

# A multi-dimensional perspective on women's empowerment through MUS



**Stephanie Leder**  
**Post-Doctoral Fellow**  
**CGIAR Research Program**  
**“Water, Land and Ecosystems” (WLE)**  
**International Water Management Institute (IWMI)**







Selingi, Dadeldhura district





## Women farmers' perceptions on empowerment (=shashaktikaran in Nepali)

Someone who gives her opinions and suggestions can be considered empowered. Nirmala is an example. She is educated and working. She is able to discuss and decide. I do not feel empowered but I am able to make decisions in my own household.

Empowered women have a good and supportive family. they are respected and know their rights.



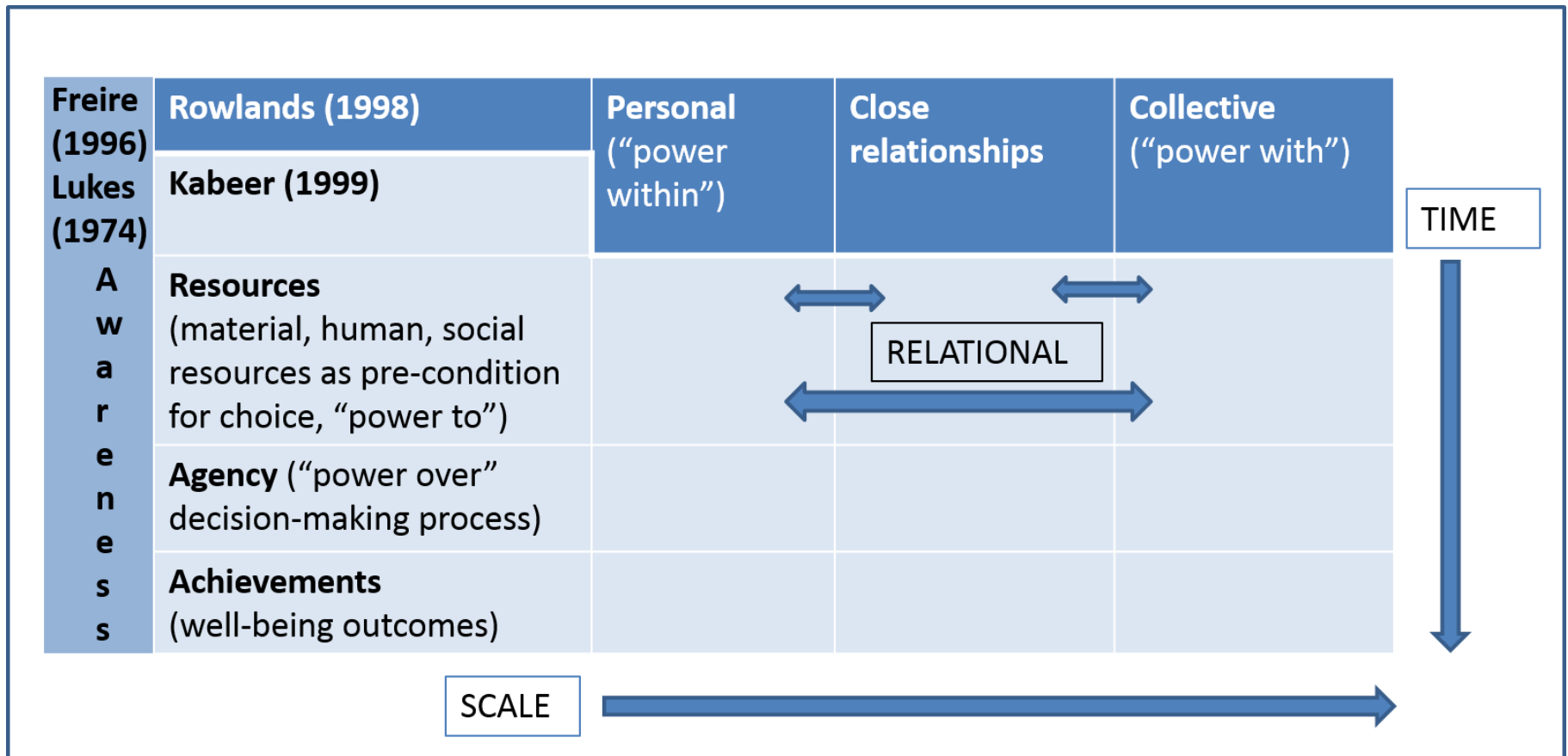
Empowered is someone with land, who does farming. Someone who helps a lot, invites us and tells us what she has learned.

