. The will was so great that I thought: 'Oh, now my opportunity arrived.' I stayed, although I did not even have clothes to stay (Linda, 2008).

Her participation at the training course for women to build cisterns did not come without the negative criticism from members of her family. Her father and brother, both masons themselves, were the first ones to express distrust.

There are people, there are families, that do not believe in our work. For instance, my own family did not believe. (...) My father used to like to go there and say "I have no faith that this cistern will hold water. This thing will not stand". 'That's OK, so let's wait.' I only said that (Linda, 2008).

She also promised her father that as soon as the training finished, she was going to build cisterns in her own settlement. And she did. In fact, she built 12 cisterns (none of which leaked) in the settlement of Barreira, but it was not without having to face the distrust of community members.

When I arrived in Barreira, there is a person that until today does not speak with me because it was like this: There were 18 cisterns for us to do there, me and a girl. However the girl gave up, she did not go. I was there alone and started doing it. Then this person said, "I don't want you here because I don't trust the cistern you are building, it is going to leak". This and more. Then I said, "OK, if you don't want, you are going to lose it, because you choose: or I make it, or you lose". He said, "I don't want." This because he wanted to do it himself without knowing how. Then he said, "You give me the orientation and I will do it." I said, "No, I won't give by any means. If you want the cistern, I will build it" (Linda, 2008).

Some of her neighbors even questioned if the work was appropriate for her as a woman.

Other people were snubbing, saying this is not a thing for a woman, this is work for man. Then I said, "But why is this work for man? Because it does not say! Does it say anywhere that to build houses or to build cisterns is a work for man? It is enough that the person wants to do it" (Linda, 2008).

However, those criticisms did not stop Linda who soon became an instructor. She led training for both women and men, and in both cases she had to assert herself as an

instructor. At the time she was 18 or 19 years old, and besides being a woman, she was also young and very thin. According to her, people believed this affected her work. She mentioned in particular a training course for men where they had a hard time believing she knew her job.

They did not believe. They did not believe! There was always someone with suggestions. But I always said: Look, here: I am training the guys here, and you are going to accept what I say (Linda, 2008).

Over time, she got some respect, she got to be known and even liked, both in the community and in her family. “This is a production, what I do, what I did ... and I feel the affection people have towards me, this is very good” (Linda, 2008). One of her older brothers used to be a mason’s assistance and was trained by her. He was very grateful because he was unemployed and got some work. But he was also critical:

My brother, he was very grateful because in the beginning he was a mason’s assistant. Then he said: ‘Linda, could you teach me how to work [building cisterns] for me to work with you?’ I said, OK, you would start as a mason’s assistant. (.) [Then, after he was trained, he said:] ‘But this work is so easy, any women can do it. The difficult work is the one of the assistant!’ (Linda, 2008).

A similar comment was heard by Conceicao on the day of the inauguration of the first cistern. Before the construction, cisterns were seen as difficult to build and as heavy work that women could not do well. However, after they were built and were concrete proof of the capabilities of women, then the work was reconsidered: Since women could do it, then the work was actually light. CF8 called this a second moment of distrust (CF8, 2006:27).

Despite having to face innumerable difficulties, the process of overcoming them and learning to trust herself was embodied by Linda in the cistern.

It was exactly like this. Those criticisms make us want to build and show the cistern itself. We built it and left it all ready, all cool. (...) And this means that we, women, we are capable. Because there are some women that don't believe in themselves, 'No, no, I am not capable of that.' In reality, even in the group that we participated in, there were women that did not believe, that were not going to do this or that. But the cistern itself creates strength, courage (Linda, 2008).

Another concrete source of support and encouragement comes from the women of CF8. When they hear about new constructions or trainings from other sources such as government or NGOs, they are the ones that contact Linda and the other women masons. Besides concrete opportunities, the CF8 also helps Linda emotionally "Sometimes I become a bit unbalanced, and the girls come and we talk"(Linda, 2008). Besides, the participation of at the Rural Women's Movement is described by Linda as a great source of growth.

Because it is like this, the movement, I grew a lot with it. I even talked with the women in my [University] course: In the schools we learn a lot. But in the movement we learn much more. Both at the professional level...because before I did not even have any work, any income, I did not have anything. And today I have an income when it comes. And we grow in the discussions themselves that we have; in our talks. Sometimes I keep thinking about how I was before and how I am now. (...) Today I am the same person but with a renovated spirit. (...) Before, I was a quiet person who did not say anything. And then some opportunities appeared for us to be talking, to be discussing, to be reading. I only entered in the [university] course because I was in the movement. (...) [the women from CF8], they talked with us about this course, to see if we were interested (Linda, 2008).

This university course that Linda mentioned is an undergraduate course offered by the University of the State of Rio Grande do Norte in partnership with INCRA and called "Pedagogia da Terra" (Pedagogy of the Earth). This is an undergraduate degree designed for rural students that have their classes taught in some rural communities allowing rural students to avoid travel to the University which is in an urban center.

6.6.3. The group from Independencia



Figures 6.8 and 6.9. Women from the community of Independencia¹⁰⁸

Twelve women from the community of Independencia were also interviewed for this research, but in a group, not individually. Because they were in a group, the depth of this interview was not the same as the individual ones. For this reason, they will not be described here. However, interesting testimonials about barriers to participation in the program as cistern builders were raised by this group, and they will be discussed in the next chapter.

6.7. Women masons, pump builders and local and municipal commission members in the region of Fortaleza

Esplar was created in 1974, first as a private, and later in 1984, as a non-government organization concerned with agro-ecology for family agriculture. Although Esplar's office is in Fortaleza, its area of action involves municipalities of the Semi-Arid in Ceara state.

Esplar's mission is to “construct in a sharing manner, a solidaristic development project that is ecologically sustainable and supports rights and that has its focus on family agriculture anchored in agro ecology, gender equality, the

¹⁰⁸ This photo was taken by the author during the interview.

strengthening of the autonomy of social movements, food sovereignty and food security, and against racial, ethnic or generational discrimination.” (Esplar’s website).¹⁰⁹

Like other NGOs, Esplar has a number of different national and international partners and supporters. Some of the international partners are Actionaid, Oxfam and GTZ (Esplar Website). Since 2002, Esplar was also the Gender Reference organization in Fortaleza for the Project Dom Helder.¹¹⁰ In addition, and relevant to this research, is that Esplar is an active integrant of the *Forum Cearense pela Vida no Semi-Arido* (Ceara Forum for Life in the Semi-Arid) which is equivalent to a State ASA. Esplar was the executive agency of the P1MC in the region at the time I visited. The Esplar coordinators of the P1MC were two women, Elzira and Malvinie.

Elzira, was one the founders of Esplar in 1984. As an agronomist, she was involved in the ecological movement and agro-ecology. She followed the P1MC since its pilot phase,¹¹¹ passing through its transition phase,¹¹² where NGOs worked voluntarily and funding existed only for the building the cisterns. Elzira told me that gender always mattered in the Ceara Forum. Since the Forum meeting of 2003, gender parity was defended for the selection of delegates to participate in the National Meeting of ASA that happened in Maranhao. In 2004, during a similar event, 48% of the delegates were women. Elzira estimates that also in the micro region forum - even though in the

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.esplar.org.br> Accessed November 1, 2010.

¹¹⁰ Which will be discussed in more detailed in the next chapter.

¹¹¹ 500 cisterns funded by the Environmental Ministry

¹¹² 12.700 cisterns funded by The Environmental Ministry and Nacional Water Agency

beginning the great majority were men - nowadays more than 50% of the participants in the Fortaleza Forum are women (Elzira, 2008).

Although Elzira was enthusiastic about the political participation of women in the Forum, she did not feel the same about the role of women as cistern builders. In her view, the work as cistern mason is unhealthy, “*insalubre*” for women. She advised me to pay attention to the role of women in the local and micro regional commissions and helped me meet some of these women.¹¹³ Elzira is also an avid photographer and her pictures of rural women entered in one promotional agenda from ASA.

Malvinie also coordinates the PIMC at the micro-regional unit of Fortaleza. Like Elzira, she has also been a part of Esplar since its early days when they worked in a program called “Water and Quality of Life”. Malvinie also represented the institution at the Brazilian National Campaign “Citizenship Action Against Hunger and Misery” inspired by the Brazilian civil rights leader Herbert de Souza, “Betinho.”¹¹⁴ The Northeast suffered a strong drought in 1998 and civil rights movements from the South were sending food to the Northeast. Malvinie was involved in the Campaign, which was concerned mostly with emergency work but also discussed structural solutions,¹¹⁵ such as cisterns.

(...) the people from Citizenship Action from the South were sending us food, that we distributed to people that were affected by the drought. (...) Sometimes we had weekly meetings; sometimes we had two meetings per

¹¹³ Professor Emma Silipandri had already called my attention to the importance of women as commission members.

¹¹⁴ In Portuguese the “Acao da Cidadania ontra a Fome, a Miseria e pela Vida”. The “Action” was created in 1993 during a period of mass political mobilization for democracy in Brazil. It was Betinho, a leader for the movement for “Ethics on Politics” who said that democracy and misery were not compatible. He and others created in Rio, in 1993, the “Citizenship Action again Hunger and Misery and for Life”. For more see:

http://acaodacidania.infolink.com.br/templates/acao/novo/publicacao/publicacao.asp?cod_Canal=2&cod_Publicacao=299

¹¹⁵ Which were also discussed in the Campaign.

week, because the situation was really urgent. But we reached a point where this group of entities, besides distributing food, created a campaign called Campaign for Solidarity for Country Life;¹¹⁶ and inside this Campaign there was the construction of cisterns. Because we wanted to bring the food that was needed immediately, but we also wanted to bring something that stayed in the community. The technology of the cisterns had already started to disseminate. The CPT¹¹⁷ was building them, Caritas also, other NGOs and we [Esplar] had been building them since 1992. We wrote a project for the National Solidarity Fund to build 225, and it was approved. We built 225 cisterns distributed in nine regions of the state that today corresponds to the nine micro-regions of the Forum (Malvinie, 2008).

At this time ASA did not exist yet, but the network of institutions in the nine micro-regions of Ceara was already alive. During the Parallel Conference in 1999, when ASA was created, Esplar was one of the founding organizations. Both Malvinie and Elzira later became coordinators of the State Forum (*Forum Cearense pela Vida no Semi-Arido*) that developed from the original network of institutions from Ceara. How did women get involved in the Forum? According to Malvinie: The State Forum always had a number of women in the leadership and the coordination. Elzira brought to the State Forum and to the Micro-Regional Forum the idea of quotas for women. (...) And this made it become a natural thing inside the Forum that brought a whole discussion. Inside the Forum there were people that had never heard about gender relations and gender inequalities. One day a person on International Women's Day at the Fortaleza Forum asked why we did not have a Men's day? Then we did the whole history.(...). Then the Gender Working Group¹¹⁸ was created in ASA and in the State Forum (Malvinie,2008).

In fact 50% of members of the Micro-regional Commission of Fortaleza in 2009 were women. Some of them were interviewed and are briefly described in the next section. They are Nilta, Betiana, Raimunda, Fatima Abreu, and Fatinha (loira).

¹¹⁶ Campanha de Solidariedade pela Vida no Campo

¹¹⁷ Comissao Pastoral da Terra - was created in 1975 linked to the CNBB – Conferencia Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (National Conference of Bishops of Brasil)

¹¹⁸ GT (grupo de trabalho) de Genero.

6.7.1. Nilta: community worker and commission member

Nilta Ferreira Gomes Alves, was from Paramoti, a municipality 40 kms from Caninde, at Sertao Central. She lived there almost all her life; except for the 7 years that she lived in Fortaleza. She raised four sons and since 1974, she has worked helping the people in need from her community. She started to work in the municipality helping the survey for the project *Mobra*.¹¹⁹ In the 90s she worked with groups of elders and later was working with the priest at the *Pastoral da Crianca*.¹²⁰ Because of her active role in the community, she was invited to participate in the P1MC in 2003.

I [got involved in the P1MC] in August 2003. (...) A commission of four people arrived in my home. I already worked at the parish (...) Then we started talking and they invited me to this meeting in September, and then I came. It was about the distribution of cisterns that was already approved, and the municipality of Paramoti was a recipient. (...) Then I committed to the subject. I learned to like the cause, because I have a mission with myself. Everything that I do is for the good of people, I don't get tired, I like it. And knowing well my municipality, knowing its difficulties, and the suffering of people with the water problem, then I committed to help. And I am here until today. Under this management from August 2003 until today, 224 cisterns were built. Thanks God this year they were virtually all full. If there is one dry, I don't know. And I am almost every day in the fields, and all of them have water. And I am here on the search because there are still families in need (Nilta, 2008).

During her period at the P1MC she also had a chance in 2005 to apply for a job at the Secretary of Agriculture of Paramoti. And now she also helps the municipality with several different projects depending on the season, mostly related to small animals, surveys, campaigns, etc. Working for the Secretary of Agriculture or the P1MC, she is

119 Mobra – Movimento Brasileiro de Alfabetizacao (Brazilian Movement for Literacy) was a project created in 1967 by the military government to bring literacy to youth and adults. Mobra lasted until the 80s.

120 Pastoral da Crianca, was created in 1983 linked to the CNBB – Conferencia Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (National Conference of Bishops of Brasil). It creates Networks of Solidarity to help children and women with basic health, nutrition, education and citizenship.

always visiting people in rural areas; for her mobility she counts on the support of her son.

I go on the motorcycle with my son. He said: Mom why don't you learn to drive the motorcycle? And I said: I don't learn so I don't drive alone, because I have four men to drive with me”(Nilta,2008).

Regarding the PIMC she explained to me that it targets the families that are part of the Program Zero Hunger (Fome Zero) because water is vital for food security and health. She told me she had already observed improvements in the health of the households that have the cisterns.

(...) because at ASA a position was reached...that food is not enough. If you have food and you don't have water of quality, you don't have health. In Paramoti we are with a great number of people with high blood pressure. There was a doctor here that suspected the water [brackish] was a contributing factor . (...) The houses without cisterns suffer more from sicknesses. Why? Because they get their water in rivers, and generally they have diarrhea, problems with the kids. From the ones who received the cisterns, we hear that this problem was eliminated. Because the cistern is clean, they are plugged. The water falls directly inside, and they drink water of quality (Nilta, 2008).

The fact that Nilta has been able to help so many people and to visit so many needy families, gave her a certain amount of power. She even created a bank in her community:

There is an association in my name, that I know everybody. It is a community bank that we opened there. I am the president of this association, but I do not want to work in the bank because I don't want anything holding me. I want to be in the middle of the people (Nilta,2008).

Although having this power in her community, and having a political vision, Nilta chose in 2008, not to run for a political position in her municipality.

And now in this political campaign, to enter as a candidate, I don't want this. I prefer not to be a candidate; I prefer to be without party involvement. I do have my political party, I do vote. I have my mayor. But for me I don't want. (...) Because I don't like to be involved with the other side. If I am on the side of the people, I do not want to know their political party. I want to know their needs. So if I know their needs, if it is on my

reach, I will try to help. (...) I am not going to say “You are from Party A and John Smith is from Party B. I only help party A, and people from party B I don’t care.” Not me. If a person is in need and my work will benefit him, I will do it. This is the vision I have of my municipality (Nilta, 2008).

As for her future perspective, Nilta aims at continuing to help her community, trying to bring things that would improve people’s lives. One example are the *mandala*¹²¹ gardens.

I intend to give continuity to my work, and every day I look for new improvements. There is a system called mandala garden, that I visit sometimes. Therefore we are in search for those mandalas for Paramoti, because the winter planting here is finished. And the mandala, if well done, produces all year around. (...) It has fish, vegetables, beans, corn, etc. (Nilta, 2008).

6.7.2. Betiana: the journey of a young pump builder and commission member

Betiana Rocha Martins from the municipio de Caridade in Sertao Central was 22 years old at the time of the interview and was pregnant. Although young Betiana had already worked for the Youth Movement at the Catholic Church and the Youth Collective of the Rural Workers Union, She even participated in the “Grito da Terra”¹²² (Shout for Earth) in Brasilia, capital of Brazil. she easily embraced the PIMC when it came to her community, quickly passing from community to municipal commission member. In parallel, she became a pump builder.

My participation in the PIMC started when the cisterns came to my region. My mother and father were recipients. Then I entered the community commission, and then I entered the municipal commission. Then the course for pumps arrived and that is where I joined. It is me and other youth colleagues that work manufacturing the pumps used to capture

¹²¹ In very simple terms, mandalas are gardens planted in circles to optimize the use of water.

¹²² The last *Grito da Terra*, happened in May 12, 2010 and united more than 7,000 rural workers demanding agrarian reform, social and environmental policies, workers rights, women, youth and elders rights, etc. For more see <http://www.fetaesc.org.br/gtb2/2010/pautaresumo.pdf>

the water from the cisterns.¹²³ Formerly this was done with hydraulic pumps, and it wasn't very good. People thought it was too heavy, mainly women, that uses more the water of the cistern, go there to get it and all. So we worked with this pump and started manufacturing it. Then we had the youth group and did the training. (...) And then when the time of building the cisterns came, we were also there building the pumps (Betiana,2010).

As a pump maker, whenever cisterns are approved, Betiana and other pump makers receive the material to manufacture pumps for each of the cisterns. She works with young men and women and feels respected by them. The people from the communities where they work sometimes find them interesting, but sometimes friends and family find it hard to understand her.

In the group with which I work everybody treats each other with respect. Even the people of the community think it is interesting. There were some municipalities where the men came to see what we were doing and found it interesting to see us doing it. They thought it was something heavy, something for men to do. But we were doing it, and they found it interesting. They hardly believed we were doing that (Betiana,2008).

(...) Because several women, colleagues of mine that I know say: 'Oh, but you lose a lot of time in your life because you are young, you should be going to parties, things like that. Those things [you do] are for men.' So I believe my colleagues should discover that it is not only men that can work, that we too have to be independent, we have to live our lives independent of what the men do or what the women will do. We will not cease to be a woman if we build pumps. We will be even more. So I think my colleagues should believe more in their own capacity, of doing what they want in life.

(...) I think I was already born with this because in my family I am the only one like that. My mother sometimes says 'Daughter, you should search other things; those are men's things, living this way.' But those are not men things. Women also walk, speak, converse, work, do everything. So I think I was already born with this (Betiana, 2008).

¹²³ This is an improvement used in Ceara, but not in all states yet. The pump eliminates the need of a bucket – that contaminates water more easily. With the pump the cistern never needs to be open, and therefore there is less risk of anything entering the water. With the bucket, the lid of the cistern needs to be open whenever water is taken. I myself in a different state saw a small frog inside one cistern that was left open.

Betiana was also trained to build cisterns, and she participated in the construction of one cistern. Then the program had a break and she got pregnant so she did not continue. But for the work of building cisterns, she felt more of a gender concern. Her family was the first to express concern:

My mother and father said: ‘Daughter, you don’t have conditions to build a cistern.’ I responded “I have and I did, and I am not doing it right now because I am pregnant” (Betiana, 2008).

Betiana also reflected about the experience of women not only building cisterns, but learning how to make them. She participated in a class with eight women and 12 men, but heard about the classes just for women:

We had a meeting in the Forum of only women and we found it interesting that the first training for women was done with women instructors. Because women are more patient and because us, when we are working with men, we have more fear, understand? Because they already know, they are used to it, and we are starting (Betiana,2008).

As plumb maker and also as a member of the municipal commission of the micro-region Fortaleza, and therefore, as a member of the Forum Fortaleza, she had travelled to several places inside and outside the state of Ceara.

I already went to several places...Even with the issue of the pumps, as our pump is made only of PVC, it is very easy to use. So, our group from Ceara, we went to Pesqueira in Pernambuco to give a training course. (...) They liked it very much.

