

Mahila Samakhya

Gujarat

National Evaluation 2004

Evaluation Team

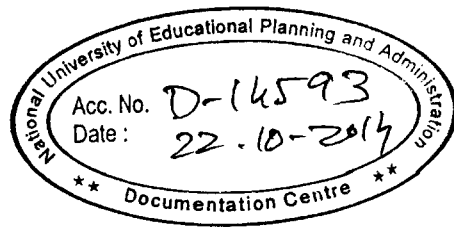
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Executive Summary

Mahila Samakhya (Education for Women's Equality) was conceptualized and initiated by the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1987-89 in response to achieve the goals of NPE (National Policy for Education 1986). It aims at empowering rural women, particularly from socially and economically marginalised groups, who are deprived of formal educational opportunities. Education for empowerment was broadly viewed as a process of building capabilities and confidence of women by imparting information and skills to take informed decisions on various matters affecting their lives at individual, community and societal level.

Gujarat was one of the pioneering states in the country to participate in the Mahila Samakhya (MS) Programme when it commenced in 1989. The programme focused on the sangha model, because it was realized that the women from the socio-economically deprived sections of the population, individually lacked resources, skills and strength to accomplish their self-development. The programme has laid great emphasis on the process of sangha formation, which has been achieved through mass mobilization and awareness raising of the marginalised women in the MS villages through information, awareness and follow-up support.

The MS programme in Gujarat has expanded from two districts to seven in the last 15 years. At present it is operative in 38 blocks (mainly in backward areas) covering 1621 villages. On the whole progress of MS in this state during the last decade and a half can be stated as having an average impact and can be described as below average in last two years. So far 1571 sanghas in operation in Gujarat out of which about 660 are strong, 552 medium and 359 are weak. This means that approximately 42% sanghas are strong enough to manage their activities and grow as autonomous units. Other 35 % have potential to develop into strong sanghas. In certain blocks the sanghas have moved forwards to institutional building efforts for sustainability by registering their federations at Taluka level as well as by creating alternative structures such as Nari adalats and Sanjeevani and Jasood centers for women's health. The weak sanghas constituting 23% of the entire programme are either new sanghas or have not received proper guidance, training and information support for the collective processes.

MS programme has raised the women's awareness about their own rights and developed in them confidence for collective action. The sanghas are emerging as agents for social change in the villages against certain social mal-practices such as child-marriages, illiteracy, dowry and domestic violence. Some strong sanghas are participating in village affairs demanding amenities such as water, sanitation and approach road to the village. Wherever self-help groups for savings and credit have been formed the funds have been utilized to protect the needy women from the exploitation of the moneylenders and to enable them to have some money of their own for small credit needs. Women's awareness about health, economic and legal issues have made an impact on the quality of life. Balika Shikshan Kendras (BSKs) have arrested dropout rates of adolescent girls to some extent and have been successful in mainstreaming them in formal education.

Alternative structures such as Nari Adalat/Mahila Panch which have emerged at the block level have generated confidence among women to address the issues of domestic violence and found cost-effective and quick in redressal of women's social/legal issues. Nari Adalats are not only offering an alternative gender justice system but also act as a pressure groups. Similarly, MS sanghas have been successful in establishing Jasood/Sanjeevani Kendras where women's traditional knowledge of health and alternative medicine is being utilized for providing low-cost medical remedies as well spreading awareness about women's health issues.

Federations of mahasanghas are emerging as larger women's collectives at the block level to provide support to the sangha members on issues requiring wider external intervention and cooperation for issue based action and economic development..

Critical Programme Issues

Organisational

- The state office is almost non-functioning and unable to provide strategic leadership due to frequent changes in leadership and management inefficiency as well as shortage of resource personnel at the state office.
- There is no strategic long term planning based on shared a vision of MS Gujarat functionaries, so activities are conducted in a routine unfocussed manner. Short-term goals are not set within the larger renewed perspective of MS.
- Human resource management is the weakest area as there is no systematic approach for staff planning, recruitment, training, capability development and retention nor for assessment or for discontinuation.
- The SPO (State Project Office) has not been effective in providing guidance for programme inputs as well as research and documentation support to the District Implementation Units (DIUs).
- There is lack of trust, coordination and cooperation amongst the DIUs, which operate in their limited zones controlling 'fiefdoms' of their own without proper accountability.
- Personnel morale is low at all levels due to lack of trust and cooperation between office and the field staff.
- Communication between SPO and DIUs as well as amongst the DIUs is not managed effectively due to a weak, subversive communication system.

Finance and Administration

- Non-availability of funds from GOI on time is a major hurdle in programme implementation within the stipulated time frame, particularly in the current financial year.
- The programme is loaded with high management cost ranging between 40 to 50 percent with disproportionately less expenditure on activities.

