

Carol Vlassoff  
GENDER EQUALITY  
and INEQUALITY  
in RURAL INDIA  
*Blessed with a Son*



# Economic Development Rural Women's Empowerment & Reproductive Health

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# Methodology

**Longitudinal study, 1975-76, 1987 and 2007-08:**

- **Household survey of all household heads**
- **Survey of all married women aged 15-49, 1975 & 2007-08; and 15-26 in 1987**
- **Resurveys in 1987 and 2007-08 of women who had not completed families in 1975 and 1987**

# Gove village, 1975-76





# History of Strong Leadership, 1975-76



# Gove village, 1975-76



# Economic Development: Bridge Finished 1982





# Economic Development: Irrigation 1987





# Gove, 2007-08





# Household census interviewees

Household heads or other senior household members

1975-76  
HOUSEHOLDS  
(N=371)

(Pop.=2170)

1987  
HOUSEHOLDS  
(N=464)

(Pop.=2654)

2007-08  
HOUSEHOLDS  
(N=604)

(Pop.=3464)

# Household Economic Indicators

Percent of households with	1975	1987	2007
Household head farmer	74	66	74
No land	16	20	23
Less than 2.5 acres	45	47	63
More than 5 acres	39	12	9
1+ acres of land irrigated	19	43	90
High income*	22	22	28
<3 rooms	63	69	60
5 or more consumer items**	22	2	45

\*Income categories were adjusted for time period: In earlier period low = Rs. 0-4499; Medium= Rs. 4500-11,499; High = Rs. 11,000+. In 1987 Low = 0-6499; Medium = 6500-13,999; High = Rs. 14,000+. In later period low = 0 - 15,999; Medium= Rs. 16000-35,999; High = Rs. 36,000+

\*\*Household consumer items were adjusted for time period: In earlier period household objects included items such as bicycle & radio. In later period household objects included motorcycle or other motorized vehicle & TV.



# Social Development - 2007-08



# Research Question

*Are rural women reaping the benefits?*

Hypothesis –

Yes: Economic development in the village will be associated with higher women's status, family planning use, and lower fertility.



# Changes Observed (Qualitative)

- Communication greatly improved (roads, cell phones, TV)
- Building of dam in 1980s leading to irrigation & lift agriculture
- Shift from subsistence to cash crops
- Influx of skilled workers
- Easy availability of water to households
- Greater occupational diversity in village
- Growing avowal that girls should be educated

# Reproductive Health Survey

1975-76  
RESPONDENTS

All married  
women aged

15-49  
(N=349)

1987  
RESPONDENTS,

All married  
women aged

15-26  
(N=171)

2007-08  
RESPONDENTS

All married  
women aged

15-49  
(N=494)



# The Village Study (Gove, Maharashtra)



## Gove Women, 1975-76 & 2007-08



# Progress in Women's Position

Respondents	1975-76	2007-08
Ave. education (girls 13-18)	6 yrs	11 yrs
Ave. education ((married women 15-24)	3 yrs	9 yrs