(...) We always travel. We have meetings, inside and outside, inside our Ceara, to places that are not close. I am always going, even with the little baby [inside her belly] (Betiana, 2008).

Even her sister emphasized that Betiana is always going somewhere. She said ‘But Beti, you walk so much. I think your work is very good because you walk a lot for real. I am sorry I don’t have the courage to do that.’ (Betiana, 2008). Besides helping people in their community and in other communities to access water more easily, and

being respected for that, plus acquiring a new technology mostly associated with men, Betiana also talked a lot about her own mobility. And it looks like all these elements together were greatly appreciated by her. In her own evaluation:

I say like that: The P1MC is the greatest passion in my life. I say wonderful things could have happened to me, but nothing like the P1MC. Then I say: ‘And after the baby comes, will I continue walking like this? And I say: Why not?’ (...) I think my son will not disturb my life in any way. For sure I will have double responsibility, as a women, as a person, in all. But with the P1MC, I feel happy; I feel a sense of accomplishment, understand? I don’t intend to leave the P1MC while it exists. This time that the program had a break¹²⁴ was a big anguish, and we were doing a movement for it to return because it is very good for us to work (Betiana, 2008).

For the future, Betiana plans to continue to work and grow with the P1MC. She told me she believes in the program and that it brings improvements to the families from her region. She is also positive that her mother and sister will help her caring for the new baby and even mentioned that in the ASA meetings at the State and National levels, there are discussions about creating babysitting arrangements so that mothers with small children can participate.

6.7.3. Raimunda Inez Souza Silva: Building cisterns from CPT to the P1MC

Raimunda Inez Souza Silva from the community of *Benir* is also a member of the municipal commission in the Fortaleza Forum. She started at the P1MC because of her involvement in the *Comissao Pastoral da Terra*- CPT – which is an organization that is part of the Forum of ASA in Fortaleza.

Since 1999 when I learned about the agrarian reform, we entered into the fight for land. In 2000 we started to look at the issue of the cisterns in the *Pastoral da Terra*. Then we created a commission that met once a month

¹²⁴ Between one phase of the program and the next one there was a break in funding and activities were suspended between 2007 and 2008.

in Fortaleza. We worked thanks to donations that came from other countries. And the Union received 100 *reais* from each family when a cistern was built, then we would build another one, (...) for another family. (...) There were no conditions, there were no masons... everybody worked voluntarily. There was only the money to construct the cistern. (...) Then in 2003, the P1MC started, and the Forum was created and everything and the work conditions improved (Raimunda,2008).

She explained that with the P1MC, there are more conditions and more people to work with the families, to go to the communities. She also emphasized the improvement of working in a network of institutions such as the Rural Workers Union who did not have a strong connection in the communities in the past but does now. There was also an improvement in knowledge. As she put it: “We gathered everybody, and the conditions of articulation and knowledge improved even in the communities, inside the families.” (Raimunda, 2008) Moreover, the P1MC, because of its concern with mobilization brought as well a specific way of managing cisterns.

In my settlement we have eight families that have cisterns through the P1MC. The others were donations at that time from CPT and also from INCRA. (...) With the P1MC we work the cistern, the care of water, the care of family, the care of the land. The P1MC has a greater knowledge. INCRA—not--it constructs the cisterns and if there is a lid or if it is painted, they won't even look. It is a bit disorganized, mostly where there is a lower level of organization. There [in her community] it is not like this, we work the cisterns of INCRA with the system of the P1MC, because there we have me (Raimunda, 2008).

Among the challenges faced by Raimunda, she mentioned gender discrimination in the Union's Movement.

Generally, it is a bit difficult because unfortunately inside the Unions Movement there is still a bit of discrimination. (...) Generally the leaders don't have an open mind. They think we will not be able take the work forward. There are always difficulties (Raimunda, 2008).

As for positive support, she mentioned her own family. She had five children, two older girls who were age 24 and 17 at the time of the interview and three boys, age

15, 10 and 7. Her daughters helped to take care of the younger ones when she had to go out, and her husband also supported her absences from home.

My kids, they support me a lot at home. And because we are women, there is a lot of difficulties if the family does not support. Who is going to go out, who will stay, who will take care of this, of that. (...) My husband doesn't mind that I go out (Raimunda,2008).

But it wasn't always like this, her participation in the P1MC, the Union, and the CPT started a decade ago, and after that she became a fighter.

I used to live only to take care of the kids and my husband. When it was the 15th of October of 1999 I learned about the CPT. They did a meeting in the community where I lived, saying there was a land. And they told us that this land was close to us. Either we organized ourselves and occupied this area or people from other municipalities were going to do so. (...) We got this land. We were camping for one year and a half. There were a lot of fights. There was even a person who died, it was *Benir*, and today the name of settlement is *Benir*.. (...) We got the land ownership on the 21st of December of 2000. And today, thanks God, we live there. Then I started this fight, being here, being there, and I never stopped. I did not stop anymore, and we are always in the fight (Raimunda, 2008).

And, as she pointed out herself, the fight continues, and she already had a vision of what she wanted not only for her future but for the future of her own community. One could summarize her goals as sustainable agriculture, food security and gender equality. In her own words:

The next hope that I see is for us to bring more awareness¹²⁵ to the settlement where I live about a way to work agriculture differently; a way to produce better, to eat better; and a better organization of women in the union. Make them aware that they [the women] also have rights, but they also have duties. And to bring forwards this entire project that we know (Raimunda, 2008).

6.7.4. Maria de Fatima de Souza Abreu: health agents and the P1MC

¹²⁵ In Portuguese: conscientizacao

Fatima Abreu is a health agent¹²⁶ at the community of Carnauba where she is married and has a 13-year-old daughter. She also participates in the P1MC locally and at the Fortaleza Forum, representing the Health Agents Association. She got involved in the P1MC due to its partnership with the Community Health Agents Program.

[Other members of the commission] looked for me, and showed me the issues of the program [P1MC]. I started to know a bit. Then my community was considered by the program (...) and I started to get involved. First I was part of the local commission, because there should be a local commission where the community is going to receive [the cisterns]. (...) Then I followed all this process, the process of selection, the process of the course training the families (Fatima Abreu, 2008).

After the first contact, the participation of Fatima Abreu did not stop growing.

Then I became passionate about it and this changed my life a lot because we became aware of the issue of knowledge; because we see as well the importance of the land, the care of the land, and it strengthened even more. Even during the visits, we started to pass information about this that; before we did not care much. (...) It started like this and then I got more involved. I started to participate in the Municipal Commission, and today we already come as representatives of the Municipal Forum into the Forum Fortaleza [micro-regional] (Fatima Abreu, 2008).

The link between Health Agents and the P1MC is an idea that started in Ceara. It tends to grow because the work of the health agents complements and supports the actions of the P1MC. Before the cisterns are built, the health agents already know of needy households and after the cistern is built, the health agents monitor its care. On the other hand, difficult access to clean water is one of the major causes of health problems in vulnerable communities, and the cisterns offer an alternative. In concrete terms, Fatima Abreu explained that the work on the two programs...

¹²⁶ *Agentes Comunitarios de Saude*, or the Community Health Agents program was introduced in Fortaleza, in 1985, inspired by the Cuban experience. In 1987 it was positively evaluated by UNICEF and in 1991 the National Ministry of Health instituted the program in several states. The state Ceara in 2008 was also the first to legislate the positions of the Health Agents as permanent public workers. The program is linked to reduction in child and maternal mortalities in the country.

(...) is complementary simply because the issues of the two projects come together in the same municipality. When we receive the program here, the fact that we already have the contact with the families helps a lot. Because we already visit the families, right? So it gives continuity. It is one more thing, but does not change our routine.

(...)

Because we do have a relation with all the people in a community, and each community has a health agent, we have a direct link--what enable us to know fast, about communities that are water deprived and everything.

(...)

It is because we are there on the day-by-day. We visit each house once a month at a minimum (...) depending on the situation and then we do this monthly monitoring (Fatima Abreu,2008).

Health agents do this monitoring of the program because in each visit they “see the environment and how the water is being manipulated” (Fatima Abreu, 2008). They also check for symptoms of water-related problems.

Diarrhea, worms, and there is also the kidney problem. There is also skin problems and high blood pressure in houses where the water is brackish (Fatima Abreu,2008).

The work of health agents require a lot of visits in communities of the rural municipalities, therefore lots of small trips. Also as a member of the Fortaleza Forum, Fatima Abreu participates in several meetings that add to the number of trips. She is able to go out thanks to the support of her mom and husband.

My daughter stays with my mom, and sometimes at lunch time she is alone. Then she goes to school. But the majority of the time she is with my mom. (...) My husband also accepts; he is very understanding (Fatima Abreu, 2008).

In terms of future perspectives, Fatima Abreu sees herself growing with the program. She now represents the Association of Health workers that has 40 members. But the biggest reward, according to her is to be able to follow the live changes in the communities she works in.

I will continue, right? To integrate myself more, because before we were only part of the municipal commission, we were not here at the Forum. Then today we gained this space. I intend to improve each day more, and bring it to those families, because to see their happiness is so great. The reservoirs, the cisterns that will ease their situation, the problem of water-- This is what is rewarding in this program; it is for us to see the happiness of the families (Fatima Abreu,2008).

In parallel with her participation in the P1MC and the Forum, Fatima Abreu also explained she gained a gender and socio-political awareness that she did not have before.

[as health agent] we gained strength. Even in the argument at home, and in other issues, we learned in the Forum and in some meetings of the commission that the participation of women is not only for her to be inside the house, but for her to have a space in everything. And it raised a lot the knowledge, and even the ability to argue some issues. And see the issue of work collectively, leaving individualism or to see only your life in particular--but there is also the space to be working the life of others and the issue of improvements, right? (Fatima Abreu, 2008).

6.7.5. Fatinha (loira), member of the local commission of Bom Retiro, Sertao

Central

Fatinha is from the community of Bom Retiro in Sertao Central where she was born and still lives. She is an active participant of the Residents Association of Bom Retiro as well as the Rural Workers Union. She is 27 and a single mom of two children, 8 and 7.¹²⁷ Her political life started when she went to the Union's office looking for documentation to help her get a maternity salary¹²⁸.

When I was 18, I had two kids. One was born in 2000 and the other in 2001. At that time I was very young and needed to have the maternity

¹²⁷ I met her during a water resources course for community members who were going to receive cisterns. She was the local representative organizing the course

¹²⁸ Maternity Salary, or *Salario Maternidade* is a Brazilian government benefit for working women, when they have newborns or new adopted children. There is a special case of Maternity Salary for Rural Workers. For more see:

http://menta2.dataprev.gov.br/df/prevdoc/benef/pg_internet/iben_visudoc.asp?id_doc=50

salary. I had completed elementary school. Then I associated myself with the Union in order to have the necessary documentation. Then, three months later, I started to work there as a secretary. There was an election and they nominated me as a secretary. (...) Six months later the Union put me here in the region as a union delegate (Fatinha,2008).

Even with two small kids and no husband, Fatinha was able to work in the Union, and get around thanks to the support of the women in her family who lived in the same community.

The kids stayed with my mom, with my sister, with my sister-in-law; it was like this. Then I passed to the State Women's Collective of the Union. I travelled a lot. I travelled to several cities such as *Boa Viagem*, *Quichada*, even *Brasilia*. From *Brasilia* to here, I know everything (Fatinha, 2008).

After some time, Fatinha also started to participate in the leadership of women's groups in the region. Helping with documentation (as she was helped once); coordinating projects such as cisterns, electrification, etc.; and organizing women's group discussions:

I am also on the commission of women of Caninde. (...) We are four doing the base work in the communities. We aim at doing the documentation of women so they can recognize their rights--both the documentation and the projects in the communities.

(...)

Our major theme is women. Because before, several years ago, and sometimes now, still exists this captivity, right? From that macho man that wants to hold the women in the house at the oven's foot. So those things we use, we debate a lot, we work both here as well as in the meetings. (...) Both here in Retiro as in Santa Maria, there are lots of women. The women are more active, right? Today a group of women exists here, and I am trying to bring benefits to the women.

(...)

Another thing that we have is the seeds house here in Retiro. Women on one side, and men on the other because the women wanted their own garden. This year however, I was involved with this project of electrification,¹²⁹ and could not coordinate the house of seeds. But now in

¹²⁹ The Project Light for All, or *Luz Para Todos* was created by the Federal Government in 2003, with the goal of bringing electricity to 10,000 people in rural areas until the end of 2010. The program is coordinated by the Ministry of Mining and Energy, but uses a participatory management approach, which involves the existence of community members, as well as national and state commission for the

August we will get the women together, bring the corn and beans we have, clean the land, and do the women's collective garden (Fatinha, 2008).

Due to all these activities in her community, Fatinha got involved in the P1MC as a local commissioner who contacts all families, participates in the selection, and makes sure they attend the course, and then follows up on the construction and use of the cistern. She is the link between the municipal commission¹³⁰ and the community.

The shortage of water here is one of the strongest problems. And the distance to water is an issue for several women: the pregnant ones, the older ones, the ones with deficiencies, small kids, lots to do. You know that rural women have lots of things to do. Early in the morning she needs to take care of the things in the house and then goes to the field. Then, for several years I was fighting for these cisterns. And thank God it worked. The women there are all happy and thankful, right? Because still today, it is as I say, there are several macho men, that get out of the house early and leave the water problem on the woman's back; besides having the responsibility of the house. Then those cisterns fell from the sky to improve the lives of women (Fatinha, 2008).

Fatima mentioned she fought for those cisterns. She explained to me how she did it:

When you see that a project that might benefit the community is coming to the region, first you do a survey with the number of families and documentation, understand? Then you send it to the Union, and the Union sends it to the body that is providing the benefit. Then later the Union makes pressure on the body, and we pressure the Union. And if the Union cannot go, we go ourselves. We do *caravanas, mutiroes*.¹³¹ We do a demand, reclaiming, vindicating... That's how it works (Fatinha, 2008).

When asked about the differences between communities and settlements, she reasoned that the communities were older. She emphasized the difference in terms of policies since the new settlements organized by INCRA are more likely to benefit from their projects:

implementation of the program. For further detail see:

http://luzparatodos.mme.gov.br/luzparatodos/Asp/o_programa.asp

¹³⁰ In this case the member of the municipal commission was Alfredo, representing the Rural Workers Union. Alfredo was also the instructor of the course on the management of water resources for the community. It was Alfredo that chose Fatinha to be the local commissioner.

¹³¹ Collective voluntary community work.

Because it is like this, in the communities the families are families of heirs. It used to be that families had 14, 15, even more than 20 kids. And then if the father had a land of 500 hectares,¹³² he had to divide it, and each child would inherit 30, 20 hectares. And those children stay in the community and they are united. Everybody knows each other, like it is here, or it is even a relative. Everybody meets and they trust each other. Because when you receive a vote it is a trust vote. And with the settlement it is different, the people arrive in that land, and they don't know the land, the people. It takes years to know them, and sometimes there are conflicts. (...)

The settlements receive benefits from INCRA, so they are in the first place. In second place are the communities. So then now, the Union is looking at this. Why? Because several settlements only want to win the land, they don't want to produce or do a group. Therefore the communities, I would say they feel disgusted. Because for the settlements there are projects for everything, for light, for cistern(...) so the communities are forgotten (Fatinha, 2008).

Among the elements that changed most in her life since she started her political participation and involvement, Fatinha highlighted 'knowledge'.

I am going to tell you something: it changes a lot. Mostly, the knowledge to see that I discovered things that I am going to bring to my community--bringing benefits, knowledge of other projects and live improvements (Fatinha, 2008).

And in relation to her future perspectives, she was able to see further developments in her political life, but also continuing connection with her community. She knows that she could go even further.

I am going to tell you something: sometimes I think about going further, because it is possible. If you try, everything you try, you get it. But I am still very much involved here. I believe I could think about going further if I could see the community here, the women wake up to reality. And if I go further, I will, but always towards my land--towards my land of origin (Fatinha, 2008).

6.8. Conclusion

¹³² 1 hectare = 1000 square metres

This chapter focused on the participation of women in the P1MC. After an overview of existing spaces for participation and of how women were formally included into the program's agenda, this chapter looked at different forms of participation and how they emerged, finding that they often originated in the initiatives of women themselves. But it is also important to note that feminist leaders had to fight for the participation of women both as cistern builders as well as commission members. It is striking how important the engagement of women leaders was. It is also evident that, in practice, feminisms are very diverse – comparing, for example, the first group at the Gender Working Group of ASA to the later one. This also holds true for the relationship of women leaders' approaches to the participation of women as cistern builders.

In the next chapter, elements from the lives of those women will be discussed in an analytical way, in order to reflect upon their participation and empowerment through their involvement with the P1MC.

Chapter 7 – Thematic Analysis

7.1. Introduction

After describing the participation of women in the selected cases in the previous chapter, it is now possible to highlight key recurrent themes that surface from the empirical work. The main goal of this chapter is identify and analyze these themes. In a first step, the themes are aggregated into five thematic networks followed by a discussion on the gender challenges and a comparison between the cases.

- The meanings of *sair*, a term that relates to the personal or individual ability of each and every woman to leave the house and participate in P1MC. Which were the personal barriers, and which were the gains and benefits that enabled women to participate?
- Feminist NGOs and the work of women cistern builders. In this section we take a closer look at the role of feminist organizations in enabling and supporting women, and more specifically the participation of women as cistern builders.
- ASA's local and municipal commissions: Knowledge, Power and Water. Another aspect explored is the participation of women in local and municipal commissions. How did they get there? In which locations? Why was this important?
- Networks of Networks: How Feminism Works. In this section the interconnection between the different feminist organizations is explored. How did this connection affect the participation of women in the P1MC?

- Synergies of Actions: Government and NGOs: Here a number of other synergies are explored between different government programs and the democratization process of Brazil. Also mentioned is the presence of international organizations.

After this point we consider the fact that despite a number of successful experiences, such as the ones described here, gender equity policies for the Brazilian Semi-Arid are still a big challenge. In addition, a comparison between the cases is presented with a response to each research question.

7.2. The meanings of *sair*

The verb *sair* in Portuguese has several possible translations in English. Literally, it could mean: to exit, to go out, to get out, to leave, to move out, to depart from, to come out, among others. *Sair* was consistently repeated by the people interviewed, sometimes with different meanings. However, in a significant number of times it was used to express the ability of going places, participating in paid work or in groups in a context of freedom and autonomy. That was the closest idea that could be compared with what development theory and feminists call empowerment – from the perspective of the individual--a personal capability to go.

In this analysis, it was decided to use the original term in Portuguese *sair* to maintain its richness. It is assumed that *sair* is more than a word; it is an important concept to understand changes in women's lives and their ability to go where they want whether or not is is a can go or must go situation. As feminists said before, “a woman's place is where she wants to be”.

One meaning of *sair* mentioned by beneficiaries of the program refers to the change from having to leave the house to fetch water in contrast with having the cistern right outside the house. One such report on that benefit stated:

We used to get water in the community. We had to go early. (...) After the cistern, it improved a lot because we don't need to leave (*sair*) the house anymore; we walk a few steps and get water (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

This quote serve to highlight the fact that poor rural women **do** go out to fetch water, to work on the fields, to work on other informal jobs (such as coal gathering, separating nuts), but this activity does not mean leaving house/home responsibilities for a prolonged period of time. "Leaving house/home responsibilities for a prolonged period of time" is more commonly associated with men's works. In poor rural areas, it is not uncommon for men to leave the house to go working in the fields or elsewhere, leaving the management of the home to the women.

Even nowadays, as I tell you, there are a lot of macho men. They leave (*sair*) early, and leave the water on the back of the women (Adriana, Esplar, Fortaleza, 2008).

Although caring for water is a women's responsibility, the participation of women in the training course to receive the cistern was not that common, because women were not used to go out for courses.¹³³ As Malvinie recounted:

I taught a course before with Alfredo in a community in Caninde, and a woman came and said: 'This is the first time that I leave (*sair*) my house to participate in a training course. I never leave (*sair*) my house for anything' (Malvinier, Esplar, Fortaleza, 2008).