- Gross financial irregularities in the districts and the state office have been observed due to lack of proper supervision, weak control system and non- observance of rules and regulations, which too have not been revised.
- Ad hocism in purchases has been frequently practiced due to non- existence of purchase committees and lack of stringent procedures.

Programme Implementation

- Programme implementation has been slack due to ineffective planning, review, follow up and lack of adequate staff at state office and DIUs
- Sufficient efforts to enhance capabilities of the field staff have not been made to enrich them with fresh inputs.
- Supervisory support mechanisms for programme management have been inadequate.
- Implementation of field activities have received a set back due to non-availability of funds since the last half year. Funds have barely been available to pay salaries.

Recommendations*

- A full time capable State Programme Director of high integrity should be immediately appointed to provide dynamic leadership to the programme and build up institutional morale.
- The SPO should organize a vision workshop for all DIUs to develop a perspective plan and determine short-term goals and resource requirements for the programme collectively for the remaining period of the 10th plan.
- A Programme Committee should be formed, by inviting experts in five core areas of MS activities to provide guidance and a new thrust to the programme.
- Effective performance, planning and review system should be designed and implemented immediately with the help of a core group of resource persons familiar with MS.
- Communication between SPO and DIUs needs to be reviewed and made effective.
- Financial rules and regulations with check mechanisms need to be made stringent to control financial disbursements, advances for programme implementation and purchases. Purchase committees should be constituted and their approval should be mandatory for major purchases at state and district level.
- All bank accounts, at state and district levels should be operative with at least two signatories. Payments of salaries should be made by cheque.
- Quarterly audit by the state Accounts officer/Auditor is recommended.

* (See -Issues, recommendations and strategies section)

1. Prelude

Periodic reviews and monitoring are part of a continuous process undertaken by the respective Mahila Samakhya State programmes. The Dutch funded states (Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh (undivided)) have been evaluated as part of the Indo-Dutch Evaluation process in the past. The last evaluation was concluded in 2001 after the first one in 1993. The National Evaluation of December 2004 is of critical importance as it seeks to review and evaluate the programme in all the 9 states that Mahila Samakhya is being implemented in.

Under the 10th Plan, strategic shifts were proposed to take into account the growing maturity of the sanghas and their federations. The focus of this evaluation is to assess the enabling environment created by the programme for the autonomous functioning of the sanghas and emerging federations. In the process the programme's role, especially in older areas is moving in the direction of providing resource support and capacity development to these community organisations. At the same time the MS programme is poised to play a critical role in the larger recent government interventions for girls education – NPEGEL and KGBV. It would be interesting to see the emerging partnerships of the programme with these at different levels or what future strategies are being considered.

The objectives of the evaluation were to:

Assess the progress of the programme based on the evaluation parameters identified for the National Evaluation of 2004 and the progress made since 2001.

2. Critically review programme strategies and interventions in terms of:

- Expansion
- Inputs/ strategies at field level for information dissemination, knowledge building, skill development on identified issues
- Status of sanghas and federations
- Strategies for training and capability building (both at field and organizational level)
- The ability of sanghas and federations to function autonomously
- The impact of the alternative structures such as: non formal educational structures (such as Mahila Shikshan Kendras), forums for redressal of issues of violence (such as Nari Adalats) and women's health (Sanjeevani Kendras)
- MS linkages with mainstream educational programmes.

3. Identify constraints and areas that need strengthening at the current juncture of the programme.

4. Recommend the next steps for the future.

2. Gujarat

Literacy status

Gujarat, the second most industrialised state after Maharashtra has slipped its rank to 15th in the country for literacy (Census 2001), though it ranked 5th in the 1991 census. The high industrial growth rate has been slowed by declining agriculture sector growth, poor environmental and ecology control measures, unrestricted exploitation of water resources and declining food security among the poorest of the poor in the backward areas of the state.

Even though it ranks mid way in the national literacy scale there is growing concern for the declining sex ratio which has come down to 921 in 2001, from 934 in 1991. This is not reflected positively even though 64.64% villages in the state have a female literacy rate of over 40%, while 115 villages (or even more) have 0% female literacy, 293 villages have 5% female literacy and 690 villages have less than 10 % female literacy! The gender gap in literacy is higher in rural areas than in the urban areas as in other states – rural: 26.43%, urban: 13.71 %. Of the MS districts the gender gap is highest in Banaskantha at 32.37 %, with also the highest increase in female literacy at 13.79 % in Panchmahal district, while Baroda has the highest number of villages below 10% literacy for women. Another interesting feature of the state is that though the literacy rate has notched up a further 8.68 from 1991, the population growth has leaped 22.88 %, thereby lowering the literacy achievements that may have occurred in the last decade. At present the total literacy rate is 69.97%, while the male female ratio is 80.50 %: 58.60 %