# Gender-related Attitudes

## Women aged 15-26 (% Distributions)

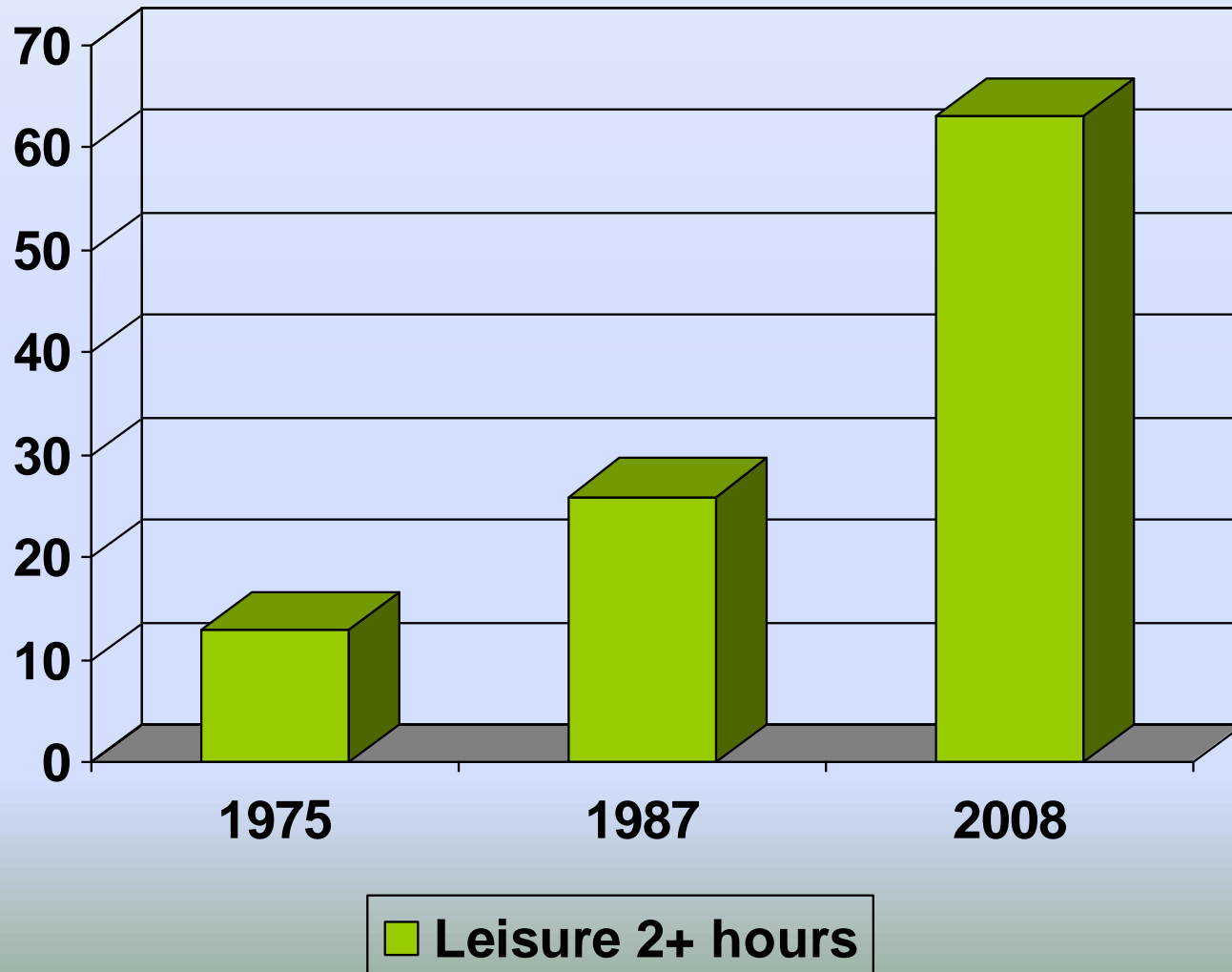
Attitude	1975	1987	2007
Approve of wife eating with husband (Yes)	52	88	95
Approve of wife buying own sari (Yes)	16	20	63
Approve of giving dowry (Yes)	63	49	4
N	153	171	142

# Typical Responses re Sari Decision, 2008

“They [others] earn money so they have the right to make decisions.”

“She can take her own decision because she is earning and on the job. She must be up to date.”

# Percent with 2+ Hours Leisure/day Women aged 15-26





# Percent Travelling Once or More Monthly Women aged 15-26

Trips to Satara	1975-76	1987	2007-08
Yes	16	25	38
N	153	171	142

# Type of Work

## % of Women aged 15-26

Type of work	1975-76	2007-08
Unpaid home exclusively	14	46
Unpaid home & fields	52	32
Wage labor	33	16
Professional & self-employed	1	6
N	153	142

# Reproductive Health Variables

## Women aged 15-49

R.H. Variables	1975-76	2007-08
Ave. age at marriage	14.2 yrs	17.4 yrs
Total fertility	5.6	2.3
Limit if no son (no more than 2)	3%	77%
Fam. planning use	37%	73%
Ever use of non-term. f.p. methods	12%	35%



# Fertility indicators, Gove 1975 & 2007-08, and Rural Maharashtra, 2007

<b>Fertility indicators</b>	<b>2007 Mean (N)</b>	<b>NFHS Mean (N)</b>
Ave. live births	2.3 (494)	2.3 (N/A)
Ave. number of living children	2.1 (494)	N/A
Sons	1.1 (494)	
Daughters	1.0 (494)	
Desired number of children	1.9 (N=340)	2.1 (N=6,558)
Sons	1.2 (N=297)	N/A
Daughters	1.1 (N=249)	

# Desired and Actual No. of Children for Married Women Respondents from 1987, Traced to 2008 (N=71)

No. of Children	Total	Male	Female
Desired, 1987	3.01	1.77	1.24
Actual, 2008	2.44	1.27	1.17