In this sense, *sair* already meant leaving the house to participate in something new, a new learning experience, even though related to the care of water; and at the same time the course was a social event in the community. More importantly, the people

¹³³ I myself participated in training where I saw women saying they had never gone to such a course before.

participating in the course were the ones to sign the official ownership of the cistern itself and would also be trained about the Semi-Arid and the rights of people to water.

On the other side, for the cistern builders, *sair* could mean being able to get out of the house for a number of days (in average about a week) so they could build a cistern in different localities. As Chaguinha mentioned about her training: “You get out (sai) of your house, leave kids, leave your husband and go to another settlement for 17 days”(Chaguinha, Mossoro, 2008).

Besides being able to go out to work, in different spaces and for longer periods of time, such as with the cisterneiras work, *sair* also had a political meaning. Through a diagnostic participatory research done in the region of Fortaleza (Marc zero) by the Project Don Helder Camera, and the following monitoring (Marc one), Adriana from Esplar noticed that women were going out more, participating more: “One thing that we identified is that women are entering into those political spaces. They are going out (sair) more, they are participating more in meetings” (Adriana, Esplar, 2008).

In this sense, *sair* meant participating in trainings and meetings of the P1MC as commission members, cistern builders, community agents or pump builders such as Maria Betiana and Chaguinha.

I already went (sair) for a number of places. Because our pump is made of PVC, it is easy to use and to carry, so we went to several regions of Ceara. We also went to a training in Pesqueira, Pernambuco state.(Maria Betiana, Fortaleza, 2008).

Yes, I already went to Recife with another cistern builder. We went to speak about our experience at the national meeting of ASA (Chaguinha, Mossoro, 2008).

Another significant meaning of *sair* that emerged was raised by local commission members, as a process of understanding their reality collectively.¹³⁴ When I asked Fatima Abreu, how her life changed, she responded:

Strengthening in the job [of health agent]. But even in the discussions at home, and in other questions, we learned from the Forum and other meetings from the commission that the participation of women is not only for her to stay inside the house. But for her to have a place everywhere. It strengthened the question of knowledge, the discussion. Even the collective work. To get out (*sair*) from individualism, from seeing just your private life. There is also a space to work the lives of others, the issue of improvements (Fatima Abreu, Fortaleza, 2008).

If *sair* means women discovering new political, public, geographical, economic and social spaces, the experience is nevertheless daunting. As mentioned by Fatinha, a number of women have difficulties going to unknown spaces and places.

We are looking for another project that benefits and encourages women. Because there are a lot of women that you talk to, you try to convince, but she does not want to get away (*sair*) from close to the stove. This is a fight for us, to take this woman to an unknown place for her (Fatinha, Caninde, 2008).

One important condition that can work either as a support or as a barrier for women to go out (*sair*) is the family. Women with small children for instance needed support from other women such as mothers and sisters in order to leave (*sair*).

My son is 8 and my daughter is 5. My kids are grown¹³⁵. But when they were small, I use to leave them with my mom, and used to go out (*sair*) to the movement and all that. And the Union always supported me. I was always invited (Fatinha, Caninde, 2008).

At the time of the cisterns I had two daughters at home. The girls took care of the house. I had no difficulties. I would leave the house (*sair*) at 6 a.m. and worked until 11 a.m. Came home, had lunch and went back. I felt very good; for me it was very important (Woman from Independencia, Mossoro, 2008).

¹³⁴ Paulo Freire would call this process, *conscientization*.

¹³⁵ It is interesting how she considers her children as grown, with 5 and 8 years old.

In a number of cases, in order to be able to go out to new spaces and places women shared their children and other household responsibilities with other women, mostly from her family, such as mothers, sisters, and even daughters so that, for the men in the house, the changes would not affect too much their roles and expectations.

However, significant changes in gender roles happen when women leave the house, and leave or share house responsibilities with their man. Although less common this also happened with some of the *cisterneiras*.

(...) I left the house with my husband. He knows how to cook, wash. He knows how to do everything (Chaguinha, Mossoro, 2008).

My sons, they support me a lot at home. Because we are women we face difficulties if the family does not support you. Who is going to leave (*sair*), who is going to stay, who is going to take care of this? (...) My husband also contributes. He does not mind if I go out (*sair*) (Raimunda, Fortaleza, 2008).

For women to become a cistern builder, not only in their communities but in other ones, they would have to be able to go further and travel. And as pointed out by Omar, this implied some changes in the gender roles at home which some were not able to accomplish.

The issue of bias is like this. You get a woman in the community and she builds a cistern. The cistern builders are trained to go and then build in other communities. It is expensive to train a person to build a maximum of 20 cisterns. So this was the problem the women spoke about. They could not travel. It was difficult for them to go out (*sair*) and leave their kids, to be living in a different place for a week while building the cistern (Omar, Oxfam, Recife, 2008).

They were expected to do 39 cisterns after the first training. There were 5 women going out (*sair*) and the women from Independencia. The women from Independencia did only the cisterns from their community. They did not propose to leave (*sair*). There was Ira, who said she had a sick daughter. (...) So she could not leave (*sair*). There was Lucia that had a very large family and could not leave (*sair*). They were very good, but

their action was internal. They could not leave much (Claudia, Mossoro, 2008).

Families were not only a source of support but also sometimes a barrier for women leaving the house and participating in the program more extensively. The case of Cidinha, from Afogados da Ingazeira, as mentioned in the previous chapter is an example of how her husband and mother-in-law stopped her from leaving to build cisterns. There were also several reports of domestic violence in the communities I visited, but I did not explore much the reasons for it.

Ritinha was trained but could not go out (sair). (...) The husband of Ira took a ride in this process and was also trained in the women's course. And the husband of Ritinha too. So the ones that were going out (sair) were them! (...) They were called and contracted to build cisterns in other places. (...) What we end up understanding was that between they (the women) going out or them (the men) going out, it was the men who were going out (Claudia, CF8, Mossoro, 2008).

In the same way, partners or boyfriends could also create obstacles for women to go out (sair) and participate in work as well as in cultural, social or educational activities they disapproved of, exerting their control over where women could and could not go. In the case of Linda, where the theater was the first experience of leaving the house and participating in other spaces, she had to make a choice between boyfriend or theater.

I do and I used to do theater. When I was doing it, we started to participate, to go out more (sair) to do presentations, rehearsals, etc. At that time I was dating a guy. Then he said to me: 'Linda, you are travelling too much, you better stop with this.' Then I said: 'Me? Stop? No I won't stop. Then you will have to choose between me or the theater. I will not stop even to think twice, because I already chose. (...) Logically it is the theater.' (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

In a different scenario, the women from the community of Independencia mentioned other women who were trained to build cisterns but had to stop because they

could not leave (sair) their previous roles as wives and mothers. The same was noted by Omar when interviewing women from Sergipe state.

They [the women] did the ones [cisterns] here. There are family mothers, housewives that cannot go out (sair) (Independencia, Mossoro, 2008).

One thing is that in order to go to other communities they have to have the conversion of the husband. Because the husbands will have to stay with the kids in the house; in other words, more work for them, and also have to cook, and also stay without sex (Omar, Oxfam, Recife, 2008).

For some, especially with small children, this could be a temporary situation as children grow. It happened with Chaguinha after she gained the rights to her granddaughter, as observed by Rejane from CF8.

When she assumed the responsibility for her granddaughter it became more difficult to go out (sair) (Rejane, CF8, 2008).

Even the other girls from the theater (...) some got married, have kids, it is very difficult. A few manage to go out (sair) (...) But to work, they need to find someone to take care of the kids, so they can't go out (sair) as they used to (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

This is a difficulty also foreseen by Betiana who was pregnant at the time of the interview. Interestingly enough, she expected that her new challenge of going out and participating in program meetings might be balanced by babysitting arrangements organized for ASA meetings. This type of institutional support appears to be vital to enable women's participation and ability to leave (sair).

In the beginning, while he is small, I will not be able to get out (sair) a lot. But if I could take him out there will be no problems. We go to the meetings, and the bigger meetings are the state and national meetings, that is the ECONASA. They have a proposal to have a space for someone to stay and play with the kids for the people who have kids (Maria Betiana, Fortaleza, 2008).

Organizations can also be a source of support or a barrier to women going out and participating in program activities. As mentioned by Marli, even after Lourdes was

trained, she was rarely called to build cisterns in her own micro-region. Instead, she was called by feminist NGOs from different states to teach and build cisterns. Those networks were vital to create opportunities for women to go out (*sair*) and participate, as we will explore in the next section about the participation in networks.

In summation, *sair* often meant leaving traditional female spaces and responsibilities related to family, house and reproduction. In parallel, it meant going to new spaces and places, including recognized paid work and participating in meetings, social and political or educational activities that are most commonly accepted and associated with men. Family can be a support or a barrier for this movement. Changes in gender roles happen when men value women's work and worth in production activities, and share reproductive activities in the house--especially in the case of *cisterneiras* where travelling is expected. Another source of support for women were feminist organizations, as we will see in the following section.

7.3. Feminist NGOs and the work of women cistern builders.

One of the potential benefits for women participating in community groups linked to feminist organizations was the cistern itself. In the case of the region of Independencia, even without being originally selected by ASA to receive cisterns, the community gained it because they had the support from the feminist center (CF8) who helped them get organized and demand the cisterns in the proper office of INCRA. So it is an achievement of the women's group that was materialized through the support from and connection with the feminist organization (and other organizations as well). In the words of one of the women from the group of Independencia:

(...) For example, the neighboring community of Pedra Branca doesn't have a women's group and they don't have a cistern there. They are crazy to have a cistern which is a blessing for our houses. (...) The women's group arranged it (...) and if it wasn't for the Feminist Center (CF8) I am sure we would be just like the neighboring community without cisterns too (Women from Independencia, Mossoro, 2008).

Of course this was not the only way a community could receive a cistern, but because the feminist organizations were working with the organization of rural women, and water access was one of their demands, the cisterns were a direct consequence of their mobilization. However, cisterns were not the only public good achieved by this partnership between the women's group and the Feminist Center¹³⁶.

The cistern was conquered by the women's group. We had other achievements of the women's group through the Feminist Center. One of them was the community telephone in the community. Then we fought with the Feminist Center and we won the community telephone here to our community (Women from Independencia, Mossoro, 2008).

It is clear that the feminist NGO had an important role in linking the women's groups with the public services they needed. This action of feminist NGO's of connecting women to society and its public services and rights, besides helping them organize, could also be seen in relation to work opportunities.

As we have seen in the previous chapter the existence of the first cistern builders training class was directly related to a feminint NG –Casa da Mulher do Nordeste–who first did a gender analysis of the implementation of the Program One Million Cisterns in the micro-region of Afogados da Ingazeira. Basically, through a conceptual analysis of the sexual division of labor in the program, plus their advocacy for women at ASA, they

¹³⁶ In Afogados da Ingazeira I had the chance to visit a women's group that had developed a cooperative for the production of jams and preserves using local fruits, such as umbu, caju, etc. From the start they had the support of the Casa das Mulheres do Nordeste, and had not only two cisterns, but a site for their production, a round bathroom, fridges and solar energy. They also received prizes for their innovative work, sold their production in markets and a store and participated in the broader "Rede de Mulheres Produtoras do Pajeu" – a regional network of women producers. This group was organized with the help of Casa das Mulheres do Nordeste. For more see part 3 of the video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_X1PctSmoY

realized it was important for women to participate as cistern builders. The logic of sexual division of labor was briefly defined by Marli.

The work during the construction of the cistern is done by the assistant, not the builder. It is the assistant that carries the heavy dough, who puts the material at the foot of the builder. So the work of the builder is the work that has the intellectual value, he is the one who thinks, the one who has the geometrical knowledge, the technology, the necessary materials to build the cistern. And the work of the assistant is cooking for the builders, digging the hole, jobs that do not need any intellectual requirement. So you imagine that women could quietly do this. But a work that needs elaborated thinking, specific knowledge about construction and masonry - and here is the economic as well because this is the work that has value in the construction of the cistern - then it was imagined that women could not do this. And the training for women cistern builders came to break this taboo. Yes we can build this specific knowledge, elaborated knowledge of building cisterns. What is missing is the program and the organizations involved in the program to see this, in order to deconstruct this division of labor inside ASA itself (Marli, CMN, Afogados da Ingazeira, 2008).

Curiously, when the first women cistern builders were trained, initially they were not hired to build cisterns in their own micro-regions. Instead, they were called out by other feminist NGOs from other states to train women and build cisterns in their micro-regions. It is interesting to note that the first cistern builders were trained by ASA, but ended up, at least in this phase, building cisterns for INCRA settlements under different funds. As Marli from Cada da Mulher do Nordeste (CMN) explains:

When Lourdes got out (saiu) to the world and went training other cistern builders, the CF8 had a project with INCRA to build cisterns and contracted the women cistern builders that were trained by Lourdes. Casa Lilas also had an agreement with INCRA to build a certain number of cisterns, and called the women cistern builders to do it. However the UGM from here never called the women cistern builders they had themselves trained to build cisterns. They built three or four, but it was always us putting it into the agenda, you understand? You train the women and never call her to build cisterns? It was a really difficult process, especially because the managing unit (UGM) did not have the concern of guaranteeing the participation of women in the construction of the cistern (Marli, CMN, Afogados da Ingazeira, 2008).

Another example is from Linda in Mossoro who reported that she was informed about new opportunities through the feminist centre:

It is always like this... it is the girls from the Feminist Centre that call me (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

As we can see, feminist NGOs do not only help to organize, but they also connect women to public services, rights and opportunities, and other organizations. Also, because they belong to feminist networks, rural women connected to feminist organizations have access to the network of feminist organizations. However, the question is sometimes asked, “Do women get involved simply for economic reasons?”

Omar from Oxfam Recife for instance referred to a study done by Telma Castelo Branco suggesting that women were becoming cistern builders for economic reasons.

Telma did some interviews in Afogados and she came up with the thesis that the women were becoming cistern builders for economic reasons. They were receiving much more money building cisterns than making coal. She compared the payment of women making coal and building cisterns and saw that the payment making cisterns is much more (Omar, Oxfam, Recife, 2008).

In fact, the payment to build cisterns is superior to what women received with other informal jobs, and for all of them it was considered good money, even if they built just in their community. In parallel the payment for building pumps was also considered good and involved mostly youth groups of men and women.

Ih, We won so much money!¹³⁷(Chaguinha, Mossoro, 2008).

For each house we build the cistern we receive 150 reais, and the in-kind contribution of food from the family as well as lodging if the house was in another community (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

¹³⁷ The translation from the original Portuguese could not be literal because the sentence used a local expression “Ih, a gente ganha dinheiro que nem presta!”. “Nao presta” literally means does not have any value, but in this context means “it was too good”.

The little money that I won was very good. I participated in about 5 cisterns (Women from Independencia, Mossoro, 2008).

We receive for each pump we put together – because we receive all the material and we only need to assemble it – we receive 10 reais for each pump we assemble (Maria Betiana, Fortaleza, 2008).

If on the one hand the payment is good, on the other hand the uncertainty is also high. As we have seen before, the construction of cisterns depends on the allocation at the national, state, micro-regional, municipal and community levels. In addition, the cistern builder needs to be contacted by the UGM,¹³⁸ the micro-regional management units. As Marli, from Casa da Mulher do Nordeste mentioned, the process of sharing information about work opportunities depends on the type of network of the organization acting as UGM, and in some places women had difficulties learning about those opportunities.

Who executes the program has the power of mobilization. So you will know if I want you to know. I will make the information reach who I want it to reach. ASA is a structure that has difficulties dealing with Feminist organizations. So difficulties occur with the CF8 in the structure of the micro-region as well as with the Casa da Mulher here (Marli, CMN, Afogados da Ingazeira, 2008)¹³⁹.

Another source of uncertainty is in the funding of the program itself. After a period that started at the end of 2007, the program was suspended and this caused a pause also in the mobilization and construction of cisterns.

I never intend to leave the P1MC as long as it exists. Even in this time, when the program had paused it was a great anguish. And we were doing a movement for it to come back because it is a program so good to work with (Betiana, Fortaleza, 2008).

¹³⁸ In Portuguese, Unidade Gestora Micro-regional.

¹³⁹ While I was interviewing Marli in Afogados da Ingazeira in 2008, the Casa da Mulher do Nordeste was waiting to hear the results of the competition for the selection of the UGM for the micro-region for the next phase of the P1MC. By the end of the interview the results were known: Casa was selected to be the next UGM for the micro-region of Afogados da Ingazeira. It will be very interesting to see how the fact that a Feminist organization assumes the UGM changes the setting. To my knowledge, this is the time that this has occurred.

Even for the Working Group of Gender of ASA at the national and state level, the break was felt.

The two stops for us were a big problem. The resources from the P1MC are a large lever for all this mobilization. Because it is not only the cisterns, it funds. It funds also the planning meetings, the evaluation meetings (Malvinie, Esplar, Fortaleza, 2008).

Nevertheless the work of women as cistern builders faced a number of challenges at the community level as well. As we have seen in the interviews of Chaguinha and Linda for instance, women had to face community distrust when they were starting to build the cisterns. It was a job considered too complex for women. As mentioned in the previous chapter as soon as the cisterns were built, community members started to say that building cisterns was in fact easy – because women could do it. Another challenge for some women was a change in the size of the plaques to build the cistern.

What I found most difficult was the size of the plaques that changed. They are not four small ones as it used to be. Now they are two bigger ones and they are heavier. Now it is too big and only men can carry it. (...) Than they (the cooperative) brings the forms in that way and we have to do it that way. It is not the way we wanted (...) It has to be done they way they want (Women from Independencia, Mossoro, 2008).

I interviewed women that were building cisterns in Sergipe and saw that they were giving up. They did build the demonstration cistern but were not working in their profession for several reasons. The reason they mentioned was that the work was too hard. But the people from the NGO Terra Viva said the tools were not appropriate. For instance the bucket for water and cement they used was too heavy. It should be a smaller bucket. Also because of the physical capacity, a woman cistern builder or two would take longer than it took a man to build (Omar, Oxfam, Recife, 2008).

However, according to Claudia from CF8, the size of the plaques may have also been too heavy for men who do not carry it alone when transporting it.

What they (the rural women) were complaining about was the weight of the plaque.(...) But what we say is that independent of the weight of the plaque the mason does not put it alone. He needs the help of someone, and

generally it is the assistant (...). The mason orients the work of the assistant. (...) What exists is a resistance from the men to be oriented by them (the women masons) starting with the digging of the hole. Women encounter difficulties in this orientation, because they (men) never trust that their orientation is correct (Claudia, CF8, Mossoro, 2008).

Despite those difficulties the support from families and NGOs, and especially the feminist NGOs seem to be of great importance for the women who overcome those challenges.

It seems that in Afogados da Ingazeira they continue with the representation of the Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, a women's organization. Where there is no women's organization then it is very difficult. A support from the women's organization or the Union helps a lot (Omar, Oxfam, Recife, 2008).

In the case of Mossoro for instance, because the Feminist Centre had done workshops with officers from INCRA about gender, some officers were sensitized about the cause of the women's groups and helped to disseminate the information about the women cistern builders in the region.

The woman from the press department of INCRA was the one who supported part of this experience. She sent the release to several people of the press. Then, when the people from Globo saw it, they became interested in doing a program in Globo Rural. They spent a week here to do the filming (Conceicao, CF8, Mossoro, 2008).

The result of this connection for the women cistern builders was huge. The biggest TV network in Brazil, TV Globo, came to their communities to tape a program about women cistern builders for their series called Globo Rural – which is transmitted nationally. In parallel, the local media also became interested.