...education, awareness, understanding, having an opinion. They can tell what to grow and how much to plant.



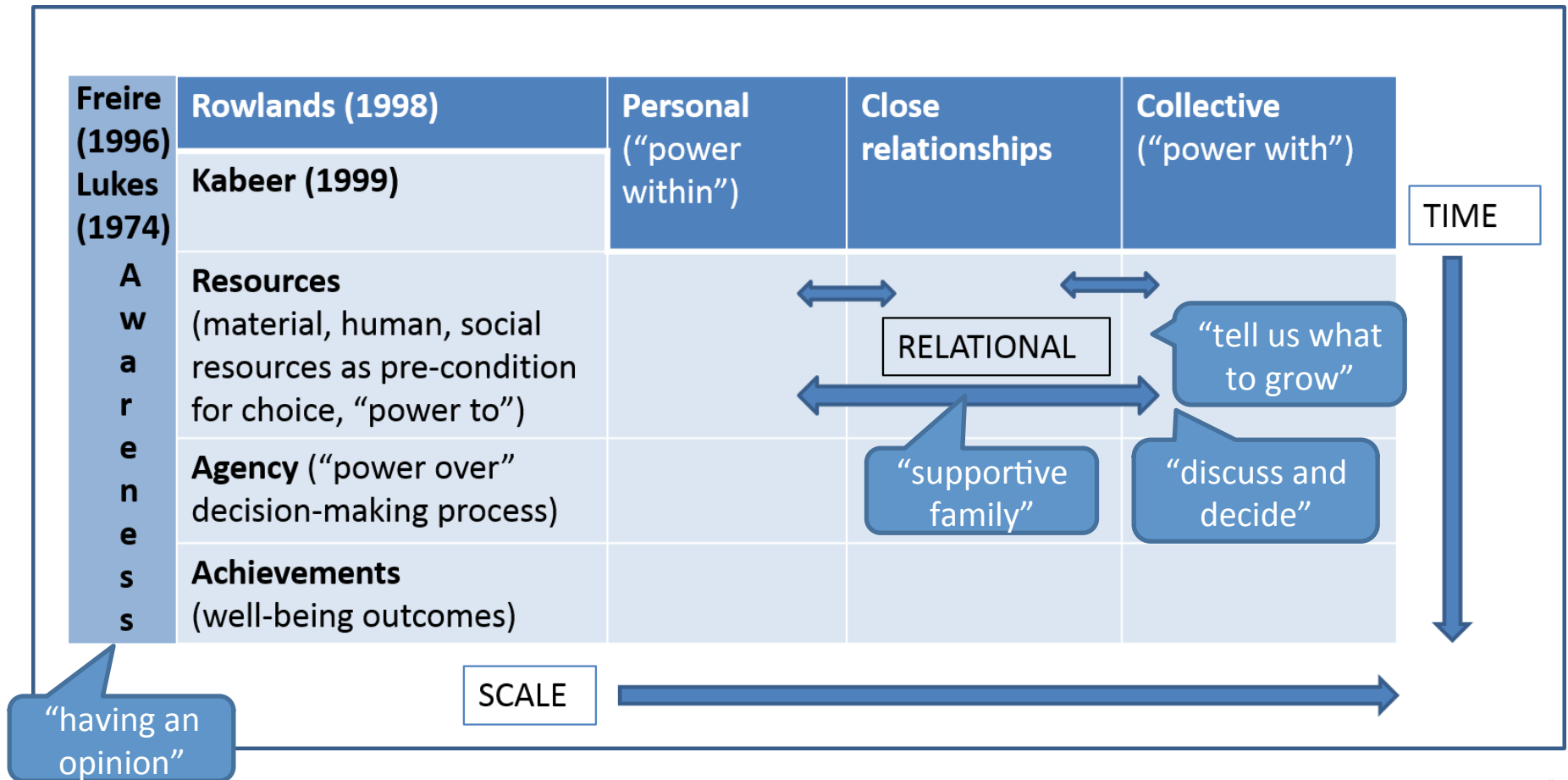
## The concept of “Empowerment” is...