# Regression Analysis Variables

## Women aged 15-49, 2007-08 N = 494

From Rao, Vlassoff & Sarode, 2013

Index	Variables	Value
Economic Status of Household (1-4)	No. rooms + Household assets	1 (Rooms < 3 & Assets < 5) 2 (Rooms < 3 & Assets > 5) 3 (Rooms > 3 & Assets < 5) 4 (Rooms > 3 & Assets > 5)
Social Empowerment (0-3)	Education Travel Once/mo. Decision re sari	0 (<7) 1 (>7) 0 (no)1 (yes) 0 (no)1 (yes)
Economic Empowerment (0-3)	Type of work	1 (wage labor) 2 (unpaid hh fields) 3 (white collar)



# Multiple Linear Regression Results, 2007-08

From Rao, Vlassoff & Sarode, 2013

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Beta Coefficient $\pm$ se in model <sup>+</sup>		
		A)	B)	C)
<u>Age at marriage</u>	Economic development	-	0.04 $\pm$ 0.094 (ns)	0.04 $\pm$ 0.1 (ns)
	+ Social empowerment	-	0.547 $\pm$ 0.132 (p < 0.000)	0.387 $\pm$ 0.14 (p = 0.008)
	+ Economic empowerment	-	-	1.09 $\pm$ 0.22 (p < 0.000)
** p<0.01  •p<0.05	R <sup>2</sup>	0.5	3.8**	11.0**

# Multiple Linear Regression Results

From Rao, Vlassoff & Sarode, 2013

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Beta Coefficient $\pm$ se in model <sup>+</sup>		
		A)	B)	C)
<u>Total fertility</u>	Economic development	-	0.001 $\pm$ 0.03 (ns)	0.092 $\pm$ 0.04 (p = 0.036)
	+ Social empowerment	-	- 0.125 $\pm$ 0.05 (p = 0.024)	0.076 $\pm$ 0.06 (ns)
	+ Economic empowerment	-		- 0.236 $\pm$ 0.1 (p=0.015)
** p<0.01  * p<0.05	R <sup>2</sup>	0.0	1.1	3.3**

# Multiple Linear Regression Results

From Rao, Vlassoff & Sarode, 2013

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Beta Coefficient $\pm$ se in model <sup>+</sup>		
		A)	B)	C)
<u>Limit on fertility if no son (no.)</u>	Economic development	-	-0.02 $\pm$ 0.04 (ns)	0.043 $\pm$ 0.04 (ns)
	+ Social empowerment	-	-0.25 $\pm$ 0.05 (p < 0.000)	-0.211 $\pm$ 0.06 (p = 0.001)
	+ Economic empowerment	-		-0.2 $\pm$ 0.1 (p=0.049)
** p<0.01  * p<0.05	R <sup>2</sup>	ns	4.7**	5.4**

# Multiple Logistic Regression Results

From Rao, Vlassoff & Sarode, 2013

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	OR (CI)	p
<u>Ever-use of condom</u>	Economic development		ns
	Social empowerment	0	1.0
		1	2.04
		2	1.93
		3	4.76 (1.03 - 22.05)
	Economic empowerment	1	1.0
		2	5.17 (1.95 - 13.72)
		3	5.8 (1.72 - 19.58)

# Conclusions

- Economic development doesn't necessarily enhance gender equality
- Lower fertility now but son preference persists
- Both social & economic empowerment of rural women important for reproductive health outcomes (education not enough), but economic empowerment has added value
- Getting rural women white-collar jobs will help raise marriage age, lower fertility, reduce son preference & increase modern contraceptive use
- By delaying first birth, population growth can be reduced



# Supports other Findings re Importance of Women's Employment

- World Development Report (2012)
- Gender Scorecard (Delhi Policy Group, 2013)
- India ranked 11th from bottom of 131 on LFPR (ILO)
- India must convert “demographic bulge” of young people (esp. young women) into “economic dividend” to outperform countries like China & Egypt (T. Friedman, *NY Times*, Feb 2013)

# Supports other economic arguments

- WDR 2013 (“Jobs are transformational”)
- Center for American Progress & Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2014 (without women in workforce U.S. economy 11% smaller than 30 yrs ago)

# Modern Jobs for Rural Women: A Driving Force for a Rising India

## *Labor Force Participation Rates in China and India*

	<b>China</b>		<b>India</b>	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
OVERALL	70%	83%	25%	80%
Primary/early secondary education	70%	83%	25%	82%
Secondary education	69%	81%	20%	67%
Tertiary education	81%	82%	34%	78%

2009-2012

GALLUP®

# Facilitating Rural Women's Employment

- By political commitment to bring about change (F.P.)
- By job planning (involve development partners and Indian think tanks) & integrate into educational curricula (current curricula sadly deficient)
- By creating incentives for businesses who employ rural women & make working hours women-friendly
- By slick massive communication campaigns -positive images to change cultural norms (Das Gupta et al., 2003)

Thereby creating a new paradigm:  
“Blessed with a Daughter”