When that girl from Globo, Helen, came we became famous appearing on Globo TV, in the Newspaper "Jornal Mossoroense" and in the Newspaper of Patos. They were all here filming us doing the cisterns, with a hat on our heads, all messy from the cement and sand... Ahh, this was so good. I loved it (Women from Independencia, Mossoro, 2008).

People know me wherever I go. If I go to Currais Novos, close to the city of my mom, people come: “Oh Chaguinha, I saw you on TV, you are a cistern builder, right?” I know a lot of people, after that I met a lot of people. It was a very good experience for me. It was difficult, there were a lot of difficulties, but it was also very good (Chaguinha, Mossoro, 2008).

Besides helping women to connect with other institutions, the feminist NGO’s supported women in other ways.

The women from the Centre, they support me a lot. Sometimes I get a little unbalanced. Then the girls arrive and we talk. My family also supports me (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

But it was not only emotional support that rural women said they received. They also mentioned personal growth, mainly from their participation in the rural women’s movement that the feminist center helps to animate.

In the school we learn a lot, but in the movement we learn much more professionally and personally. Because it is like this, before I did not have work, did not have an income, did not have anything. Today I have an income when it comes. And we grow in the discussions we have, in the talks we have. Sometimes I think about how I was before and now. Before I was another person or the same person but now I have a renovated spirit. (...) Because it is like this... before I was a quiet person. I did not talk much; and then opportunities appeared for us to be talking, to be discussing, to be reading. The course itself came through this. I only entered into the course because I was part of the movement (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

The course that Linda mentioned is the Course on Pedagogy of the Earth offered by the State University of the State of Rio Grande do Norte in partnership with INCRA and the MST. It is an undergraduate course offered in and for rural communities. Linda heard about this opportunity through the feminist movement, too.

Another role of the feminist NGO’s supporting women is related to domestic violence. Claudia from CF8 mentioned the case of one woman who started to participate

in the cistern building training course. Although she was unable to continue, she did ask the group for help to escape from domestic violence.

During this period she put her name to be trained. She was one of the few that left in the middle and did not finish it. She had a husband who was a police man, and she suffered a lot of violence. She got closer to us, to the group and asked for help. People in the community knew that she was suffering from domestic violence but pretended that they did not know anything. She suffered alone. After she got close to the group she was able to denounce him, and there was a long process (Claudia, CF8, Mossoro, 2008).

The cycle of domestic violence is frequent, and other cases were mentioned in the interviews. However it was also interesting to note the presence of the Tutelary Councils (*Conselhos Tutelares*) in these communities¹⁴⁰.

In conclusion, the feminist NGOs play a crucial role in organizing local women's groups linking them to the social services they want, sharing knowledge and information about rights and opportunities, as well offering personal support. These activities seem to be effective in including women in a social network that before was difficult to access (including water).

Although building cisterns was widely accepted by feminist leaders as an important tool for women's empowerment and program organization, other women members of ASA such as Elzira from Esplar found the work of building cisterns unhealthy or "insalubrious" for women. Moreover, Elzira pointed out that the most important source of empowerment in the program was the participation of women as local commission members which was already significant in the micro-region of Fortaleza thanks to her leadership role as coordinator of the program (UGM) in the

¹⁴⁰ These were already described in the previous chapter. The Tutelary Councils are composed of community members elected to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents under the Estatuto da Crianca e Adoslecente law.(1990).

micro-region. The role of local and municipal ASA commissions will be examined in the following section.

7.4. ASA's local and municipal Commissions: knowledge, power and water.

It was Elzira, from Esplar, the UGM¹⁴¹ from Fortaleza, who called attention to the importance of women participation in local and municipal commissions. This type of participation was very visible in Fortaleza and other regions of Ceara state, thanks at least in part, to the leadership of Elzira.

It was Elzira herself who brought to the Micro Regional Forum and to the State Forum the story of quotas. When there was a meeting she was always saying there should be X men and X women, and she defended the quotas for the participation of women. And that led to become a natural thing in the forum and triggered a whole discussion. There were people in the forum who had never heard about gender relations and inequalities (Malvinier, Esplar, Fortaleza, 2008).

Unfortunately the same was not true in Afogados da Ingazeira where women were underrepresented in micro-regional commissions. According to Marli, this might be due to the partnerships of the micro-regional management unit (UGM) with social movements mainly represented by men.

It depends a lot on the organization and on the relations that the executive organization has with the social movements. For instance, Diaconia has a strong connection with the Union movement. So what is the tendency? The commission in this micro-region has 12 men and one woman. Because they are a reproduction of the rural union movement that is macho, patriarchic and hierarchical, so this is reproduced there because the indication/suggestion come from them, not from Diaconia. Diaconia does the mobilization for the municipality of Sao Jose do Egito forming the municipal commission, getting together the social actors from the municipality such as the CPT,¹⁴² Unions, ... and when you get them together it is a municipal commission of only men, and the representation

¹⁴¹ UGM stands for Unidade Gestora Micro-regional, or Micro-regional Management Unit.

¹⁴² Comissao Pastoral da Terra (Pastoral Commission of the Earth)

For more info see <http://www.cptnacional.org.br/>

that comes to the micro-regional consists of men only (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Afogados da Ingazeira, 2008).

In fact in the region of Afogados, Marli had already realized that men participated more in the unions because of a rule of one representative per family which was later challenged by a number of women.

When we started to do the leadership courses we realized women were not members of the association, because their husbands were already members and the association said they could not have two members from the same house, the same family. (...) Then women understood they were without a right, that to be a member is an individual right (...) it is not a representation. (...) Then several women became members after the association understood that the law in fact does not restrict one household to one member, that in reality this rule was dictated by the board of directors of the association, who in turn were all men (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Afogados da Ingazeira, 2008).

If social movements, especially unions, had mostly men as members or in leadership positions, how could women in Fortaleza get into those positions? On the one hand, Elzira created demand for women in the Forum (ASA) Micro-regional of Fortaleza. But how did those women get there? Where did they come from? Some of the women currently participating in the commission of their municipality and therefore part of the micro-regional commission came in fact from the local commissions.

My participation in the Program One Million Cisterns started when the cisterns went to my region; my father and mother were recipients. Then I volunteered in the local commission, and later I passed to the municipal commission (Maria Betiana, Fortaleza, 2008).

To start participating in the local commission is already a great entrance. You go to the meetings, follow the construction of the cisterns, and the local commission obviously has to deal with the municipal commission. And several women started to participate in the municipal commission through the local commission (Malvinie, Esplar, Fortaleza, 2008)

I started participating in the commission through other members of the commission. They looked for me and they showed me the issues of the program. And I started to know a bit. Then my community was

considered, (...) Carnauba in the rural zone. Then I started to get involved. First I was part of the local commission that selects the people who will receive the cistern. Then I followed all this process, the selection, the course... (Fatima Abreu, Barreiras, 2008)

Other women were already participating in organizations in the community, such as the Pastoral Commission of Earth (CPT), the Pastoral Commission for the Child (Pastoral da Crianca), or the Community Health Agents Association and even the local Union, and then they got involved in ASA.

Before ASA we already worked with the Pastoral of Earth and the Union. We received donations to build cisterns for two families. Those families paid 100 reais and with this money we gathered to build other cisterns. (...) The CPT is part of the Forum (Raimunda, Ocara, 2008).

It was August 2003. I was working on the Parish (...) There was a guy from the youth group. They were accompanying these people and we started to talk and they invited me to participate. I went to the meeting in the basement of the Cathedral on the first day of September. (...) The meeting was about the distribution of cisterns that were approved, and the municipality of Paramoti was one of the beneficiaries. (...) Then I committed myself to the subject and learned to love the cause (Nilta, Paramoti, 2008).

I participate in the Municipal Commission representing the Association of Health Agents. Because we have a link with all people of the community and every community has one (health agent) this connection facilitates work. We can very rapidly know which community has more shortage of water and everything (Fatima Abreu, Barreiras, 2008).

People involved in those commissions participated in local and municipal meetings, and some of them also in the micro-regional meetings. They were also able to participate in state (Forum Ceara) and national meetings (ECONASA). Therefore they were exposed to a lot of information from different places and spaces, and most of them described a growth in knowledge.

I became passionate and this changed my life because we started to wake up to the question of knowledge; because we saw the importance of the earth, the care of the earth, and this has strengthened us. And during the

visits we started to pass along information about this that we did not care a lot about before (Fatima Abreu, Barreiras, 2008).

The conditions changed. Today we have more conditions of working with the families, of going to the communities because there are more people. There is a bigger connection. The conditions and the ways of working also improved and the knowledge because before we were alone. The Union did not have an active participation in the community and with the families. Now everybody is together and the connection and the knowledge improved, even inside the communities and the families (Raimunda, Ocara, 2008).

I am going to tell you, it changes a lot--Mostly the knowledge to see the things that I want to bring to my community. And it brings benefits, the knowledge of other projects, and life improvements (Fatinha, Bom Retiro, Caninde, 2008).

Some women reported learning and concerns about gender equality in the social movements that they participated in, in parallel to their participation at ASA. However we can suspect that some were more concerned about the inclusion of women in policies than about changes in gender roles since the participation of women is justified by their caring role in water. Others do not see women well organized yet in the movements.

I continue to integrate myself, because before we were only part of the municipal commission and we were not here at the micro-regional forum. So today we gained this space. (...) ... we learned in the forum and in some meetings of the commission that the participation of women is not only for her to stay in the house, but for to have her own space and everything.

(...) as I said before, women are very important. They start to find their space, showing that in this program they are important, because it is them that care, that are there everyday; raising the consciousness that men need the women. Women are very important in several situations.

(...) the majority of the cisterns are in the name of the women. It is not that men cannot, but it is really them (the women) that will give the continuity and everything (Fatima Abreu, Barreiras, Fortaleza, 2008).

Generally being a woman there is a bit of a difficulty because unfortunately there is still discrimination in the union movement. (...) Generally the leaders don't have an open mind. They think we will not be able to take the work forwards. (...) the women in the union are more or

less organized. There is a group that is and a group that is a bit away. We are trying to improve this (Raimunda, Ocara, Fortaleza, 2008).

(...) that it is not only men who can work, that we too have to be independent, we have to live our lives independent of what the men do, or what the women will do. We will not cease to be a woman if we build pumps. We will be even more. So I think my colleagues should believe more in their own capacity of doing what they want in life (Betiana, Caridade, Fortaleza, 2008).

However women participating in the municipal commissions are also exposed to new ideas related to the sustainable development practices, some of them supported by Esplar for a long time, such as concerns with food security, organic farming, etc.

I intend to give continuity to my work and look for other improvements. There is a system called mandala that I visited a few times. We are in search of those mandalas for Paramoti. Because here there is the harvest from winter and that's it. And the mandala I have been studying, if well developed, you have it all year. And I am searching to see if some groups or families want to engage (Nilta, Paramoti, Fortaleza, 2008).

The next hope that I see is for us to bring more awareness to my settlement about a way to work agriculture differently--A way to produce better, to eat better, and a better organization of women in the union. Make them aware that they [the women] also have rights, but they also have duties. And to bring forward this project that we know. (...) Like not doing the burning, not using poison and using other cheaper and more economical forms for the worker, that he could do himself (Raimunda, Ocara, Fortaleza, 2008).

Some women members of the commission also develop contacts not only with their communities, organizations, and partner organizations, but also with the public organizations within municipalities that they are engaged with.

(...) I participate in other commissions such as the one for civil defense, and the PAC¹⁴³ commission in the municipality, and I am always there,

¹⁴³ PAC – *Programa de Aceleracao do Crescimento* or Growth Acceleration Program is a program created under the Lula national government to develop several areas of public infrastructure. It is now in its second phase. For more information in English see: http://www.brasil.gov.br/para/press/press-releases/march/brazil-announces-phase-two-of-the-growth-acceleration-program/br_model1?set_language=en

always in the field (...) If I see something, I say, I speak, I tell the mayor, the secretary... (Nilta, Paramoti, Fortaleza, 2008).

It is no surprise that men in similar positions sometimes enter into the political life and become city councilors (*vereadores*) in their municipalities. As well described by Marli. “water is power” in the Brazilian Semi-Arid.

When there are women, the men don't want to let it go. This is also because the program had elected several men to the city council in the region. From the 12 men, we made a survey, four today are city councilors--four men that came from this process because it ends in the political power--because water in the semi-arid is power. It is power! Men do not want to let go of this political representation because they know that it is power to gather the community; it is power in the elections. It is not easy for women get into this business because it is like this: only in one micro-regional commission there are four city councilors from different municipalities (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Afogados da Ingazeira, 2008).

Even though I did not meet any women from the city council, I met a few who had already considered the possibility of becoming candidates and whose discourses were also very political such as Nilta and Fatinha. Also in Fortaleza, Malvinie mentioned a woman who was elected to the board of the Union.

I am going to tell you something: sometimes I think about going further, because it is possible. If you try, everything you try, you get it. But I am still very much involved here. I believe I could think about going further if I could see the community here, the women wake up to reality. And if I go further, I will, but always towards my land--towards my land of origin (Fatinha, Bom Retiro, Caninde, 2008).

Dulce did not come today but she is a person who says: “My life before the P1MC was inside the house with my feet at the stove and the sink.” Now she became a candidate for union officer and she won, and will assume her office in September. (...) This inclusion of women in the program (...) there was a jump in quality in the political and social lives of these women (Malvinie, Esplar, Fortaleza, 2008).

We can conclude that the participation of women in local commissions and later in municipal and micro-regional commissions has a great effect on the political lives of

women and their communities opening several possibilities for growth, knowledge and even political power. At the same time, we see that their involvement will depend on how much organizations acting as UGMs are aware of and embrace gender equality. And obviously the engagement of women leaders in ASA such as Elzira, Malvinie, Marli, and Graciete plays a crucial role.

This is a place of political dispute. So the executive organizations (UGMs) have a lot of power in the region. They have power with the communities, they have mobilization power, and this generates enormous power for the organizations (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Afogados da Ingazeira, 2008).

7.5. Networks of networks: how feminism works

One other project that seems to have left a permanent mark on the feminist NGOs involved in the emergence and support of the *cisterneiras* is the Project Dom Helder Camara (PDHC).¹⁴⁴ This project was the result of a partnership between the Brazilian Ministry of Agrarian Development¹⁴⁵ and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)¹⁴⁶ and was directed at the agrarian reform settlements in the Northeastern Semiarid. According to the evaluation¹⁴⁷ done by IFAD, the PDHC adopted:

(...) a concept of human development, incorporating not only aspects of production and of water and food security into understandings of rural poverty and sustainable development, but also other dimensions including education and culture, gender equity, generation and ethnicity, social organization and political participation (IFAD, 2010).

¹⁴⁴ The project originally was called “Sustainable Development for Agrarian Reform Settlements in the Northeast Semiarid” but adopted the name Dom Helder Camara to honor the archbishop. Don Helder Camara (1909-1999) was archbishop of Olinda and Recife, in Pernambuco state. He was an advocate for the poor and human rights even during the Brazilian dictatorship, and for that he was criticized as a communist. Among numerous merits he was the only Brazilian nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize four times.

¹⁴⁵ *Ministerio de Desenvolvimento Agrario (MDA)*

¹⁴⁶ In Portuguese *Fundo Internacional para Desenvolvimento Agricola (FIDA)*.

¹⁴⁷ *Fundo Internacional para Desenvolvimento Agricola (2009) Avaliacao do Projeto Dom Helder Camara. Primeira Fase. Novembro.*

In fact the consideration of gender was a demand made by IFAD, as described by Graciete, from Casa da Mulher do Nordeste who also became a partner of the PDHC.

One other issue, in fact a demand made by IFAD, was a gender policy, gender as a transversal element. (...) Another issue in the negotiation of this project was that they (IFAD) were going to be the financial sponsors, but were not going to execute the project. They had a vision of recognizing the work of organized civil society, NGOs and associations had accumulated knowledge and it was going to be from those partnerships that the actions would be conceived (Graciete, CMN, 2008).

In order to guarantee gender as a transversal component, the Project Dom Helder Camara (PDHC) designated a number of feminist NGOs as “gender referential organizations,” an idea from Cristina Buarque,¹⁴⁸ who was selected to coordinate the actions of Dom Helder Camara, and who was also a feminist.

The Dom Helder (PDHC) got this issue of gender. Then Cristina starts and we participate since the beginning in the construction of the gender proposal of the Project Dom Helder. How are we going to build this process of transversality? And then it is very interesting because Cristina conceives this idea of ‘gender referential organizations’ following the logic of identifying the organizations in the territory that bring forth this issue. Because there was the question: Who will guarantee? (...) If you don’t make it concrete, don’t put anywhere, then it isn’t anywhere. (...) Since the construction started with the territories, there was a movement towards the partner organizations that were the organizations doing the technical assistance themselves. So the objective was to do work with those organizations in order that they could incorporate gender into their practices and interfere in the actions of the project. And also have an action with the women in a feminist perspective, and this was great boldness, recognizing that the principal subjects were women, strengthening the organization of women, the critical capacity of women, so that they could understand their reality, know, appropriate, intervene. So this was the initial idea (Graciete, CMN, 2008).

Having adopted a territorial approach, the Project Dom Helder Camara selected 60 municipalities in nine different territories of the Northeastern Semi-arid, in the states

¹⁴⁸ Cristina Buarque – feminist and researcher from the Fundacao Joaquim Nabuco in Recife. She had been previously a consultant for the project “Gender and Agrarian Reform”, a partnership between INCRA and FAO.

of Ceara, Paraiba, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe. Coincidentally three of those territories correspond to the areas of Sertao do Pajeu (where Afogados da Ingazeira is); Sertao Central (where Fortaleza and Caninde are); and Apodi (where Mossoro is). Another coincidence is that among the partner organizations, both the technical assistance and the 'gender referential' units, are Esplar (from Fortaleza), Coopervida and CF8 (both from Mossoro), and Diaconia and Casa da Mulher do Nordeste (from Afogados da Ingazeira). As a result, it is possible to ascertain that the PHDC had an affect on the P1MC in terms of strengthening the network of organizations sensitive to gender equality in the territories, and that later this effect translated to the cistern builders. The fact that the organizations under the PDHC had several exchange meetings, helps to support this hypothesis.

So it gained a lot of strength because we had a policy of meetings; we had meetings with gender referential organizations from other states and territories about agro-ecology, about understanding of the rural world, with youth, about permanent education and with women (Graciete, CMN, 2008).

As previously mentioned, one of the actions of the PDHC executed by the gender referential organizations was to train members of the organization responsible for technical assistance. Conceicao from CF8 (Centro Feminista 8 de Marco) describes this process as very rewarding.

We also have a project supported by the MDA that is the Project Dom Helder Camara. In this project we trained organizations that give technical assistance to settlements. We knew that this issue of women could not be forced into the institution, neither was it a problem just for training. It is a problem of political definition. You might know the structure of gender inequality, how it is perpetuated, how to change gender inequalities, but if you are not convinced politically....? Then we did like this: first we educated and sensitized the women from the institution, and we did all the courses directed to women. In our heads it was like this: we will have allies inside that institution. And it worked! So today we have the women

from that institution as allies. We don't need to go there. They are working on the assumption that this is important. Not everything is wonderful; there are several macho men and several women who don't value the approach. But all the institutions that work with us have this gender perspective. And those girls became militants of the March; they are more than technicians, they are militants (activists); they go to the demonstrations (*passatas*), they helped in the construction of the event of March 8. (...) We mix things. We think that just a project will not change the lives of women; there is a horizon to be conquered. And to conquer this horizon it has to be mixed. So they are at the same time technicians and militants of the March. This is one of the results from this work that I find very cool (Conceicao CF8, 2008).

It seems that the fact that members of the technical assistant organizations became feminists had a very concrete effect for the cistern builders. Thanks to the enthusiasm of one of those allies who widely distributed information (a release) about the *Cisterneiras*, the Globo TV, as mentioned earlier, became interested in doing a small documentary about them in their TV Program *Globo Rural*, which was very important for the *cisterneiras*.