“the **process** by which those who have been denied the ability to make **strategic life choices** acquire such an ability” (Kabeer 1999: 436)



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## Research question

**How can improved water access through MUS address the multiple dimensions of women's empowerment?**





## The project “Anukulan”

Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate  
Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) Programme  
(DFID funded)



**Objective:** Developing climate resilient livelihoods for local communities through public-private partnership for 500,000 poor people in Western Nepal that suffer from climate extremes and disasters

### Project partners:



Led by:





## Field sites in Doti and Dadeldhura districts, Far West of Nepal

Doti district

### Village Tiltali, Latamandu VDC

Coordinates	29°17'39" N 80°49'39"
Elevation	620 m
Total HH	190
Dalit HH	46
Chettri HH	145

Dadeldhura district

### Village Selingi – 4, Samajee VDC

Coordinates	29°21'46" N 80°34'56"
Elevation	1530m
Total HH	65
Dalit HH	9
Chettri HH	59

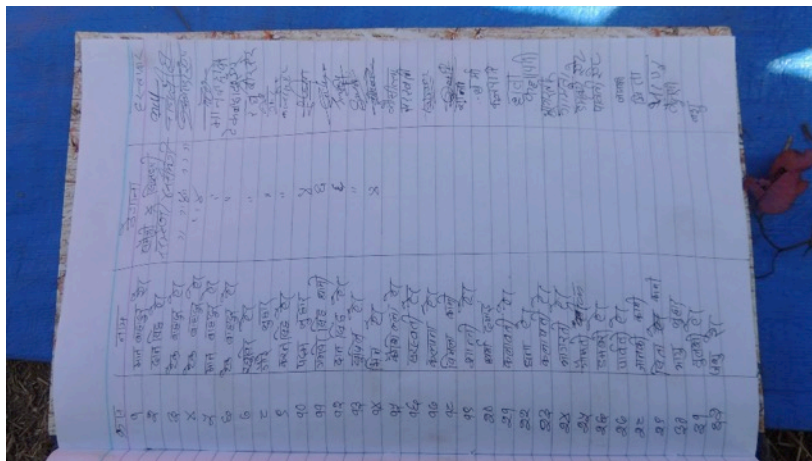
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# Methods

## In-depth interviews



## Empowerment Ranking Exercise

## Focus Group Discussions



## Village Resource mapping

## Findings in four dimensions of empowerment

Dimension of Empowerment	MUS relevance
<b>1) Resources</b>	<b>water access, income, ...</b>
<b>2) Critical Awareness</b>	...?
<b>3) Agency</b>	...?
<b>4) Achievements</b>	<b>nourishment, health, food security, hygiene, financial security...</b>

→ Who has when, where, how and why access to water?



