

# ***Finding our way into the blackbox:***

*Unpacking systemic gender inequality across institutional landscapes*



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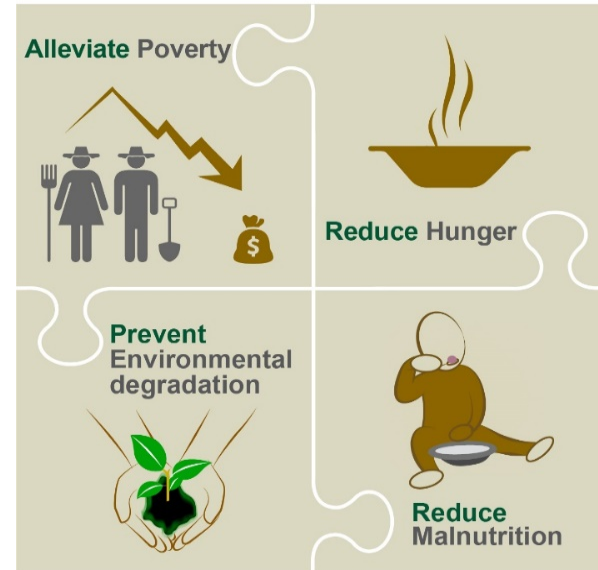
# ICRISAT

The only global R4D organization for dryland topics in agriculture

We believe all people have a right to nutritious food and better livelihoods



ICRISAT works in the dryland tropics of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia to:



Our **research activities** are focused on **crops** of immense value to the nutrition and economics of the semi-arid tropics – **dryland cereals** (sorghum and millets) and **grain legumes** (chickpea, pigeonpea and groundnut)

# Gender norms and values of institutional stakeholders is the 'black box' in gender research



- ❖ Gender is one of the cross-cutting themes of CGIAR research, ICRISAT research (Kauck *et al*, 2010)
- ❖ Focus mainly on *households and communities*
- ❖ Organizations and institutional stakeholders are important actors who shape policies for addressing gender in research – but remain less researched



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**Collaborators:**

•ICRISAT, India

•Central Agroforestry Research Institute, Jhansi, India



# Theoretical Background

- ❖ Zwarteveen (2015) notes the presence of men as water managers and engineers and masculinities of water management organizations give rise to ‘hydropatriarchy’.
- ❖ Reflexivity about positionality of institutional actors important to understand their role in watershed projects.

## Aim of the Study:

### Understand Perspectives

- Look at existing values and norms that guide watershed research
- Locate gender perspectives of institutional actors

### Gender-related Competencies

- Design initiatives to improve competencies for including gender as an analytical category
- Include CGIAR scientists and partner organizations

# Methodology

- ❖ Methodology of 'studying-up' and 'studying power' used (Nader 1972, 1997)
- ❖ Two early-career female researchers with a background in social sciences conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews using Microsoft Teams platform in 2020.
- ❖ Participants identified through *snowball sampling* methodology:
  - Watershed scientists based in National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems and Research Organizations ( $n=9$ )
  - Development Practitioners and Academics engaged with watershed research and activities ( $n=8$ )

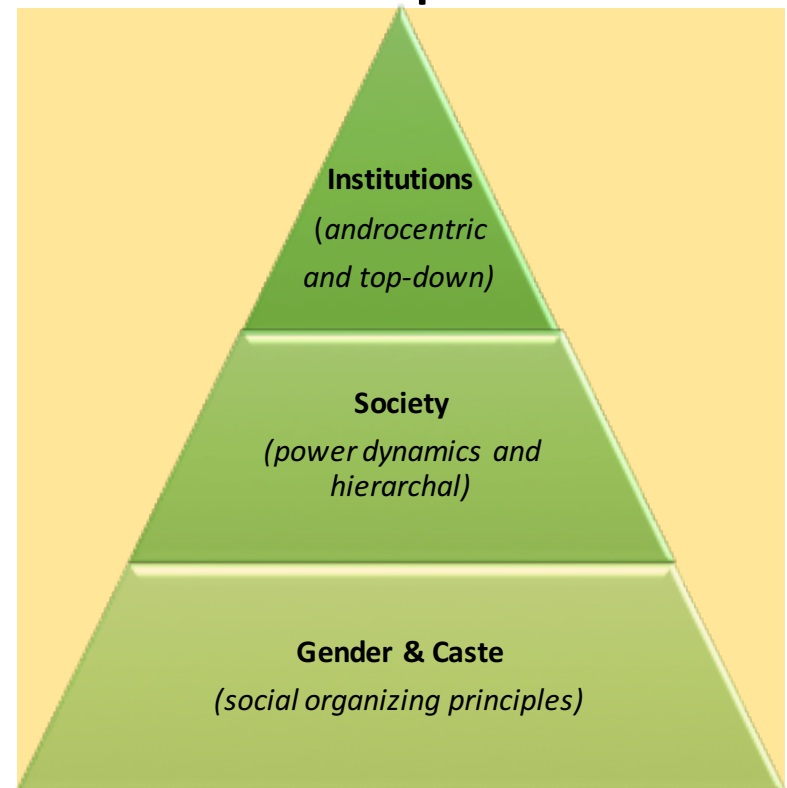
'Studying-up' refers to studying social actors who hold privilege or power *vis-a-vis* the researcher.  
- Becker & Aiello, 2013:64



# 'Hydropatriarchies' in Watershed Research

- ❖ Watershed (WS) development policies crucial for rural development globally
- ❖ Inadequate attention to constraints for inclusive participation such as unequal gender relations, patriarchy, caste system.
- ❖ Extending the concept, hydropatriarchies are prevalent in watershed institutions (Zwarteveen, 2008)
  - WS institutions are masculine– both in technology approach and workforce composition.
  - Ecological goals are prioritized over social goals

## Pyramid of Power in Watershed Development





# 'Studying Up' Scientific Community in Watershed

## ❖ Colonial bureaucratic legacies and masculinity exists in WS Organizations

- Difficulties in accessing institutional actors and scheduling interviews
- Prioritizing biophysical sciences over social sciences
- Limited realization of opportunity costs of choosing environmental goals over social goals

## ❖ WS Programs are often designed and implemented in a top-down nature

- Donor driven agenda
- limitations of funding and tight project timelines

*"...social scientist are also key members ...in the project ... and much of the time their role is only to mobilize community... [they are important in the mapping of ] how [water] needs to be shared ... I have not heard anybody [talking about] how they would like to include them [social scientists] in the project implementing stage itself ...I have not seen [their perspectives] in any design document".*

- Excerpts from Interview with Government Scientist, India



# Practitioners' Perspectives on Watershed Programs

- ❖ **Narrow representation of 'women' as 'Gender'**
  - Inclusion of women in water user committees is often a nominal and tokenistic
  - Women from socially dominant sections are primarily represented without considering intersectionality
- ❖ **Need to represent local knowledge and diverse voices**
  - Goals of watershed projects need to be reevaluated to minimize sustainability versus development paradox.
  - Voices of marginal communities needs better representation

***Watershed program should be integrated...** When you tell people that we want to conserve [resources, they will ask] at what cost? They don't want to give up their livelihood for conservation of the environment... Watershed activities includes a lot of things; conservation, utilization distribution and management of all the resource within the watershed. It also includes capacity [building of locals and represents] voice of the people who are participating, who are living there, [and] are part of the watershed.*

- Excerpts from Interview with NGO based Practitioner, India





# References

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