The gender referential organizations also developed initiatives towards groups of women in settlements and communities. As described by Adriana, from Esplar:

(...) In Esplar I am inserted in the Project Dom Helder Camara. We work with agricultural women in a perspective of feminist empowerment. (...) There are some places with women's groups already, and in others (...) we are working on an organizational approach.

(...) We did a gender diagnostic, with women from the territory. 340 questionnaires were distributed in five municipalities. (...) The survey was conducted by the women who do agricultural work themselves, who were trained to do so by us. They were paid for that. (...) this diagnosis was wonderful, because it gave us a new view. There is the Marco Zero¹⁴⁹ available as a book, and we have the Marco One that was finished last August.

(...) And then you can do a comparison. (...) And one thing that we identified well is that women are already in the political spaces, they are

¹⁴⁹ The first diagnosis.

going out more, they are participating in meetings... (Adriana, Esplar, 2008)

It is important to remember that Casa da Mulher do Nordeste in the Sertao of Pajeu, as well as Centro Feminista 8 de Marco in the Apodi region, and Esplar in the Sertao Centrak region (around Fortaleza), all produced both the Marco Zero diagnosis, as well as the Marco One for their territories (CF8, 2003) (CMN,2003) (Esplar, 2004). And it is reasonable to assume that knowledge developed through one project (PDHC) had synergies with the other one (P1MC).

However, the PDHC was not the only other network to participate in and exchange with the feminist NGOs studied here. Each of them, as described in the previous chapter, participated in a number of other networks and partnerships themselves. Moreover, the three NGOs participated in several common networks; among them were the *Rede Economia e Feminismo*¹⁵⁰ (Network of Economy and Feminism), the *Marcha Mundial das Mulheres* (Women's World March), the *Marcha das Margaridas* and the Gender Working Group of ASA. Participation of various organizations in the gender movement is shown below.

Do you know that we are part of the Rede Feminismo e Economia. It is at the national level and they had been giving us subsidies on this issue of feminism and economy, about this thing of the gender division of labor (Conceicao, CF8, Mossoro, 2008).

Another good thing is that on the 8th and 9th will be formed the Sertao Central committee of the *Marcha Mundial das Mulheres* in Quixada. Some women from the region already identified as militant of the *Marcha*. Because when we do the workshops, the training, the facilitation of the meetings... everything we do there are flying the flags of the *Marcha*. (...) Women are a bit unmotivated by the issue of leadership in the Unions. It is too stuffy. It is creating another type of politics, not the politics of

¹⁵⁰ For More Information about the *Rede Economia e Feminismo*, please see http://www.sof.org.br/rede_econ_femin.htm

coping¹⁵¹. (...) So the women felt the necessity to form an autonomous movement (...). The day of the March is already on the calendar of the women in the Sertao central. On the 17th of October, they go to the streets because it is the day to combat poverty and sexist violence. (Adriana, Esplar, Fortaleza, 2008)

We participate in the *Marcha das Margaridas*¹⁵² due to this relation with women agricultural workers and their movement in the Northeast. In the *Marcha Mundial* we participate indirectly, because in terms of our action in the state we are more active at the Forum of Women of Pernambuco.¹⁵³ The participation in the *Marcha* in the forum is still incipient. And the Forum connects with the AMB¹⁵⁴ – the Articulation of Brazilian Women. (...) There is a relation to the history of the *Marcha Mundial* because we participate in REF – Network of Economy and Feminism– that it is a space of knowledge production, reflection and strengthening of this perspective of the economy in a feminist perspective (Graciete, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Recife, 2008).

Those network of networks seems to be of vital importance for feminist organizations and movements in order to provide not only support, shared knowledge and exchanges at the local, regional and national level, but also at the international level. All of those networks have several international links as well. So when agricultural women participate in one organization, connected to one network, they are potentially connected to a much broader network.

Of vital importance also was the women's network inside ASA that primarily operated through the Gender Working Groups of the P1MC, functioning at the micro-regional, state and national level. Some examples of its achievements and challenges were described by the participating women.

There is the gender working group of ASA which aims at including women in this debate and in the materialization of alternatives for the

¹⁵¹ In Portuguese *enfrentamento*.

¹⁵² As mentioned in the previous chapter, *Marcha das Margaridas* is a national movement organized by the Rural Agricultural Workers Unions every three years. For more please see http://www.contag.org.br/imagens/f43Pauta_reivindicacoes.doc

¹⁵³ In Portuguese: *Forum de Mulheres de Pernambuco*.

¹⁵⁴ In Portuguese *Articulacao de Mulheres Brasileira* – for more information see <http://www.articulacaodemulheres.org.br/amb/>

Semi-Arid, such as the cisterns; (...) and we had a proposal where women were looked for, and hired by a larger number of organizations. (...) Because there is still a lot of incomprehension of the processes, of the inequalities, of the difficulties that women face, sometimes organizations can wait three weeks for men to finish a cistern, but they cannot wait three weeks for a woman to resolve her problems and be able to go (Claudia, CF8, Mossoro, 2008).

The gender working groups also aimed at including women in leadership positions, as speakers and at the same time as subjects of discussion in the ASA meetings.

In the meetings of the working groups there was more to discuss than this thing. We were at the ASA State Meeting with several organizations. There were three men conducting it and they made a proposal. And it was polemic because we wanted that each table had a person talking about a theme related to women. This was approved in the plenary; and at each table there was a woman talking about the theme, and how the theme impacts the lives of women, and that was really cool. We did a Seminar on Gender in the Semi-Arid, and now we had the Meeting of Women from ASA in the Rio Grande do Norte state that was very cool (Conceicao, CF8, Mossoro, 2008).

In Afogados da Ingazeira, the Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, which enabled the emergence of the first female cistern builders, also participated in the working group on gender as mentioned by Joao Amorim from the ASA administration when it was still a commission.

I think the participation of women has been growing. ASA embraced it and created a commission for the discussion of gender. It still has to take this discussion into the programs. But first it created the commission, organized the first Seminar... (...) It is a discussion that tends to strengthen in the ASA and inside the programs. (...) Marli (from Casa da Mulher do Nordeste) is always present in the meetings of the gender commission of ASA (Joao Amorim, ASA, Recife, 2008).

One challenge faced by the gender working groups or commissions of ASA during 2008 was the lapse in the program that demobilized the emerging groups. On the other hand support came from Oxfam that funded one of their meetings. However, they

realized the need to guarantee regular funds to support other meetings in the future and invest more in growing the Gender Working Group at ASA.

There was a pause in the program and the gender commission ended up not meeting. And now there was a return, and there were three meetings. (...) And yesterday there was the first meeting of women from ASA in *Sobral*, and it was a revolution inside ASA. (...) it was a meeting where we discussed some directions, presented the history of this commission, and also tried to raise the issues for women in the Semi-Arid, the challenges and problems to overcome at ASA. In another moment the Programs P1MC and P1+2 were presented and we discussed how we were going to put the gender perspective into those programs.

(...) What I found very interesting was the 'amplified gender working group'. And who was participating? The public, the women who benefited either from the P1MC or the P1+2 plus one woman from each commission. Therefore there were two women from each micro-region, understand? (...) We provided the transportation and lodging for women thanks to some funds from OXFAM.

(...) It was also discussed that it is common to have this type of break in the connection of the working groups, and mostly in the gender working group. Why? Because there are no resources in ASA for those women to be participating and connecting with other women. So this was a difficulty discussed there.

(...) There are some issues that the funding agency does not support, and this ends up being a barrier for activities and connections of women. (...) So we are writing other projects to other funding agencies that know that the issue of gender is primordial (Adriana, Esplar, Fortaleza, 2008).

These smaller networks with feminist agendas encourage and amplify the extent of participation of rural women in policies, movements and programs, not only locally, but nationally and even internationally since several local networks are linked to global networks as well. This helps to understand how Chaguinha was able to participate in the *Marcha Mundial* in Brasilia and Sao Paulo, as well as to speak at the ASA meeting in Recife. Women who are socially excluded would not have access to those opportunities without organized networks that encourage and support their participation and inclusion.

(...) I have been to Recife. In Recife I went with another *cisterneira* from *Recreio*, Edinalva. We went there to speak about the cistern. (...) It was the National Meeting of ASA.

(...) They liked it! There was an old man, and when I spoke there, the old man started to cry. (...) It was good that meeting (Chaguinha, Mossoro, 2008).

However, in order for rural women to be included, the opportunities need to exist.

And where do they come from? The case of Linda is an example. She became a cistern builder and overcame prejudices, learned the art of networking and even began a university education. Her case highlights the importance of several continuing opportunities for women's growth in rural areas and the role played by synergies not only at the local and regional levels but also at the national and international levels.

7.6. Synergies of Actions: government and NGOs

As we have seen in the case of the PDHC and the P1MC, there were synergies between the projects and also with other projects and movements that helped rural women out of poverty and gave them access at least some goods and services. Even when the rural emphasis was understated or hidden, those projects and movements changed and improved the lives of rural women in the Brazilian Semi-Arid. This was not an easy task as this dissertation's chapter 4 about the Northeast region emphasized, since for a long time rural poor women were consistently excluded from policies, programs and opportunities.

However, synergies exist at the national, regional, and even international level in terms of policies, programs and projects. Such a broad outreach eventually encompasses even the rural women into the Semi-Arid. This is extremely important as the network structure creates opportunities for rural women to participate in development action.

The life story of Linda illustrates the importance of the synergies of those programs, since only one of them would have not have had the same effect in her life. As mentioned before, Linda's social life started with her participation in a theater group, whose educator was funded by World Vision Canada using the methodology of PDA, Plan for the Development of the Area¹⁵⁵.

It is like this, I do theater in a close by community, community of *Barreira*, since I was 12 years old. (...) The educator she is from the PDA *Jucuri*, the Plan for Development of the Area, which is supported by the World Vision. We have a sponsor in Canada. They send funds and the opportunities are developed here in the areas (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

In turn, it was through the theater group that Linda entered into contact with the Feminist Movement and the Feminist Centre (CF8).

It was through the educator [that she got involved with the feminist movement and CF8]. because my first contact was doing presentations. We used to come, do the presentations [on feminist events] and come back.

(...) This was when I met the girls. They said there was going to be a training to build cisterns (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

And from her involvement with the Feminist Movement and CF8, Linda became a *cisterneira*, learning not only to build cisterns but also to instruct other men and women how to build them. Also from her involvement with the Feminist Movement Linda had access to the University Course on the Pedagogy of Earth and became a student.

I take the course of Pedagogy of the Earth from the UERN, the University of the State of Rio Grande do Norte. But our course is directed towards rural areas. Our course happened in the Farm Sao Joao – not at the university itself (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

155 The Plan for Area Development is the main tool used by World Vision in Brazil, as in the other 100 countries where they work toward a Transformative Sustainable Development, through actions on community mobilization and rights, agro-ecology, social justice, and etc. See more at <http://www.visaomundial.org.br/ProgramaseProjetos/ComoaVis%C3%A3oMundialtrabalha/tabid/84/language/pt-BR/Default.aspx>

Furthermore, during the interview in 2008, Linda also was a candidate for the Tutelary Council in her community.

I am also participating in the Tutelary Council that works directly with children and adolescent rights. (...) I am a candidate (...).

(...) It was through this course [cistern builders] that several doors opened to us. It was because of the course that I came to take the Pedagogy course, which was my first gain. Now this election appeared. And like this, each day, each year, I see that I am growing every time more (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

And she continues to grow setting both personal and professional goals. At the time of the interview, Linda's dream was to become an engineer.

(...) when we participated only in the theater group, I was thinking of becoming an actress. But from the moment I started to perceive the needs of the settlement itself, it is not that I don't want anymore, but I want to continue with this work [with the community] and I intend to do an engineer course (Linda, Mossoro, 2008).

Linda came from a large family of agricultural workers and masons which in Brazil are low-income activities. Through Linda's involvement in the P1MC, their family received a cistern. Linda herself was involved in many programs and policies and had access to social networks, education and other opportunities that opened up a kind of life very different from the ones of her parents. The fact that she had an outgoing personality and the ability to go out (*sair*) was important. It was also essential for Linda to have the support, encouragement, struggle, knowledge and connections gained through her participation in the feminist movement. However, an important boost for Linda's growth came from the synergies of opportunities – positive policies and projects and programs which are both national and international in scope – that she could, despite lots of traditional and ethnic struggles, enjoy.

The argument, then, is that Linda's participation in one of those organizations alone would not have had the same impact on her life. Instead, it is only because there were synergies between several different programs and policies that Linda could grow out of poverty and develop awareness and pride of herself as a rural woman. Is this not empowerment?

While her case is a special one, it is by no means unique. Another example is from *Afogados da Ingazeira*, the women's group *Xique-Xique*¹⁵⁶ composed of seven women that used to work in the emergency front works program during severe droughts.¹⁵⁷ With the help and support of the *Casa Da Mulher do Nordeste* and its partnership with several different international agencies and government programs, the group was doing very well. They produce jam and other products from local fruits, have their own site for production, with not only a cistern but also an asphalt cistern providing water for their production, a round bathroom,¹⁵⁸ solar energy – all new and sustainable technologies in the region. Some of the women there were trained as cistern builders but got involved in their own production. They were also part of a strong network of women producers, the *Rede de Mulheres Produtoras do Pajeu* (Network of Women Producers of Pajeu), who recently received a prize from the Brazilian Bank as an example of Social Technology Managed by Women¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵⁶ They can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUUe6ZiXbMQ&feature=related>

¹⁵⁷ *Frentes de Trabalho* were emergency programs during the most severe droughts in the region. They were discussed in the chapter about the Brazilian Northeast.

¹⁵⁸ A new technological innovation developed by Diaconia. See more at http://www.diaconia.org.br/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=616&Itemid=37

¹⁵⁹ About their prize see more at <http://www.cese.org.br/index.php?menu=projeto&prefixo=det&id=32>

Again, their experience is not unique. In Mossoro there was another group of rural women producers called (also) *Xique Xique*¹⁶⁰ Network for Solidary Commercialization¹⁶¹. They alone have the support of 36 other organizations including unions, feminist organizations, government and national and international NGOs. Again, the synergies of supports only strengthen their struggle.

In fact, since the start of the democratization process in the late 1990's and especially in the course of the two Lula presidencies (2003 to 2010) Brazil developed a number of social policies aimed at reducing extreme poverty and hunger in the country. This has been called by some "the new generation of social programs in Brazil" (Pero & Szerman, 2005). Accordingly, some programs and policies have finally reached poor rural workers in Semi-Arid. The most well-known policy is the Zero Hunger Strategy¹⁶². It brings together a number of different programs and actions: including the ones related to (i) food access, and among them the *bolsa familia* /conditional cash transfer and also the support for the P1MC; (ii) strengthening family agriculture and among them the National Program for Family Agriculture (PRONAF), Food Procurement Program (PAA) (iii) income generation; and (iv) partnership promotion and social mobilization¹⁶³.

The majority of these programs are linked to the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (MDS)¹⁶⁴, and/or the Ministry of Agrarian Development

¹⁶⁰ There was a very popular forro music in the 1980s by Genival Lacerda called Severina Xique Xique. It is the story of a woman in the Northeast who became wealthy thanks to her own clothes store, and how a man, Pedro, was after her and/or her store. Lyrics are available at <http://letras.terra.com.br/genival-lacerda/173135/>. My suspicion is that the music inspired the names of both the group (in Afogados da Ingazeira) and the network (in Mossoro).

¹⁶¹ For more on the Xique Xique Network see <http://redexiquexique.blogspot.com/2010/10/reuniao-do-nucleo-da-rede-xiquexique.html>

¹⁶² In Portuguese see the website of the Fome Zero Strategy. <http://www.fomezero.gov.br/programas-e-acoas>.

¹⁶³ For a description and discussion of the Zero Hunger in English, see Rocha, 2009.

¹⁶⁴ See <http://www.mds.gov.br/>

(MDA) that also executes the National Program for Family Agriculture (PRONAF) and the Food Procurement Program (PAA) through its Secretary for Family Agriculture (SAF). The MDA also administrated the Project Dom Helder Camara (PDHC) through its Secretary of Territorial Development.

It is not only agricultural and social policies that are reaching rural workers from the Brazilian Semi-Arid. As mentioned before, the Program *Luz Para Todos*¹⁶⁵ (Light for All) sponsored by the Ministry of Mining and Energy (MME) is finally bringing light to settlements and some communities in the Semi-Arid. In addition, as previously mentioned, Brazil has a decentralized and participatory water governance, where water is recognized as a public good, and local watershed committees are formed to manage water resources. ASA members participate in a number of those committees.

It is not just in the realm of policies that interconnections and synergies work. As we have seen a number of international organizations have been supporting feminist organizations in their projects with rural women, and the learning from one project, program or policy often helps the others. Some of the supporting international organizations mentioned by the women interviewed, are the Suisse Terra des Hommes, CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency); IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development); Intercom Oxfam; and Action Aid; just to name a few. The most successful experiences seem to be the ones in which the international organizations leave it to the local organization to define its own strategies and people. But despite a number of successes, the inclusion of gender into policies in the Semi-Arid still seems to be a major challenge, a challenge taken on by feminists in Brazil.

¹⁶⁵ <http://luzparatodos.mme.gov.br/luzparatodos/asp/>

7.7. Gender challenges

Over the last 10 years Brazil has seen significant growth in policies and programs committed to eradicating extreme poverty; a number of them are benefiting and prioritizing the rural poor, in particular small family farms.¹⁶⁶ However, when the target of those policies is families, the main beneficiaries are frequently men, since policies habitually assume a harmonic concept of family. As Graciete mentioned:

It is a conception of family where there are no conflicts. (...) that consider relations as if they were homogeneous. It does not consider differences and inequalities. Because differences it is cool to have them, but inequalities, not only of gender but also generational, are a very serious problem (Graciete, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Recife, 2008).

Graciete and Marli used the case of PRONAF to illustrate the point that “under the *familistic* approach women do not grow.” PRONAF, the National Program for Family Agriculture provides credit to family agriculture (small family farms). However, women had difficulties accessing it, because their own projects had to complement their partner’s project. According to Marli:

The women’s project was conditioned by the interest of the profession of the man and not of the woman. Like this, if the man planted manioc, the women could only access credit if she was doing *tapioca*.¹⁶⁷ If he was raising cattle, she could only access it if she was producing cheese. (...) And it was two years of this fight, going back and forth in the National Congress. (...) ‘Well you like to raise cattle? I don’t. I like to embroider, and I can access my credit to raise my production’. (...) So it is a bit of this reading that touched the official concepts of this nucleus family, perfect, harmonic, in which there are no power disputes, the women, the children, the youth are highly valued (...) and in the *Sertao* of the Semi-Arid, the saying still prevails that ‘in a fight between husband and wife nobody should interfere.’¹⁶⁸ (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Afogados da Ingazeira, 2008).

¹⁶⁶ In Portuguese *Agrigultores Familiares*. I used the translation small family farm, because the noun ‘farmer’ normally translates in Portuguese to ‘fazendeiro’, which is a farm owner, and refers to the image of a large rural property owner.

¹⁶⁷ Tapioca in Brazilian culture is like a pancake made with manioc flour, specifically tapioca flour.

¹⁶⁸ In Portuguese “Em briga de marido e mulher, ninguem bota a colher”.

Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, as well as other organizations such as PDHC and PEPIGRE (the Program for Equality of Gender and Race of the MDA), participated in a working group of Gender and Credit which eventually led to the creation of the current PRONAF Women¹⁶⁹.

The proposal raised was of the PRONAF women, a credit that women could access. Our issue was that women had the right to have an economic project that they wanted to decide not attached to her partner because it influences a lot. So this is a project that is not for the “family;” otherwise he stays with the money, and she does not manage, she only works a lot. So this was our fight.