## 1) Resources: Access to water



**The water reservoir  
tank (70,000 l) in  
Selingi, Dadeldhura**





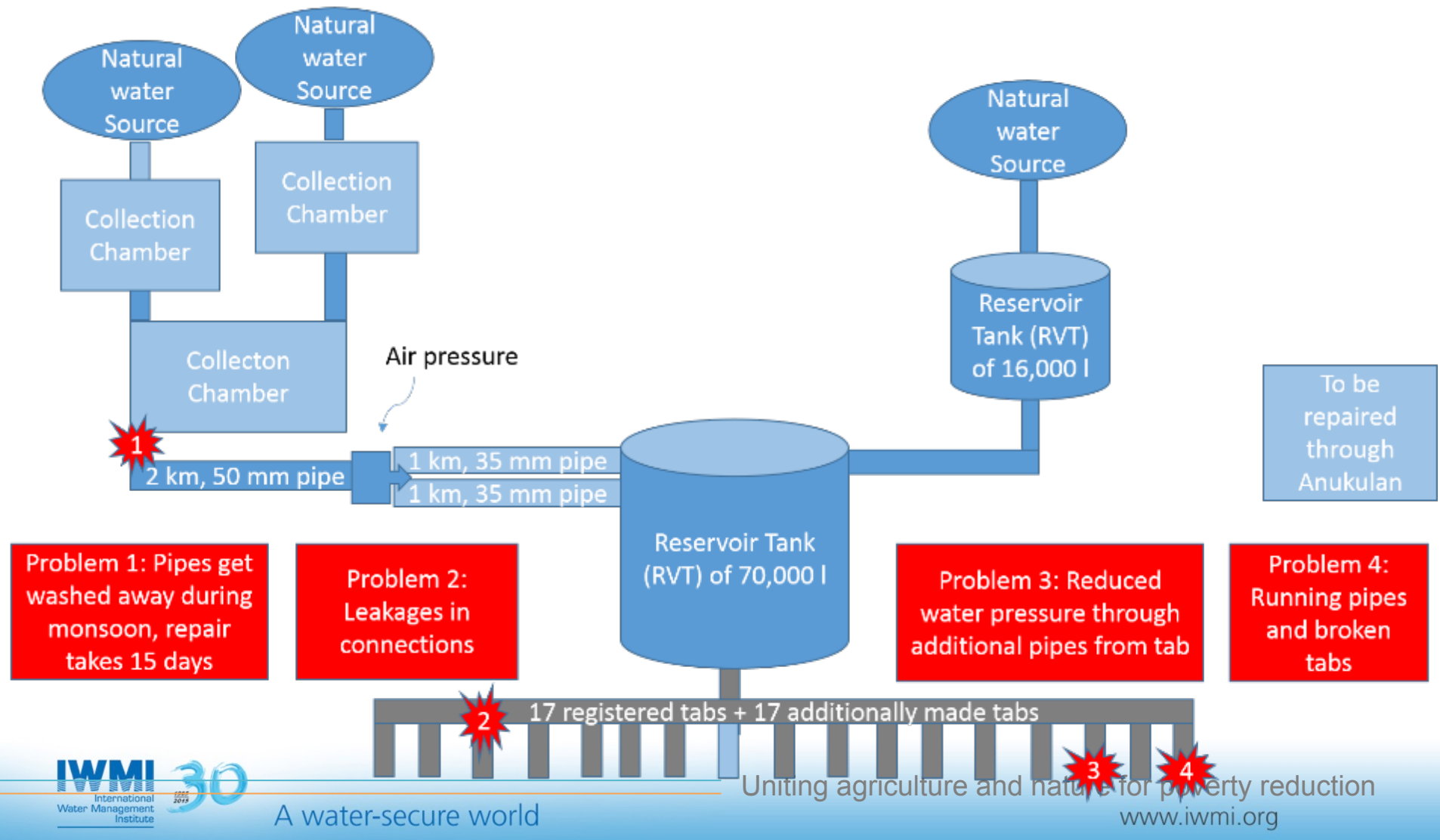
17 registered communal taps for 45 households; around 29-35 mobile private pipes flexibly connected to valves (“pipe cutting”)