(...) However, women have a very small percentage and the Indians as well (Graciete, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Recife, 2008).

Similar difficulties emerged in relation to technical assistance.

Another thing we saw in this production chain besides access to credit was the issue of technical assistance. It was necessary to change the conception of technical assistance, the macho, patriarchal technical assistance where women are not recognized. The knowledge built by women for instance in craftwork, in gardens... is a small thing that does not give any result in their view. So I think that in relation to technical assistance policy this has advanced a bit, a discussion was opened (...) Emma Silipandri participated in this group, as well as Andrea Butto from PEPIGRE (Graciete, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Recife, 2008).

This is also true for the water management committees where women are still underrepresented.

These councils and committees, they reproduce the structures of the base organizations. When a representation position is open it goes to a man. Why? In these structures, in the social institutions themselves, men have more power. So every time there is a representation, it is masculine. And I am talking about power in the sense of the knowledge, the construction of knowledge in those institutions. All those committees, those forums, there are only men speaking. How many men, how many men! (...)

¹⁶⁹ PRONAF Mulher. For more see <http://portal.mda.gov.br/portal/saf/programas/pronaf/2258856> and http://www.bndes.gov.br/SiteBNDES/bndes/bndes_pt/Institucional/Apoio_Financeiro/Programas_e_Fundoss/pronaf_mulher.html

Because if you talk about emancipation people say “Ah, women are already emancipated! Women are occupying professions, positions in the big cities, being paid sometimes more than men, assuming positions of company directors and everything.” But those are still examples. In general, this does not happen. Civil society organizations have the best access to a qualified debate about this but they are themselves mostly masculine in their structures, in their power and decision-making bodies, and in program management. And this is going to be reproduced in those committees because they themselves do not have the concern of parity. Because the focus is not gender, the focus is on the transposition of the Sao Francisco river. As if the issue of water affected men and women equally. And we know it does not. The meaning and the impact of access to or exclusion of water is different in the lives of men and in the lives on women, it is very different. And who lives in the Semi-arid knows that, because it is in the daily lives of people (...) Migrations, exodus, this always impacted the lives of men and women differently.(...) The men during droughts, they go to the south, to the southeast, to Sao Paulo. The people living without water, without food, with children, with the elderly, with the sick are women.

So every time there was a drought in the Northeast, the women speak about the drought in different ways than the men. The men will speak about their trip to Sao Paulo. The women will speak about a scourge in their lives and their children, because they stay here drinking mud, walking kilometers for a can of water. The impacts are different, and for some people the droughts are even lucrative.(...) So today this logic is not the same, a lot of changes happened, there is a change in paradigm and over the last 15 years there is a new conversation about the semi-arid and public policies are absorbing it. However, water continues to impact on, and create different stories for, men and women (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Afogados da Ingazeira, 2008).

Those challenges are also faced by ASA, an umbrella body composed of a number of diverse organizations, some feminist, while others are not sensitive to gender at all. Still, argued Marli, “there are efforts to finally build a gender policy in ASA because there isn’t one.” As we were speaking, Marli received the news that *Casa da Mulher do Nordeste* had been selected to become the next UGM (micro-regional management unit) for the P1MC in their micro region starting mid 2008. With the increasing involvement of the national government supporting the P1MC, there were going to be new challenges, new bureaucracies and new rules to be followed; however,

this was another victory for the Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, the feminist movement, ASA and the Brazilian Semi-Arid.

The first feminist organization in the Semi-Arid that will manage the P1MC, the only women's organization. It is starting a new history, a new mark for P1MC (Marli, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste, Afogados da Ingazeira, 2008).

7.8. A Comparison between the cases

In order to do a further comparison between the cases, the research questions from this study will be revisited.

1. What was the context of emergence of the P1MC? How it is organized? What are the possible avenues for public participation for men and women? How did women enter onto the program's agenda?

As discussed in chapter 4, the P1MC was born in a context where civil society demanded changes to the paradigm of development for the Northeast: Instead of the traditional fight against droughts through emergency policies, the members of ASA (Articulation of the Semi-Arid) proposed the coexistence with the Semi-Arid and its resources, investment in sustainable policies and social mobilization.

The construction of cisterns was the first big ASA program, and it was funded by different national and international organizations. But the national government was also a major source of funds. In parallel to other participatory designs that emerged in the country after the democratization process (such as the Participatory Budget, National Commissions, etc) the P1MC also created new spaces for public participation, such as local and municipal commissions, micro-regional and state forums as well as the *Econasa* (biannual ASA national meetings).

In addition, ASA members are invited to participate in other local and national spaces for civil society participation such as the National Council for Solidaristic Economy (*Conselho Nacional de Economia Solidária*), the National Council for Food Security (*Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar - CONSEA*), the National Council for Sustainable Rural Development (*Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Rural Sustentável - CONDRAF*) among others (Assis, 2009:105).

But how could women occupy those spaces? Interested in this process, the current research looked at the following cases and results.

Table 7.1. Organizations and Places

Organizations and Places	AFOGADOS DA INGAZEIRA	MOSSORO	FORTALEZA
Region	Sertao do Pajeu	Serra do Apodi/ Assu/Mossoro	Sertao Central
UGM – Micro-regional Managing Unit	Diaconia	Coopervida	Esplar
Feminist Organization	Casa da Mulher do Nordeste –	Centro Feminista 8 de Marco	Casa Lilas
Result	1st group of women cistern builders – Lourdes was trained.	2 nd group of women cistern builders – trained by Lourdes	Later group of women cistern builders – trained by Lourdes Women in the municipal commissions

2. How did the first cisterneiras (women cistern builders) appear in the program?

Afogados da Ingazeira was the place where the first group of women cistern builders appeared in the program. A major force for their appearance was the feminist presence at ASA Pernambuco meetings where members of Casa da Mulher do Nordeste (with support of other feminists) raised the question of political and economic under-

participation of women in the program (and the ideas of sexual division of labor and underrepresentation in decision making). At the same time, Casa mobilized the state ASA members (demanding training for women to build cisterns), and the poor rural women (asking if they had interest). In parallel, Casa concluded a partnership with the Micro-regional Managing Unit, Diaconia in order to implement the training. The result was a list of interested women that later became the first class of women cistern builders. From a class of six only three became real cistern builders. Out of these three, one, Ms. Lourdes, moved on to become an instructor, which later became very important to the program.

Mossoro, was the second place where women cistern builders were trained. Here the process started outside of the framework of the P1MC when Centro Feminist 8 de Marco (CF8) was working on the organization of poor rural women in the region of Apodi (around Mossoro). Through these organizing meetings ‘animated’ by CF8, the urgency of obtaining clean drinking water emerged, and rural women started a process of demanding cisterns that led them to INCRA and to a partnership with a technical NGO responsible for the implementation called Coopervida. Because these first cisterns were “conquered” at INCRA as a cistern initiative for the women’s group, they could claim ownership for the entire process and demand that women be trained to construct those cisterns. However, the simple idea and knowledge that this would be possible (and that Lourdes existed and could be invited to train them) was shared by the CF8. In Mossoro, the major force for the training of women cistern builders was the rural women themselves. Yet, they received support and encouragement from the feminist NGO. Their ideas about women as agents of their own development and the knowledge derived from

their feminist networks (and the knowledge that Lourdes was available to train them) were instrumental in propelling the initiative of rural women forward.

In addition, because of the connection of CF8 with INCRA, women cistern builders in the region around Mossoro gained recognition and visibility through their appearance in the Globo TV Network documentary at the program Globo Rural.

Another effect of Mossoro was to give Lourdes the opportunity to teach other women, and to continue working and travelling.

Fortaleza. The conditions for cistern builders in the region around Fortaleza, Sertao Central were similar to the ones in Mossoro. The idea was brought up by a feminist NGO called Casa Lilas that was working with the organization of agricultural women. Through the feminist network they heard about the experiences of Afogados da Ingazeira and Mossoro and formed the first training for women in the region.

Comparing the three cases, it is possible to highlight the following conditions for the appearance of cisterneiras in the program:

1. The existence of feminist leadership among the NGOs participating through ASA, such as Casa da Mulher do Nordeste bringing gender to the attention of the program.

2. The partnership between feminist NGOs and the technical or management unit of the micro-region in implementing the training as seen in the case of CMN and Diaconia, CF8 and Coopervida.

3. The feminist network, involving exchange of information among feminist organizations.

4. The organization of rural women who were often mobilized and supported by feminists' organizations, for instance by providing knowledge about programs and governments services and institutions, or about rural women in other places.

2.1. What changed in their lives? What helped them? What barriers and challenges did they face?

From *Afogados da Ingazeira*, Lourdes was the first women cistern builder and the instructor of many other women in the Brazilian Northeast, a position that cannot be taken away from her. Before becoming a cistern builder, she had no defined profession and survived doing small jobs in the region. Lourdes was a single mom and therefore the head of her household. She had no family strings, and had freedom of mobility since her younger kids helped her care for the smaller ones. She was able to travel far from home to build cisterns and instruct other men and women.

The feminist network helped her find work in other regions. The selection of cistern builders is done by the Micro-regional Management Unit, and most organizations “naturally” would choose a man. Like all other cistern builders, she therefore faced distrust by community members since cistern building was considered not a job for women. Yet, she loved what she did.

Cidinha was another cistern builder from the same group who despite loving it as well, did not have family approval to travel. Without mobility and family support, she had to stop building cisterns.

The second training for women cistern builders happened in *Mossoro*, at the settlement ‘Independencia’, where the first cisterns were built in the region. Chaguinha, Linda and the group from Independencia were among them. Linda was the one whose life

changed most radically. After she became a cistern builder she started participating in the rural workers movement and this association had enabled her to access many other opportunities related to work, education, knowledge, information and personal growth. She was single and mobile. As for Chaguinha and the others, they confronted community distrust and biases. Chaguinha however, after building a number of cisterns and traveling to build in other communities, had to take care of her infant granddaughter and therefore had her mobility temporarily constrained. This also seems to have affected her ability to participate in the rural workers organization where she had to suspend her activities. In spite of the pride derived from being able to build cisterns in their communities, the women from the group of Independencia, mostly due to family ties, seemed to have low mobility. This decreased the number of projected cisterns and reduced the size of the plaques that according to them, had been altered, making them more difficult to carry.

Women from the micro-region of Sertao Central around Fortaleza were not interviewed about their role as cistern builders. However, reports from the NGO Casa Lilas highlight the financial gains due to changes in economic activities: Women made ten times more money building cisterns than peeling manioc (Januario, 2010; Fome Zero, 2006), one of their previous activities in the region. Similar gains were reported by cistern builders from other regions – despite the seasonal nature of cistern construction.

In sum, the life changes described by women cistern builders range from access to work and feminist associations all the way to travelling and being aware of a range of rights and opportunities. In addition, self and community recognition were also mentioned. Those life changes seem to depend on the level of mobility (*sair*) of the women, as well as on her level of association with other groups and NGOs. The more

they were integrated with the women's organization (and the more they were organized) the greater was their awareness of their rights and achievements which were not confined to water interests.

In all cases, NGO and community groups' families seemed to have great effect on women's achievements both as potential barriers as well as potential support. As mentioned before, in all cases women reported resistances and lack of trust by community members. Both men and several women associated building with masculine work which was a bias they had to face and deconstruct. Another observation that holds true across all cases is that cistern building brought important financial gains even if work was not permanent but contingent on the phasing of the program.

2.2. Which role did feminist NGO's and the feminist movement play?

In all cases, feminist NGOs had an essential role as "change agents" (Goulet,1995:321).

In *Afogados da Ingazeira*, the role of the NGO Casa da Mulher do Nordeste in advocating for women in the ASA state meetings was very prominent. This resulted in the creation of the first training for women. It was also important that they were connected to a feminist network and able to disseminate information and share opportunities with the cisterneira.

In *Mossoro*, the feminist NGO Centro Feminista 8 de Marco was clearly instrumental in fomenting the organization of women rural workers by helping them to formulate their needs and to learn how to and where to make corresponding demands. One key aspect of this organization is that they offered participation in meetings where women learned to discuss their needs and ideas. The occupation of spaces for

participation in government/ civil society forums - even if in theory they are open to women of all social classes - is particularly difficult for low-income women who are not used to participating or debating in public. Therefore, as mentioned by Linda during her interview, the learning acquired through the participation in the women's movement (animated by the feminist NGOs) is greater than what can be learned in formal education.

Another visible role of feminist NGOs was sharing information and knowledge and connecting participating women to their network of ideas, opportunities, and events. In this important sense, feminist NGOs were catalysts of change.

Overall, it is possible to affirm that feminist NGOs have accomplished more than creating new spaces of economic and political participation. They also supported rural poor women in their process of self-organization and awareness of their rights, and they connected them to other supporting networks. Their work is a driving force for the inclusion of women as active participants, not only in the water program, but in society at large.

3. Which other forms of deeper participation of women occurred in the program?

Comparing the three localities of this study (the micro-regions of Afogados da Ingazeira, Mossoro and Fortaleza), the other most visible form of deeper participation of women was when women were included in local or municipal program committees.. This type of political participation was only observed, at that time, in the micro-region of Fortaleza, which will be discussed later in this section.

However, outside of the direct realm of the program, but still in close connection to the feminist organizations such as Casa da Mulher do Nordeste and Centro Feminista 8

de Marco, women participated in several “production” networks, that also produced holistic changes in their lives. In parallel, rural women participation in unions and mass social movements such as marches connected them to other local, national and even international organizations concerned with social justice and human rights. These connections are important to contextualize the “fight for water” and to view that fight not only as the right to a particular service but rather the rights to a much broader spectrum of human rights. Unfortunately, there is no room in this dissertation to explore all of these initiatives.

3.1. How did the women commission members appear in the program? What changed in their lives?

Up to July 2008, we have no knowledge of the presence of women in the micro-regional commissions of Afogados da Ingazeira and Mossoro. However, it is expected that by now they exist in Afogados da Ingazeira, since Casa das Mulheres do Nordeste assumed the coordination of P1MC becoming the micro-regional management unit later in 2008.

The participation of women in municipal commissions existed in the micro-region Sertao Central, around the city of Fortaleza, Ceara state. Women were participating in those commissions, thanks to their prior participation in other voluntary community organizations such as the local commission of the P1MC, and the Church Organizations (Pastorais) as well as professional organizations (health agents). Despite the fact that women are often involved in voluntary community work everywhere, it is possible to suggest that those women were selected to participate in this commission because of the existing leadership of the program that was concerned with gender equality and embraced

the principle of gender parity. If one condition for their participation was a prior involvement in community organizations, the key to their actual participation was the position of the female leadership in the coordination of the P1MC in the region as Esplar was the micro-regional management unit and Elzira, the coordinator.

What changed in their lives? Nilta from Paramoti, for instance already worked in a number of community projects, some of which were even linked to her municipal government. So her participation in the program One Million Cisterns was one more project bringing improvements for her region, in this case, the cisterns. At the time of the interview she was fighting to bring the technology of garden mandalas to her region. She seemed to be concerned with sustainable development, and aware of her own growing political power in her region. Betiana was part of the municipal commission due to her work as pump builder. She was younger and pregnant, but nevertheless aware of the gender issues related to her work (as a pump maker) and mobility (travelling for meetings). For Betiana, the P1MC had a much greater effect as she wanted to continue to grow with the program improving lives. Raimunda from Benir came from an organization already involved in social change, but saw her involvement in the P1MC as an improvement of the conditions to work towards her goals of sustainable development, food security and gender equality. And finally, Fatima Abreu from Carnauba, saw her role as a health agent being strengthened by her participation in the P1MC and reported gains in knowledge about land and agriculture as well as gender and social awareness.

To summarize, changes in women's lives due to their participation in the municipal commission have expanded their range of action, knowledge and networks. All were very aware and proud of their role in assisting and improving their communities,

and they were positive regarding the effects of the program. Some were more pronounced than others about gender concerns depending perhaps on the perspectives of their original organizations. In any case, their presence in the Forum seemed to expand their knowledge, voice and power. However, not all of them appeared to have a feminist perspective.

3.2. What helped them? What barriers and challenges did they face?

Since women are generally active in voluntary community work, and since this is the most basic requirement for their participation in the program's municipal commission one would expect a higher participation rate of women in those commissions at the P1MC level. However, members are selected at the micro-regional management unit. And since the program had no clear policy of gender, the participation of women depended on the discretion of the coordination group who had the power to encourage the participation of women or not - such as in the case of Fortaleza where gender parity was introduced by the coordinator.

As with the women cistern builders, family support was also mentioned as important for their mobility. In addition, all of them reported liking the job and feeling rewarded.

3.3. What role did feminist NGO's and the feminist movement play?

As mentioned before, in the case of municipal commissions in Fortaleza, leadership sensitive to gender was enough to open spaces for women's participation. Also vital was the fact that the NGO coordinating the P1MC in Fortaleza, Esplar, had a strong gender axis. This raises the question of how this axis was built over time and what role the feminist movement had in that organization.

For the current study, it is important to acknowledge that although women from this group did not specifically mention any link to the feminist movement, some of them expressed concerns relating to gender equality and women's rights. In addition, they were participating in this commission precisely because they were already active in their original organization so they had already some type of political participation before. This suggests that participation in the commission strengthened their roles in their communities and organizations by exposing them to new groups, experiences, exchanges and resources.

4.4. In a cross-case analysis, what were the recurrent themes and ideas mentioned by poor women and their supporters that could shed light on the conditions for their own development? Was their participation a successful story of 'deep participation'?

Comparing all cases and types of participation, it is possible to identify a few themes that shed light on conditions for "deep participation."

At the micro level, the ability to leave or *sair* clearly emerges as a key theme. In order to participate in meetings or work, women have to achieve mobility first. In the case of the cistern builders who had to regularly travel to other communities, mobility was a requirement to be able to stay in the program. However, because the participation in the P1MC also involved attending meetings at the state and even national levels, it made sense to assume that all of them had to have some flexibility in terms of mobility. Because of women's traditional roles in reproduction this mobility would be impossible without support from family or friends or from external organizations (providing child care). However, changes in gender roles in the household would only occur when the man started to do reproductive work as well which was only reported in a few cases.

Also very important was the identification of the women with the activity. Therefore, the most successful cistern builders were the ones who loved the job, such as Linda who wants to become an engineer. All the women, including the women in the municipal commissions, reported loving what they did and feeling rewarded. Those activities are not only economic and political opportunities, but also opportunities for growth and satisfaction. Therefore, mobility, support and 'gusto' were relevant conditions.

At the meso level, an important condition of deep participation of women in the program was their connection to social organizations or groups. For the cistern builders, their link was with feminist organizations, and therefore involvement with the feminist movement had been vital for their access to resources, services and opportunities, self-organization, personal and political growth, and finally inclusion in a network of rural women, which meant social inclusion. This connection to feminism as a movement brings a broader perspective to light, which is concerned with social justice. This is bigger than the right to water. This larger perspective guarantees the continuity of the movement which does not stop with one achievement.

Also noted was the important link to organizations involved in health or community development. Especially in relation to women in the municipal commissions, their previous links to organizations active in family agriculture, health, and community development was strengthened as they participated in the municipal commission. As previously discussed, water is power in the Semi-arid and this participation of women in the commissions had the potential to open even more arenas for political participation.

Key here was the occupation of those spaces. And this could only happen because of women's leadership in the program.

Finally, at the macro level, the existence of spaces for public participation seems to be a basic condition for women's inclusion. If in a society people are only able to organize at the local level, their actions are limited to a local context. Fortunately in Brazil, there are now synergies between government programs and projects as well as new opportunities for dialogue between civil society and the state which has created new spaces for public participation at the local, municipal, state and national levels. Nevertheless, women are not "naturally" invited in, and the feminist movement and leadership are key in creating affirmative action policies that enable their participation.