→ Water for domestic use and kitchen gardening 8 months a year

→ Dalit households have direct water access as they share 4 of these taps



# Water supply challenges in Selingi, Dadeldhura



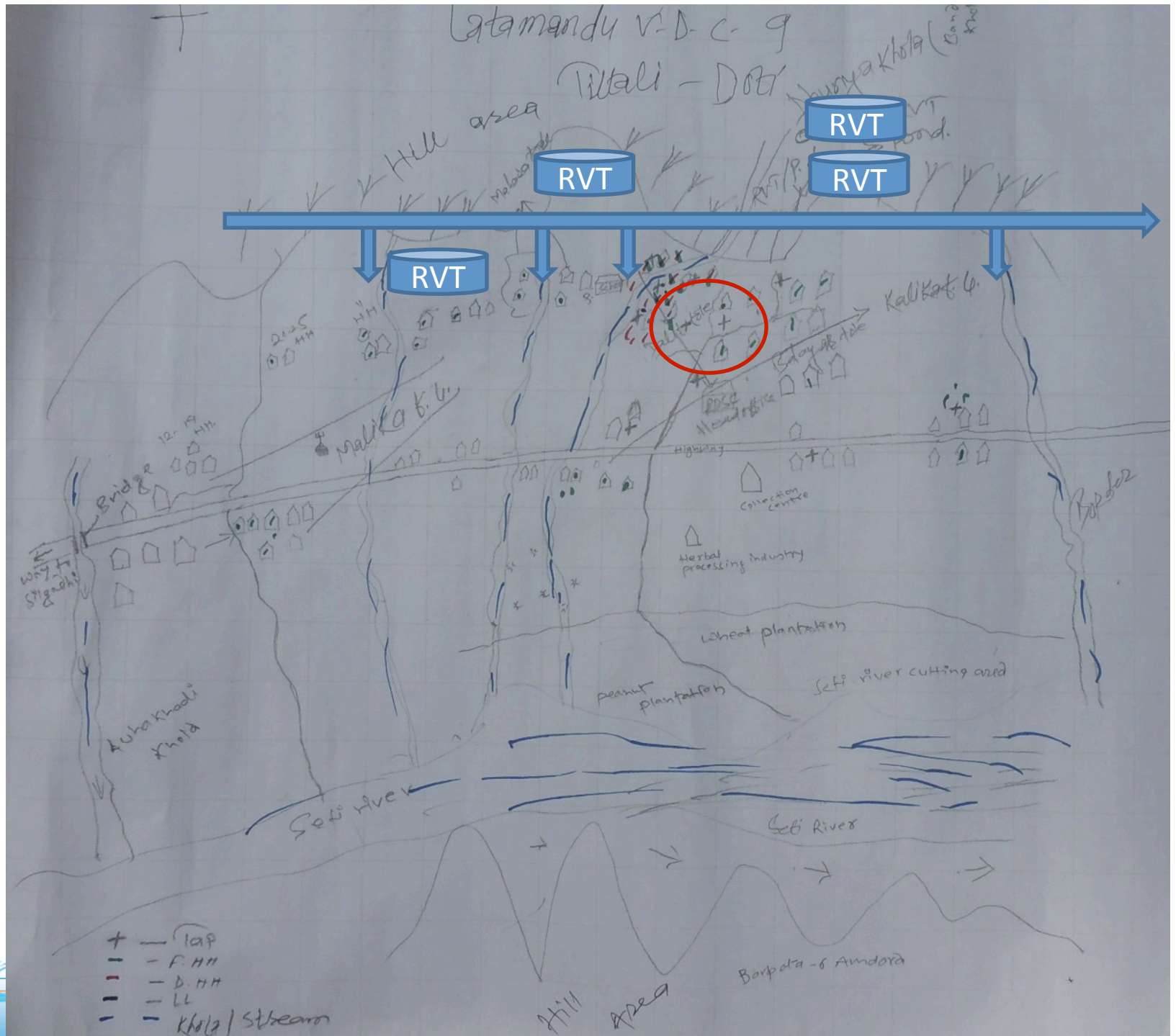


## The Naula in Selingi, Dadeldhura





## Water access to Tiltali VDC, Doti district







Water sources used  
in Latamandu, Doti





Both villages are exposed to floods covering fields, irrigation canals and naulas during monsoon due to prior deforestation



## 2) Critical Awareness

Womens group – voice, knowledge, networks, access to finance, respect

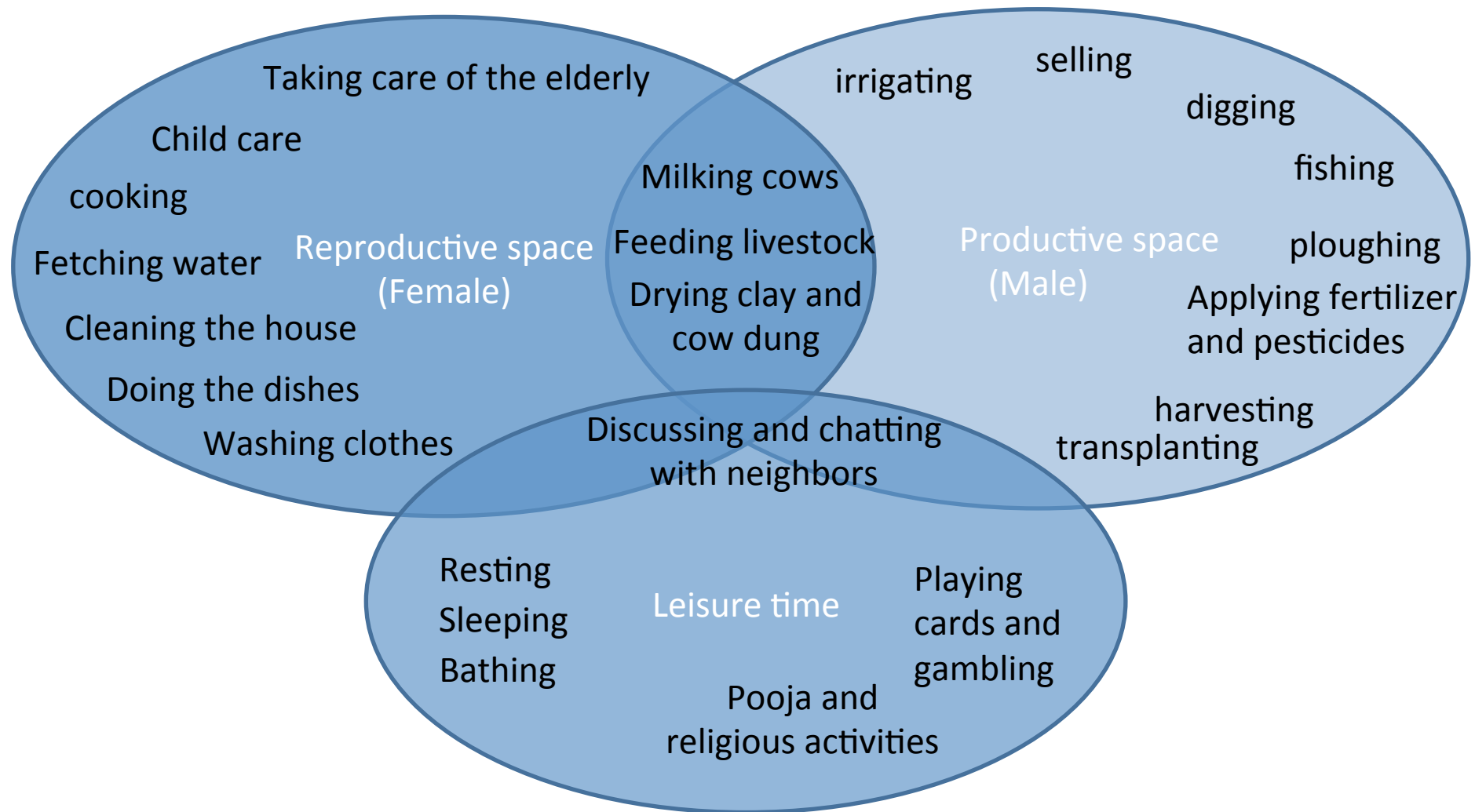
“We women tell men to repair the water connections!”

“...they used to discourage me and tell me ‘aren't you ashamed of yourself for speaking