In addition, international organizations and international movements also play a role in supporting the gender agenda by creating opportunities for participation of women.

7.9. Conclusion

Despite the machist/patriarchal cultural traditions that still dominate the Semi-Arid, there is reason to be optimistic about the growing participation of women in water management (and in the society as a whole) in the Semi-Arid.

On a more macro level, the existence of democratic spaces of participation seems to be a necessary condition for the greater inclusion of poor women. And in this broader enabling context the Brazilian Northeast has been able – in spite of significant resistance – to develop social policies that create opportunities for the poor.

However, if participatory spaces or opportunities (such as the work of ASA) are a necessary condition, they are not sufficient. For women to occupy those spaces, their link

to organizations and feminist networks is crucial. Those linkages provide the commitment, intelligence, sisterhood and support for women to change: in terms of culture, education, rights, reflection, self-esteem and socialization. This is not to say that this can happen without resistance, as Parpart (2009) reminds us.

Finally, at the individual level, for women to participate and to *sair* or to be able to leave, traditional spaces seem to be relevant as well. It is possible to affirm that women who had conquered the right to leave “*sair*” were more autonomous and had more chances to enjoy the opportunities created by the policies and opened by feminist leaders. The next chapter will discuss in more details the implications of this analysis for the broader questions raised by this dissertation.

Chapter 8. Conclusion: Gendered Waters and Deep Participation

8.1. Introduction

The main goal of this dissertation was to identify conditions for the deep participation of women in water development in poor, rural regions. ‘Deep participation’ means participation that goes beyond mere consultation and the passive role of being a recipient of policies or programs. Rather, deep participation leads to the empowerment of women, defined as social transformation (Batliwala 1993, 2007), as it requires changes to power structures at the individual, community and macro-political level.

This chapter will discuss the conditions for deep participation identified by this research and reflect upon the context, the limitations and the implications of this research for the gender/ women development dialogue.

8.2. Conditions for participation

Access to water is a privileged focal point where issues of development and gender inequality intersect. While rural women in poor regions of developing or emerging economies are the principal stewards of domestic and productive water acquisition and use, they remain underrepresented and in subordinate positions in decision-making bodies and processes that manage water access and distribution. It is broadly accepted that progress towards alleviating the current water crisis depends on enhancing the participation of key stakeholders in water management. This makes the issue of gender inequality in water and development an urgent one with significant policy implications.

The dissertation took this case of gender inequality in development as its starting point. It adopted a qualitative case-study approach and offered an in-depth study of the Program ‘One Million Cisterns’ (P1MC) in the Semi-Arid, Northeastern region of Brazil, from the perspective of the women involved. The program, initiated by an umbrella civil society organization (ASA) and sponsored by various national and international bodies, aims at improving access to water through the construction of rainwater harvesting tanks (cisterns) at the household level. The participation of women as cistern builders and municipal commission members became important avenues for women. This program was selected as a potential case of “successful” deep participation of women in water. As such, it would be a case that would allow the researcher to identify the conditions necessary for deep participation of women and transformative change. Three localities or micro-regions were selected for empirical investigation: Afogados da Ingazeira in Pernambuco State; Mossoro in Rio Grande do Norte State, and Fortaleza in Ceara State.

The conditions for deep participation identified by this research can be classified in three different dimensions, micro, meso and macro levels of conditions for participation, each one involving a number of diverse elements.

Table 8.1. Levels, Dimensions and Conditions for Participation

Level	Dimension	Conditions
Micro	Individual	Mobility Support Passion
Meso (corresponding to Goulet’s micro level)	Groups and Associations	Organization, creation of identities, collective goals Commitment
Meso and Macro	Networks	Circulation of ideas, information, people. Opportunities for meetings, exchanges, knowledge

		sharing. Commitment/passion
Macro	Government Agencies Larger Networks	Synergies Spaces Opportunities

Firstly, on the micro or individual level, the most basic condition emerging from the interview material is mobility, meaning the individual ability of women to go places or in their own words “sair.” This ability seems to be strongly related to the existence of support by families, friends and communities. Women needed support in order to share household responsibilities with other women or men; and in the latter case, changes in gender roles were involved. Women also needed family support in the sense of the approval of their freedom to go places. Furthermore, women had to feel passionate about the activities that they were getting involved in whether building cisterns or helping communities in order to have the individual drive to act on their ambition. This particular element was highlighted, for example by Adriana from Esplar, who at the time of the interview was returning from a PIMC Gender Working Group.

Secondly, at the meso level, an important condition for the deep participation of women was the organization of women in groups or associations. This was vital in order to elaborate, reflect and act upon common demands. Feminist organizations in particular were central in their role of fomenting this organization by promoting meetings where common aspirations and goals would be raised. At the same time, as women were having the opportunity (a time and a place) to express their ideas, discuss and reflect upon them, they were also becoming aware of their rights and of how legitimate their demands were. For instance, in Mossoro this organization of women in groups helped them to realize that it was fair for the women’s groups to demand cisterns, and that it was fair to demand

that they were to be built by women. Commitment from group members was of course essential.

Thirdly, in between the meso and macro levels, women's deep participation was also significantly facilitated by their engagement in networks. The feminist network was the most prominent one because it connected rural women not only locally, but also globally as feminists, building a new identity. In addition, it was thanks to the connection between feminists in Afogados, Mossoro and Fortaleza that the women cistern builders could multiply. Moreover, feminist ideas such as "sexual division of labour" had been circulating among feminist NGOs for some time before they found a concrete expression in ASA with the women cistern builders, the cisterneiras. Therefore, by way of participating in those networks, rural women also had access to ideas, information, knowledge, opportunities and people that were previously inaccessible to them. The networks were thus critical for inclusion.

A second group of networks identified relate to unions, church organizations or even sustainable agriculture movements, such as the agro-ecology movement that resonated very well with rural, agricultural women (see Siliprandi, 2009). Similar to the feminist networks, the engagement of rural women with these networks gave them access to a movement of ideas, experiences, people and possibilities that otherwise would be closed to them. A good example is the connection of Fatima Loira with the Union. As an unemployed single mother she grew into a confident woman who envisioned herself going much further – maybe even into political leadership roles.

A third important network, at the meso/macro intersection which greatly impacted the participation of women was the ASA network itself. The spaces for meetings,

discussions, exchange of information created by ASA - such as the micro-regional forum, the state forums and the Econasa (national) as well as the growing Gender Working Group - became hubs for people and organizations concerned about improving their lives in co-existence with the Semi-Arid. This was especially true for women even though many of the groups were still dominated by men. As mentioned by the municipal commission members, the ASA network strengthened their work and organization creating synergies. Assis (2009) notes that the P1MC enabled even more interaction between civil society organizations in the Semi-Arid.

This type of work in networks not only strengthened the organization members of ASA and P1MC themselves, but also strengthened ASA as a whole. One example is the fact that ASA members were participating in other spaces of participatory democracy (such as the Watershed Committees, Food Security Councils, etc). In addition, the popularity of being associated with the program created opportunities for formal political participation. Members of local organizations responsible for executing the P1MC were elected to positions in municipal government. While Assis (2009: 132) acknowledges that these kind of linkages create the potential for clientelism, this does not seem to have been a problem in the case of P1MC thanks to the high level of control exercised over the program. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that for women, access to larger networks such as ASA could bring political opportunities as well as risks.

Fourthly and finally, at the macro level, the conditions that favored the deep participation of women were related to synergies between different national and international forces. At the same time women were becoming cistern builders, they were also getting involved with the Tutelary Councils, having their houses connected to the

electricity grid, gaining access to rural universities, participating in marches, serving on commissions, etc.. Hence, the participation in the Program was part of a broader transformation of their lives. Different processes of change combined to produce a momentum for a continuing process of change or at least helped create opportunities for change.

8.3. Reflecting on the macro context

But can micro-processes of change effectively translate into macro-changes? Goulet claims that micro participation is relatively easy to achieve and remain authentic (Goulet, 1989:168). The challenge is rather for those local micro instances of participation to grow into a macro-level process. And indeed, the history of authoritarian rule in Latin America readily illustrates how governments can suffocate bottom-up initiatives and claims for participation.

Not surprisingly, the most difficult form of participation to elicit and sustain is also the most indispensable to genuine development. This is the type of participation which starts at the bottom and reaches progressively upward into ever widening arenas of decision making. It is that form of participation which is initiated, or at least ratified, by the interested non-elite populace at an early point in the sequence of decisions. It matures into a social force wielding a critical mass of participating communities now enabled to enter into spheres of decision or action beyond their immediate problem solving (Goulet, 1989:168).

While Goulet's skepticism is well founded, it is important to note that Brazil has recently experienced a deep process of democratization, which has opened new spaces for public participation. New relations between state and civil societies are being forged. Even Goulet recognizes that "Brazil's initiatives supply evidence that participatory decision-making in macro arenas is feasible" (Goulet, 2005:906). However, this

democratic development is not unique to Brazil. It is useful to put democratization in Brazil in the broader context of the debate about different concepts of democracy to better understand how micro or bottom-up participation and democracy relate to each other in the Brazilian case.

Avritzer and Santos (2002) helpfully distinguish between three debates about the concept of democracy. The first one, in the post-war period of the 20th century focused on the principle of representation and had the United States as an example. The second debate discussed the compatibility of capitalism and democracy and pitted the two ideologies against each other. The disagreement was about the question of whether or not democracy's character allowed for redistribution. However, after the 1980s, this second debate subsided and a hegemonic concept of democracy emerged where behind formal representative institutions, political apathy and the reign of technocratic decision-making was in fact central. The idea was that in complex modern societies specialized structures for decision-making would render intense political participation or involvement unnecessary if not dysfunctional. European welfare state societies provided the context for this idea.

However, in countries with high and persistent inequalities like Brazil, this concept of democracy does not resonate with the majority of the population because technocratic, depoliticized decision-making puts severe limits on redistribution. This dissatisfaction with the technocratic paradigm triggered a new debate that revisited the weaknesses of representative democracy.

Santos and Avritzer (2002) show that (...) representative democracy (...) is not able to resolve the problem of diversity of identities. This becomes more complicated in countries where ethnic, regional and class diversity exists. Therefore in countries like Brazil a new propensity emerged to

examine local democracy and the possibility of variation in the interior of national states, promoted by the rediscovery of participatory traditions that were not considered in the process of construction of a homogeneous state with homogeneous national identities (Assis, 2009:118).

As examples of the renewed importance of participation, Avrizter and Santos (2006) cite the World Social Forum and new participatory institutional designs in Brazil such as participatory budgeting, watershed committees, etc.. Assis locates the P1MC program in this context of greater civil society participation – while recognizing that greater participation may also reflect a neo-liberal retreat of the state:

The process of construction and institutionalization of P1MC allows to bring to light that this institutionalization happens in a context in which Brazil was passing through a phase of state reform. Thus, it was interesting for the state to share non-strategic actions with organizations of civil society. Therefore, the P1MC is born in a process of confluence between neoliberal projects of reduction of the state and projects of greater insertion of civil society organizations in public policy Assis (2009:117-8).

In fact, on the one hand, the P1MC is criticized by some for taking on policies that were in fact the responsibility of the state. However, on the other hand

(...) the P1MC represents an alternative movement to this process of classic representation, emerging from a movement where civil society organizations undertook an effort of systematization and dissemination of the issue of coexistence with the Semi-Arid, and whereby civil society contributed toward a different form of development in the Semi-Arid (Assis, 2009:118).

In sum, the P1MC is definitely a bottom-up,¹⁷⁰ civil-society-driven initiative of mobilization and action even though it has attracted more and more support by the government in terms of public policy. However the participation of women in the

¹⁷⁰ Or maybe it should it be called *middle-up* since the program was born at the level of organizations working with rural communities in the Semi-Arid.

program, while alive and growing, remains a challenge. What then were the limitations of this study?

8.4. Reflecting on limitations

As a case-study of only three localities within a larger region of a major emerging economy, this research has obvious limitations in terms of scope and hence, potential for generalization beyond the case studied.

A further limitation of the present case-study research is the fact that it looked at successful experiences on the periphery, as it were, of the program rather than presenting a comprehensive evaluation of the participation of women in the program. “Success,” therefore, may not be the norm.

Yet, as Rao and Kelleher point out, ‘these examples are not the norm’ (2005, 57). Fundamental change remains uneven and largely elusive; successes are few and failures depressingly common (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) 2005 cited by Parpart 2009:6).

While the dissertation’s perspective thus carries the risk of over-stating progress, one could also argue that meaningful social change has to start somewhere. And if the norm consists of failed policies and limited achievements, it is worth looking at successful experiences in search for conditions that enable the emergence of more successful outcomes.

Subsequent studies on the implementation of gender policies from the perspective of the core of the program as well as from innumerable other regions are necessary for a more comprehensive and better understanding of the participation of women in the program. Moreover, studies of the participation of women in the new program ‘One Land

Two Waters' (P1+2)¹⁷¹ are of extreme importance. The cisterns built under P1MC are destined for holding water for domestic use. Thus, to some extent it was considered “natural” that women got involved with its construction. But what about the cisterns built under the P1+2 which are cisterns for production?¹⁷² Will this be a new dichotomy?

Studies on women and work have for some time reported the innumerable barriers faced by women in non-traditional employment, and specifically in construction starting from their entrance into the profession (Fielden et al, 2001; Greed, 2000). Women cistern builders will likely continue to face constant barriers. More studies would need to address coping strategies and to what extent are they helped by their participation in the larger networks of women cistern builders and of feminist-biased organizations. .

In respect to women participation as ASA commission members, the current study just covered one single case. More studies are needed in order to better understand the conditions of entrance for women into municipal commissions, and the impact of their participation on their lives and on their communities especially since participation in new spaces can be “extremely intimidating” for poor women (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007). It would also be interesting to follow their political development and see where the engagement with the Program could lead them. Could they become new political leaders? What new challenges would they face?

Another potential limitation as well as subject to future research is the topic of men and masculinities. Although not the focus of this research, men also had a role in supporting women's ability to go out (sair). Whether as fathers, sons, brothers or

¹⁷¹ In Portuguese: ‘Uma Terra e Duas Aguas’ or P1+2.

¹⁷² During an informal conversation with an INCRA official about cisterns, he told me that the P1MC build the cisterns for women, while the P1+2 build cisterns for men. This explained why women were involved in building ‘their’ cisterns.

husbands sharing domestic work and supporting women in their economic or political endeavors, men's support was very important, and feminist organizations were aware of it. They reported going to communities and talking with the associations before meeting with women's groups. Without their approval or validation, women's capabilities for participation could be even more restricted. Studies about men and masculinities also acknowledge the role of men in supporting women and feminism (Murphy 2004, Esplen & Greig, 2007).

Despite this support, 'sair' is still more often associated with men in the region. Therefore, a closer investigation of gender roles in the Semi-Arid region would benefit from discussions about masculinities (Esplen & Greig, 2007:18). If women are breaking taboos, and their participation in productive and political activities are rising, what is happening to men? Are they engaging in domestic roles? According to Raewyn Connell, broadly "women as a group have increased their presence in the paid work force, but men as a group have not substantially increased their role in housework or infant care (Connell, 2007:x). Changes in the patriarchal and masculinity framework that defines the masculine and feminine and the subordination of the latter are targets of a number of discussions (Esplen & Greig 2007, Parpart & Zalewski 2008, Murphy 2004, Segal, 1990). The inclusion of the discussion about men and masculinities could benefit the understanding of gender roles and women's participation in the Semi-Arid region as well.

Another dimension not sufficiently analyzed in this dissertation was the intersection of race, class, gender, ability, age, ethnicity, sexuality and other forms of oppression. Intersectionality is the recognition that oppression and inequality combine several different types of discrimination, that together can produce something unique and

different than the analysis of one type of oppression. The concept acknowledges that the experience of individuals are based on several grounds, such as race, gender, age, culture, class, disabilities, religion, and nationalities (Collins,2008, Crenshaw 1994).

As mentioned before, due to time constraints the discussion of race for women cistern builders in Quilombo communities was not possible. This might have generated interesting reflections about intersectionality (such as Yuval-Davis et al. 2005; Roschelle et al. 2004; Bond 2004) in relation to the participation of women in the PIMC.

Nevertheless, due to the Brazilian history of slavery and miscegenation, poverty in Brazil has gender and colour, and Afro-Brazilian and Native-Brazilian women are more likely to be poor. This was also the case of rural women from the Brazilian Semi-Arid region. Future studies on water development and the Semi-Arid would be greatly enriched if the intersectionalities of race, class and gender are included.

Additional dimensions also referring to intersectionality are age, ethnicity and ability. Although the women cistern builders interviewed were different ages, and the younger ones in principle appear to have more success, this was not consistently investigated in this dissertation and future studies would benefit from including age in their analysis. Also, as detailed in chapter 4, because of the association of the Northeast region with poverty, rurality, droughts and out-migration, another potential category of analyses for further studies could be the Northeastern identity and its role in aiding or dismissing issues by relegating future attention as the role of media. As described in chapter 6, in the case of women cistern builders the media had a key role in validating and disseminating the image of women cistern builders. It also showed alternative images of femininity and masculinity to a broader audience, helping to legitimize the work of

women locally and nationally. Although this was not analyzed in detail in this research, the potential impact of media for changes towards gender equality in development is definitively a fertile area for future research.

8.5. Reflecting on women's participation

Since July 2008, when the interviews for this study were conducted, the participation of women in the P1MC has not stopped growing. Women cistern builders now have regular regional meetings where they discuss their experiences,¹⁷³ which is one step further toward the creation of their own supporting network. Meetings are now included in the budget of the P1MC¹⁷⁴.

In Afogados da Ingazeira, Casa da Mulher do Nordeste became the Micro-regional Management Unit for P1MC in Pajeu, and women commission members were more likely to appear in the region. The more women participate in the municipal commissions of the P1MC, the more spaces for women are created, including training positions for women in cistern building. Furthermore, this growth of woman leadership in the program may also generate progressive political leadership.¹⁷⁵ The legitimization process and expansion of Gender Working Groups also suggest that women's participation in the program keeps growing.

There are encouraging signs that Brazil's general political climate is moving towards more gender equality. For example, the newly elected female President Dilma

¹⁷³ For more details on those meetings please see <http://solidu.wordpress.com/2009/04/20/128/> or http://www.cavjequi.org/index.php?pageNum_eventos=5&totalRows_eventos=108&pagina=1

¹⁷⁴ See <http://diarios-oficiais.com.br/diarios-da-uniao-dou/3-secao-dou3/2011-02-28/17694-pg.160>

¹⁷⁵ A United Nations study of 128 countries pointed out that countries which had a greater presence of women in power were the ones with lower indexes of corruption. And in countries where women were more repressed and were more distant from power, corruption rates were very high. (O Globo, 10/06/2011, my translation)

Rousseff appointed the 10th woman to her cabinet,¹⁷⁶ which raises the percentage of women cabinet members to 26%. Nevertheless, resistance against greater equality is strong and encountered everywhere¹⁷⁷.

One key aspect learned from the experience of the women interviewed in this research was the importance of their involvement with the feminist movement itself. To be sure, the agents of change were not gender experts giving guidelines on how to empower women in water. Agents of change were the rural women themselves. Yet, they were supported by feminist NGOs from whom they learned how to be feminist themselves. They participated in several collective activities, discussed their meetings and strategies and formed new connections and networks. A number of rural women from Pajeu for instance, including some cistern builders, are part of the Network of Women Producers of Pajeu.¹⁷⁸ In Mossoro as well, rural women are organized in networks such as the Xique Xique Network for Solidarity¹⁷⁹. Therefore, their struggle for water is not only a struggle for water, but it is also a collective struggle for social inclusion, social justice, environmental justice, water and food security, and women's rights (Pearce, 2008). In other words, access to water is not enough. Women need to participate in the control (Valdivia and Giles, 2001:8; Joshi, 2005: 137). This connection to groups and networks and the concomitant definition of their struggle as collective have a much greater potential of changing 'the rules of the game' framed as individual benefits.