up when males are there’. Now they don't say that but it used to be like that before.” - S\_I4H

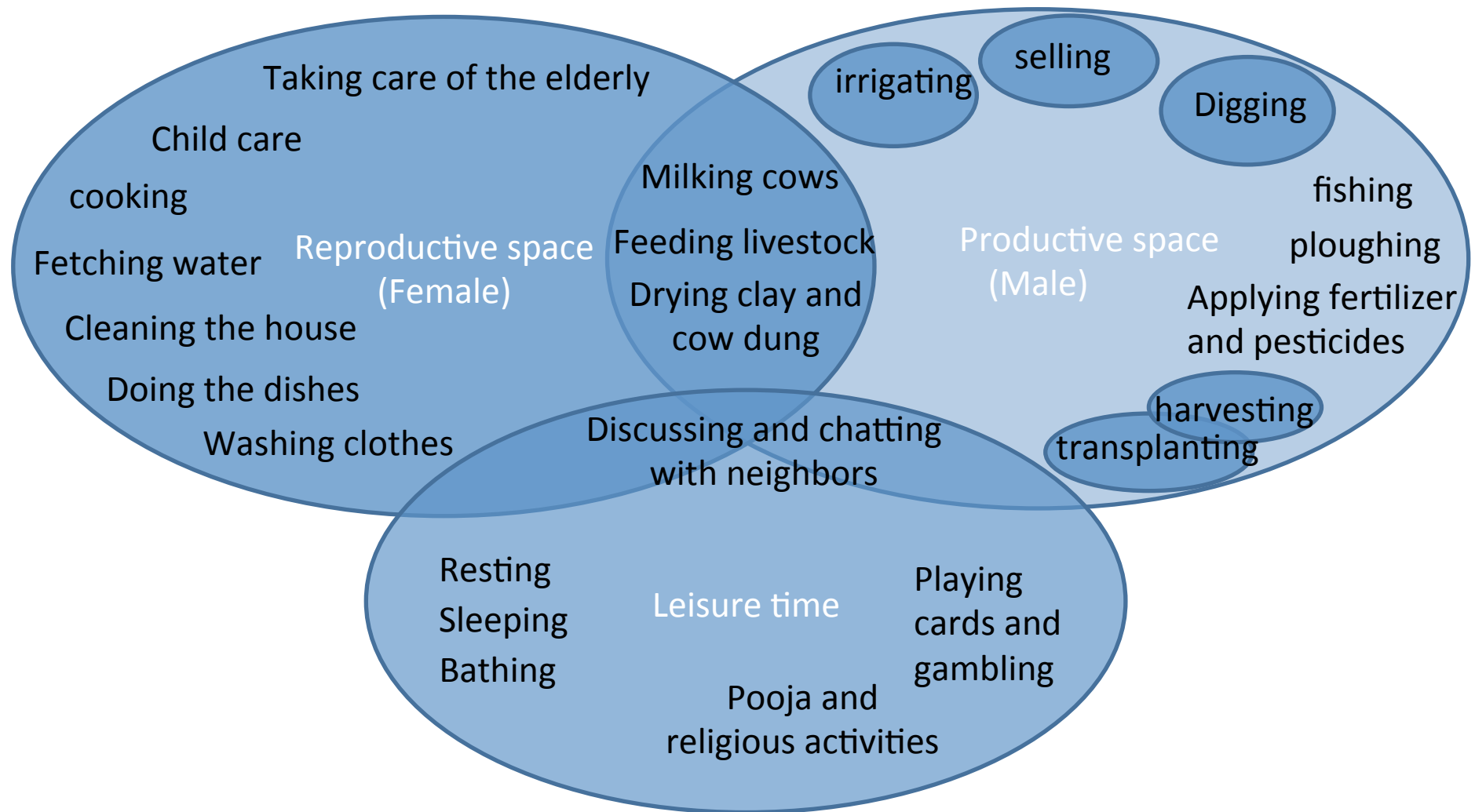
“...if they say thuli bhayeki (too clever) or (...) neta (politician) then how will anyone want to speak up or attend any programs.” - T\_I4M