¹⁷⁶ Up to June 2011, the women nominated to President Dilma's cabinet are Ideli Salvati (Institutional Relations), Gleisi Hoffman (Civil House), Helena Chagas (Social Communications), Tereza Campello (Social Development), Miriam Belchior (Planning), Maria do Rosário (Human Rights), Iriny Lopes (Women), Luiza de Bairros (Racial Equality), Ana de Hollanda (Culture) e Izabella Teixeira (Environment).

¹⁷⁷ Even the president is subtly criticized in the title of an article calling her Cabinet 'O Palácio da Luluzinha' referring to a girls club. As if almost 30% made the Cabinet a women's club !

¹⁷⁸ Rede de Mulheres Produtoras do Pajeu. <http://cirandas.net/rede-de-mulheres-produtoras-do-pajeu> There are also videos about them available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_X1PctSmoY

¹⁷⁹ Rede de Comercialização Solidária Xiquexique <http://www.redexiquexique.blogspot.com/>

Nevertheless, we are reminded by Parpart that the risk for corruption and co-option always exist.

Simply allowing women (and marginalized men) into the inner circles of power does little to change the way the 'rules of the game' are played, (given) the predominance of a 'common sense' equation between certain forms of masculinity and power. 'Outsiders' soon find themselves pressured to 'play by the rules' and given the flexibility of gendered practices, and the separation of sexed bodies from gendered practices, it is quite possible (and even probable) for women and marginalized men in positions of power to adopt hegemonic masculine traits (Hooper, 2001; Hutchings 2008; Zalewski and Parpart, 2008; Weigman 2001). Indeed, this is an all too common practice which continues to reinforce the common sense nature of masculinist power and feminine disempowerment around the world (Parpart, 2009:12).

However, even acknowledging the risks, action is needed. Brazil now has the necessary conditions for inclusive participation of civil society at several levels, including water management. As noted above, the participation of women is a growing trend in the country, even moreso after the first female president was elected. The existence of those democratic spaces of civil society decision-making is a *necessary* condition for the growing and deeper participation of women in social, economic and political terms. However, while necessary, these conditions are not *sufficient* to include low-income women from regions such as the rural Semi-Arid. In order for those women to occupy citizen spaces of participation (including water management) the support, resources, encouragement, organization, advocacy, connections, knowledge and network building provided by the feminist movement have been crucial. Still, a larger, coordinated approach is needed in order to promote the deeper participation of women in water management on a larger scale

8.6. Final Considerations

Water is essential to life; therefore it must be a human right. People still suffer from water insecurity (and will continue to do so in the future), due in part to inequalities created and maintained by social, cultural, political and economic constraints and interests.

When the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights was written, no one could foresee a day when water would be a contested area. But in 2010, it is not an exaggeration to say that the lack of access to clean water is the greatest human rights violation in the world (Maude Barlow, cited by Council of Canadians, 2010).

In order to address inequalities in water access and management and control, gender inequalities and social exclusion need to be addressed (Joshi,2005; House,2005).

In this respect, it is not only important to understand the gender inequalities but the intersection of those with class, race, ethnicity, ability, age, etc. More studies need to look into these intersections.

It is true that Brazil has experienced a period of economic growth and stability, despite recent international crises. But this alone does not explain the fall in inequality rates that the country has been observing over the last decades. “Inequality in Brazil, as measured by the Gini coefficient, fell from 0.59 in 2001 to 0.53 in 2007” (IPC-IG,2009). Part of the improvement in equality equation could be explained by effective policies such as improvements in education, direct cash transfers from the state to families and better income distribution (IPC-IG,2009). In fact, “the unemployment rate for April, at 6.4%, is the lowest on record” (The Economist, 2011).

However, even good policies often fail to include rural poor women whose role in the production and reproduction of rural life is often invisible, the struggles over water

only being one of them. Even where there is “good will” and gender mainstreaming is included, it is often “harder to do” (House, 2005:209). Even if the gender and development framework was inspired by feminism, and even when policies and programs try to apply gender sensitive instruments - what is often left behind is feminism itself and the feminist movement. Taking feminism from Gender Equality is like taking “power from empowerment” (Batlivalla, 2005). Feminism even in its diversity brings a ‘worldview’ that is not the dominant one. Yet, without these visions, policies are likely to continue not seeing or engaging rural poor women in development.

The African proverb: “It takes a village to raise a child” could be used also for women, but with a twist: **It takes a village to raise a woman, but sisters’ hands make a difference.**

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APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE (EN)
For members of non governmental organizations

*Project title: “Gendered Waters:
The Participation of Women in the Brazilian Program “One Million Cisterns”
Project Number # 1117537
Andrea Moraes Interview Questions*

1 – Oral Consent Form

Repeat that she can stop any minute as well as ask questions.
As again if prefers to stay anonymous.

2 – The organization and the person.

Name of the organization the person works. What is her/his position? For how long is she/he working there?
What is the goal of the organization? How is it funded? Who are your partners?
What is the involvement of the organization with the P1MC?
What is your role towards the P1MC?

3 – The participation of women in the P1MC.

How would you tell the history of women’s participation in the P1MC?
Did you participate in this history? How?
Who else participated? In which role?

4 – What do you think about the participation of women in the P1MC?

As beneficiaries.
As cistern builders.
As commission members

5 – Extras

Any interesting story?
Any document or article you recommend?
Concepts?

Thank you!

APPENDIX 2. INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE (EN)

For cistern builders

1 – Oral Consent Form

Repeat that she can stop any minute or not answer questions.
As again if prefers to stay anonymous.

2 – Personal Information

Name, locality where person lives, where was born, marital status, number of children.
Does the person participate in any political, religious, community organization?
Which type of housing the person lives? Does she own the property? Is it in her name?

3 – How did she become a cistern builder?

How did you hear about the training? Why did you go? How was it? How did you feel?
What did you expect? What did you get from it?
How was building the first cistern? What were the challenges you faced? What were the gains? Who and what supported you? Who and what were against?

4 – Past: Life changes

Tell a bit of your life story....
What changed in your life after you became a cistern builder? (House, relationships, community, health, work, family, marriage)
How was your life before? How is your life now?

5 – Future perspectives

What are your future perspectives?

Thank you!

APPENDIX 3. INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE (EN)

For commission members

1 – Oral Consent Form

Repeat that she can stop any minute or not answer questions.
As again if prefers to stay anonymous.

2 – Socio-economic information

Name, locality where person lives, where was born; marital status, number of children.
Does the person participate in any political, religious, community organization?
Which type of housing the person lives? Does she own the property? Is it in her name?

3 – How did she become a commission member?

How did you become a commission member?
How was it in the beginning? What were the challenges you faced? What were the gains?
Who supported you? Who were against?

4 - Life changes

What changed in your life after you became a commission member? (house, relationships, community, health, work, family, marriage)
How was your life before? How is your life now?

5 – Future perspectives

What are your future perspectives – professionally and personally?

Thank you!

APPENDIX 4. ORAL FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT TERM - *For non government organizations members*

This is an Oral Free and Informed Consent Term.

It is a requirement of my institution for all research done with human subjects with the goal of protecting them.

My name is Andréa Moraes and I am doing a research about the participation of women at the program One Million Cisterns and the experience of women as cistern builders.

This research is part of the requirements of the graduate course in Rural Sociology that I am doing at the University of Missouri in Columbia, in the United States. I am interested in understanding how gender is framed in this water program and how it affects women. Since the experience of women as cistern builders in Brazil is recent, I am also interested in understanding their experience.

For that reason I am interviewing *members of non government organizations* that work with the program one million cisterns.

This interview is not supposed to bring any risk for you or your family. The interview consists of questions about your organization, its relation to the Program One Million Cistern and your view about the participation of women in the program.

I would like to tape this interview and transcribe it so I could compare with other interviews and see what they have in common and what they differ. After that I plan to write a dissertation (book) in English and eventually I may quote parts or sentences of your interview or not. I will send you a copy of any document in Portuguese I end up producing, as well of my dissertation in English to the organization that indicated your name. If you tell me so, I could use cite your first name. Otherwise you will remain anonymous.

Finally, I would like to make clear that you can at any moment choose not to participate in this interview or choose not to answer a question or stop the interview entirely. If you have any question about this process at any time, please call me collect at the my local cellular number 021-7614-5714 or contact me by e-mail at afm229@mizzou.edu

Please keep a copy of this consent if you want to contact me anytime.
Thank you very much.

Andréa Moraes
University of Missouri- Columbia
021-7614-5714 afm229@mizzou.edu

APPENDIX 5. ORAL FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT TERM

For Cistern Builders and Commission members

This is an Oral Free and Informed Consent Term.

It is a requirement of my institution for all research done with human subjects with the goal of protecting them.

My name is Andréa Moraes and I am doing a research about the participation of women at the program One Million Cisterns and the experience of women as cistern builders.

This research is part of the requirements of the graduate course in Rural Sociology that I am doing at the University of Missouri in Columbia, in the United States. I am interested in understanding how gender is framed in this water program and how it affects women. Since the experience of women as cistern builders in Brazil is recent, I am also interested in understanding their experience.

For that reason I am interviewing women that were trained as cistern builders/ commission members. You were indicated to me by _____ (person name/organization).

This interview is not supposed to bring any risk for you or your family. The interview consists of questions about how did you become a cistern builder/ commission member, how is your experience now, which challenges you faced and support you received.

I would like to tape this interview and transcribe it so I could compare with other interviews and see what they have in common and what they differ. After that I plan to write a dissertation (book) in English and eventually I may quote parts or sentences of your interview or not. I will send you a copy of any document in Portuguese I end up producing, as well of my dissertation in English to the organization that indicated your name. If you tell me so, I could use cite your first name. Otherwise you will remain anonymous.

Finally, I would like to make clear that you can at any moment choose not to participate in this interview or choose not to answer a question or stop the interview entirely. If you have any question about this process at any time, please call me collect at the my local cellular number 021-7614-5714 or contact me by e-mail at afm229@mizzou.edu

Please keep a copy of this consent if you want to contact me anytime.
Thank you very much

Andréa Moraes
University of Missouri- Columbia
021-7614-5714 afm229@mizzou.edu

APPENDIX 6. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (Portuguese)

Perguntas para membros das organizacoes nao governamentais

1 – Ler termo de consentimento.

Lembrar que a pessoa pode parar a qualquer hora.

Perguntar novamente se prefere ficar anonima depois da entrevista.

2 – A pessoa e a organizacao

Instituição em que trabalha, o que faz, há quanto tempo?

Qual o objetivo geral da Instituição. Como se financia? Tem parceiros? Quais?

Qual o envolvimento da instituição com o P1MC?

Qual o seu papel no P1MC?

3 – A participação da mulher no P1MC

Como voce contaria a historia desta participação?

Voce participou dessa historia? Como?

Quem mais participou? Em que papel?

4 – O que acha da participação da mulher

Como beneficiarias?

Como pedreiras?

Como membros de comissoes locais ou municipais ?

5 – Extras

Alguma historia interessante?

Algum texto ou publicacao que recomenda?

Conceitos?

Obrigada!

APPENDIX 7. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (Portuguese)

Perguntas para Cisterneiras

1- Ler no Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido:

Lembrar que a pessoa pode parar a qualquer hora e não responder perguntas.
Perguntar novamente se prefere ficar anônima depois da entrevista.

2 - Dados pessoais

Nome, local de moradia, nascimento, onde nasceu, estado civil, número de filhos/as.
Pertence a alguma associação comunitária? Igreja, Grupo? Como participa.
Que tipo de moradia reside? É proprietária?

3 – Como se tornou Cisterneira?

Como ficou sabendo do treinamento? Porque foi? Como foi? Como se sentiu?
O que esperava? O que aprendeu?
Como foi construir a primeira cisterna? Que desafios enfrentou? Quais ganhos?
O que ajudou, o que atrapalhou?

4 – Passado: O que mudou em sua vida?

Contar um pouco a história da sua vida...
O que mudou na sua vida depois de se tornar pedreira? (Casa, relacionamentos,
Comunidade, saúde, trabalho, família, casamento)
Como era a sua vida antes? Como está agora?

5 – Perspectivas Futuras

E agora – como estão as coisas? Acha que houve diferentes fases? Quais são os ganhos e
quais os desafios?

Obrigada!

APPENDIX 8. INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE (Portuguese)
For commission members

Perguntas para as Membros de Comissoes:

1- Ler no Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido:

Lembrar que a pessoa pode parar a qualquer hora e nao responder perguntas.
Perguntar novamente se prefere ficar anonima depois da entrevista.

2 - Dados pessoais

Nome, local de moradia, nascimento, onde nasceu, estado civil, numero de filhos/as.
Pertence a alguma associacao communitarian? Igreja, Grupo? Como participa.
Que tipo de moradia reside? E' proprietaria?

3 – Como se tornou membro da Comissao?

Como ficou sabendo? Porque foi? Como foi? Como se sentiu?
O que esperava? O que aprendeu?
Que desafios enfrentou? Quais ganhos?
O que ajudou, o que atrapalhou?

4 – Passado: O que mudou em sua vida?

Contar um pouco a historia da sua vida...
O que mudou na sua vida depois de se tornar pedreira? (Casa, relacionamentos,
Comunidade,saude,trabalho, familia, casamento)
Como era a sua vida antes? Como esta agora?

5 – Perspectivas Futuras

E agora – como estão as coisas? Acha que houve diferentes fases? Quais são os ganhos e
quais os desafios?

Obrigada!

APPENDIX 8. ORAL CONSENT (Portuguese) *NGO Members*

TERMO DE CONSENTIMENTO LIVRE E ESCLARECIDO

Este é um termo de livre consentimento – que é um requerimento da minha instituição para todas as pesquisas feitas com pessoas humanas, com o objetivo de protegê-las.

Meu nome é Andréa Moraes e eu estou fazendo uma pesquisa sobre a participação da mulher no PIMC e a experiência das cisterneiras (mulheres pedreiras). Esta pesquisa é parte dos requerimentos do curso de pós-graduação em Sociologia Rural que estou fazendo na Universidade de Missouri na cidade de Columbia nos Estados Unidos. Eu estou interessada em entender como funciona uma política de água com foco na mulher e qual impacto têm na vida das mulheres. Como a experiência de mulheres pedreiras no Brasil é recente, eu estou especialmente interessada em saber como é a vida destas mulheres.

Para isso estou entrevistando pessoas envolvidas no Programa Um Milhao de Cisternas e a questao de genero . E você me foi indicada pela _____ que você já conhece. Esta entrevista, não trará nenhum risco para você ou sua família. Ela consiste em perguntas sobre o como você se tornou cisterneira e como é a sua experiência, seus ganhos e desafios.

Eu gostaria de gravar essa entrevista, e depois transcrever para ler cuidadosamente e comparar com outras entrevistas para que eu possa ter uma idéia de um conjunto de fatores semelhantes ou diferentes na experiência de vocês. Depois pretendo escrever minha tese em Inglês e alguns artigos em português podendo eventualmente citar uma frase sua ou não.

Neste caso eu poderia citar seu primeiro nome – ou não – se você preferir não ser identificada. Eu me comprometo a mandar uma copia do que escrever em português para você, e uma cópia do que escrever em inglês para a sua Instituicao.

Você tem toda liberdade de escolher não participar desta entrevista, ou de não responder à perguntas que eu faça, ou mesmo de parar a entrevista a qualquer momento . Se você tiver alguma duvida pode me perguntar a qualquer hora, mesmo depois da entrevista. .Pode ligar a cobrar para o telefone 021-7614-5714 ou me contatar por e-mail andreajmoraes@yahoo.com ou afm229@mizzou.edu

Caso você concorde em participar, pediria para me dizer se prefere que use que cite seu nome ou não cite seu nome.

Não Cite ____ Cite ___ Nome: _____

Você também pode escolher se quer prefere dar um consentimento livre e esclarecido oral ou escrito para esta entrevista.

Consentimento Oral ____ Consentimento Escrito _____

Muito Obrigada

Andréa Moraes - Universidade de Missouri-/Columbia

APPENDIX 9. ORAL CONSENT (Portuguese)
Cistern Builders and Comission Members

TERMO DE CONSENTIMENTO LIVRE E ESCLARECIDO

Este é um termo de livre consentimento – que é um requerimento da minha instituição para todas as pesquisas feitas com pessoas humanas, com o objetivo de protegê-las.

Meu nome é Andréa Moraes e eu estou fazendo uma pesquisa sobre a participação da mulher no PIMC e a experiência das cisterneiras (mulheres pedreiras). Esta pesquisa é parte dos requerimentos do curso de pós-graduação em Sociologia Rural que estou fazendo na Universidade de Missouri na cidade de Columbia nos Estados Unidos. Eu estou interessada em entender como funciona uma política de água com foco na mulher e qual impacto têm na vida das mulheres. Como a experiência de mulheres pedreiras no Brasil é recente, eu estou especialmente interessada em saber como é a vida destas mulheres.

Para isso estou entrevistando mulheres que foram capacitadas para construir Cisternas. E você me foi indicada pela _____ que você já conhece. Esta entrevista, não trará nenhum risco para você ou sua família. Ela consiste em perguntas sobre o como você se tornou cisterneira e como é a sua experiência, seus ganhos e desafios.

Eu gostaria de gravar essa entrevista, e depois transcrever para ler cuidadosamente e comparar com outras entrevistas para que eu possa ter uma idéia de um conjunto de fatores semelhantes ou diferentes na experiência de vocês. Depois pretendo escrever minha tese em Inglês e alguns artigos em português podendo eventualmente citar uma frase sua ou não.

Neste caso eu poderia citar seu primeiro nome – ou não – se você preferir não ser identificada. Eu me comprometo a mandar uma copia do que escrever em português para você, e uma cópia do que escrever em inglês para _____.

Você tem toda liberdade de escolher não participar desta entrevista, ou de não responder à perguntas que eu faça, ou mesmo de parar a entrevista a qualquer momento . Se você tiver alguma duvida pode me perguntar a qualquer hora, mesmo depois da entrevista. .Pode ligar a cobrar para o telefone 021-7614-5714 ou me contatar por e-mail andreamoraes@yahoo.comafm229@mizzou.edu

Caso você concorde em participar, pediria para me dizer se prefere que use que cite seu nome ou não cite seu nome.

Não Cite ____ Cite ____ Nome: _____

Você também pode escolher se quer prefere dar um consentimento livre e esclarecido oral ou escrito para esta entrevista.

Consentimento Oral ____ Consentimento Escrito _____

Muito Obrigada

Andréa Moraes - Universidade de Missouri-/Columbia

VITA

Andrea Ferreira Jacques de Moraes was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where she grew up. She did a B.A. in Psychology and a Masters in Social Psychology at the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro. Andrea did her Doctoral studies at the Department of Rural Sociology of the University of Missouri- Columbia. Her dissertation was entitled: *Gendered Waters: The Participation of Women on the Program “One Million Cisterns” in the Brazilian Semi-Arid Region.*

While doing her undergraduate degree, Andrea worked as a municipal elementary school teacher and her interests in education remained constant in her life. During her graduate studies at the University of Missouri, she taught at the Romance Languages Department, where she received the 1998-99 ‘Donald K. Anderson Graduate Student Teaching Award for Excellence in Teaching.

While living in Canada, Andrea worked at York University as coordinator for a development project in Brazil concerned about the participation of civil society in water management (2004-2008). In parallel, she was also an instructor at York University and was one of the founders of the Brazilian Studies Group at York. Since 2007, she teaches “Gender and Food Security” for the Chang School of Continuing Studies at Ryerson University, Toronto.

Andrea’s academic interests include Gender and Development, Water and Food Security, Latin America and specifically Brazil, as well as studies concerned with social justice and participatory democracy.