- Changing gendered norms on speaking
- How can these explicitly be addressed to ensure multi-dimensional uptake of MUS?

### 3) Agency: Women's domestic and men's outside space?

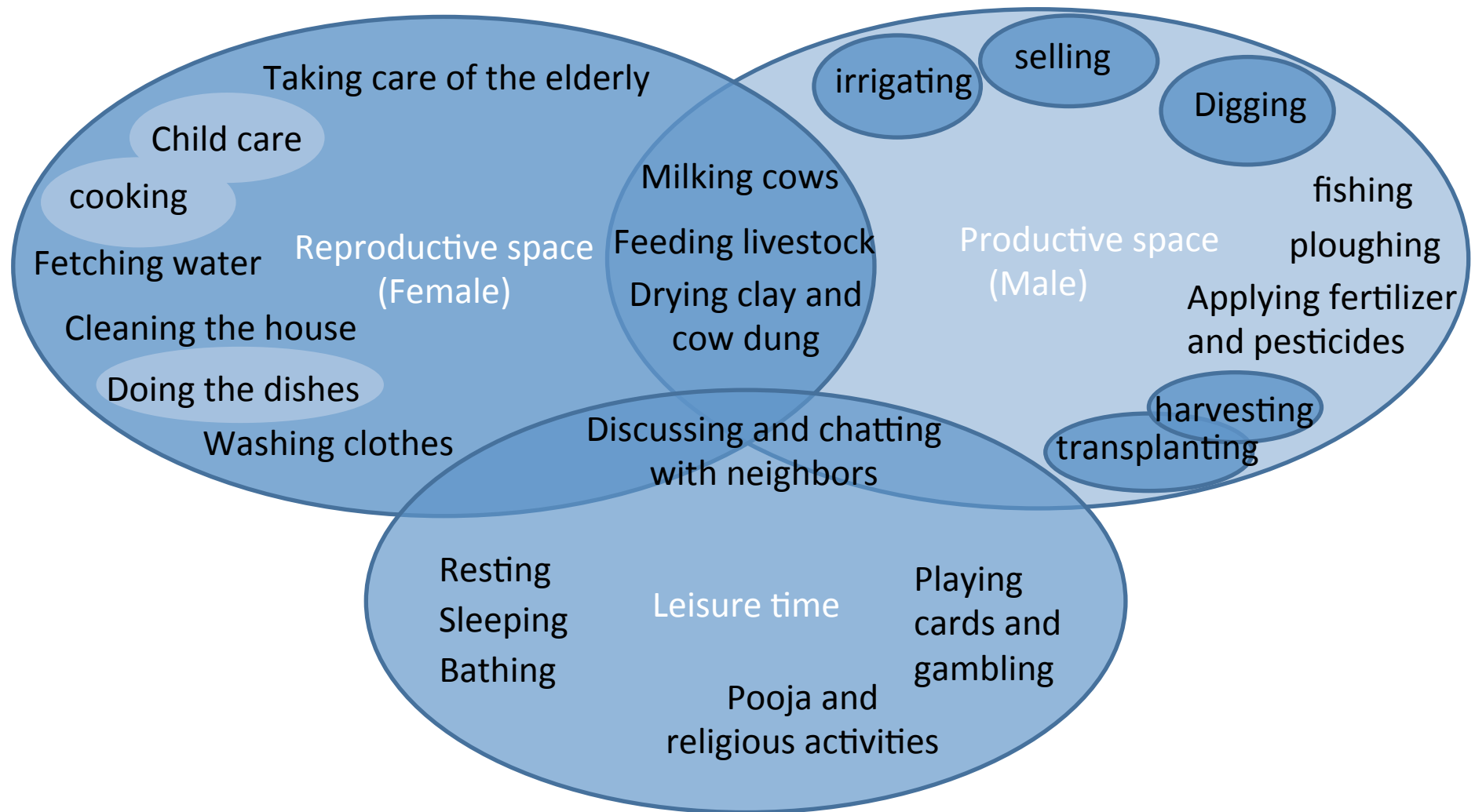


## Changing division of labor and double work burden through migration





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### 3) Agency: Decision-making at household and community level

...depends on the household position and family support:

→ gender, age and the position in the household (e.g. daughter-in-law, mother-in-law) are empowering factors

*“...that is the most important. You need your family to let you attend these trainings.” - T\_I3M*

*“...that too they didn't send me on their own I had to ask them to send me. They didn't send me saying who will do the house work if I'm away... So I said why did you give birth to me then they sent me.” - T\_I3M's daughter*



## 4) Achievements: Individual, household, collective empowerment?

Those who plant are independent, hardworking, don't depend on husbands, they do not have time to talk with others, no quarrels, in groups they learned how to grow (Tiltali FGD Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015)



Vegetable farming in Latamandu, Doti



When I planted vegetables, I earned money, so we can run our home. Women work the most, so we can keep money, and not men. Men also work, and have money for alcohol. Women pay for stationary for school children. If women try to improve something, it will change. We are not behind men, we can bring children up, so we also have power. (Tulasi Balayar, Latamandu, Doti)



Seeding and simple greenhouses in Latamandu, Doti



# Multi-dimensional empowerment through MUS?

## Empowerment is double-relational:

### 1) *Influence of household:*

age and position within household, number of children, support of parents-in-law and husband

### 2) *Supportive individuals influencing collective empowerment:*

sharing knowledge, benefits and skills with household and community

**BUT:** “False empowerment” = suppressive leaders because of sustaining positions within village based on intersections of age, gender, caste, class, and voice (mother-in-law, caste, income, outspoken/beating)



# Multi-dimensional empowerment through MUS?

## Who will benefit?

“Those who have voice will get into new project contracts and receive own tap”  
(Bhagwati 0526)

MUS is selective: who gets MUS might sustain power imbalances in villages by empowering those further who raise their voice first and already have better access to resources than others...

e.g. gender, caste (Dalits), age and the position in the household (e.g. daughter-in-law, mother-in-law) are empowering factors

## Not everyone takes up vegetable farming...

...prior training through RDSC in Latamandu on vegetable farming with 21 participants, of which only 4 took it up → how to increase the number?

- No time (work burden), no money, not enough people to support at home
- trainings will develop only a few leaders who function as role models



## Multi-dimensional empowerment approach to MUS

- addressing existing power relations in the village (caste, gender, age, class)
- addressing existing power relations within the household (parents-in-law)
- addressing those who are not outspoken enough to intervene
- including Dalits hit harder in water scarcity
- integrating (young) men to ensure they invest in farming
- using farmer's knowledge of how to build MUS in such a way that it is protected from landslides







Thank you!

Please contact me at [s.leder@cgiar.org](mailto:s.leder@cgiar.org)