Table1: Comparative rural literacy rates of districts and blocks of MS Gujarat

1. District – Banaskantha, 1989	Literacy	Literacy	Literacy	Below 10% female literacy
Taluka	Total –47.91	Male – 64.02	Female- 30.73	
Tharad	39.58	57.99	19.69	6 villages
Kankrej	46.10	62.09	28.89	3 villages
Deesa	45.20	61.52	27.77	4 villages
2. District – Baroda, 1990				
Taluka	Total –57.62	Male –70.24	Female- 44.07	
Kanwat	33.35	45.85	20.48	37 villages
Chota Udepur	23.97	32.95	14.93	64 villages
Pavi Jetpur	48.86	64.08	32.77	13 villages
Naswadi	47.16	61.10	32.57	38 villages
Sankheda	62.98	75.90	48.97	2 villages
Vaghodia	65.73	79.18	51.31	1 village
Dabhoi	65.82	76.81	53.86	-
Padra	70.26	82.43	56.74	-
3. District- Dang - 2001				
Taluka	Total	Male	Female	
Ahwa	60.23	71.35	48.99	5 villages
4. District- Panchmahal, 1998				

Taluka	Total -57.53	Male - 73.69	Female- 40.34	
Jambughoda	56.86	72.98	40.01	-
Halol	55.03	70.93	37.62	2 villages
Kalol	64.26	79.32	47.79	-
Godhra	59.32	76.59	40.83	-
5. District – Rajkot, 1990				
Taluka	Total- 66.13	Male – 76.93	Female- 54.88	-
Maliya	58.11	71.37	44.18	4 villages
Jasdan	55.24	68.72	41.53	-
Paddhari	67.47	77.32	57.55	-
Kotda Sanghani	69.52	78.41	59.40	-
Morvi	71.79	83.49	59.82	-
Lodhika	68.67	77.04	60.08	-
Upleta	69.47	78.71	59.82	-
Jamkandoma	72.10	79.13	65.12	-
Jetpur	71.94	80.67	62.79	-
6. District - Sabarkantha, 1989				
	Total- 64.85	Male- 79.32	Female- 49.83	
Khedbrahma	37.77	49.34	25.90	22 villages
Meghraj	56.05	72.59	39.09	-
Vijaynagar	67.23	83.00	52.03	-
Bhiloda	69.65	84.35	55.01	1 village
Idar	71.09	84.24	57.65	-
7. District – Surendranagar, 1998				
	Total - 53.47	Male -65.15	Female -41.28	
Sayla	45.14	59.60	29.41	8 villages
Chotila	46.92	61.98	30.24	7 villages
Muli	52.45	64.82	39.35	7 villages

17 blocks of MS area are also NPEGEL blocks. Source: Status of Female Literacy in Gujarat GCPE 2004

MS in Gujarat

Mahila Samakhya (MS) in Gujarat commenced in 1989, within the National Programme of Mahila Samakhya through Dutch assistance, as a pilot programme in pursuance of the NPE, along with Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. Sabarkantha was the first district to be started, after which the programme commenced in Baroda and Rajkot simultaneously, the next year. Then followed Banaskantha in 1994. In 1998 two more districts, Panchmahal and Surendranagar were added. Finally in 2001, a tribal district Dang was included. Today the programme straddles a wide sweep of 38 blocks covering approximately 1621 villages (in 1571 sanghas) of a total of 3922 villages in these blocks, so it almost covers 41% of the area of the districts.

Table 2: Coverage of Programme

Details	Sabar- kantha	Baro da	Rajkot	Banas kantha	Panch mahal	S.Nagar	Dang	Total
Year	1989	1990	1990	1994	1998	1998	2001	
Blocks	05	08	10	06	05	03	01	38
Villages	294	304	373	250	120	130	150	1621
Sanghas	294	304	373	200	120	130	150	1571
Sangha Members	11000	6901	11190	3392	3300	2800	1780	40363
Sahayoginis	23	24	21	17	11	9	15	120
Maha Sangha	05		05		04	03		17
" Members	2680		1500		2202	825		7207
Mahila Panch / Nari Adalat	02	05	09	00	04	01		21
Mahila Kutir	09	03	08	01	02			23

Source: Annual report 2004

The programme in the districts also grew in phases to have the present out reach. When it was started, it was thought that MS, with its empowerment approach with feminist leanings would provide an alternative perspective for Gujarat, within the rich existing climate of NGO operations that are part a culture of welfare and philanthropic institutions over the last hundred years. Hence, it was thought that MS would bring in a new orientation to the prevalent culture. Besides this, there were may backward areas where women's social, educational, economic status was still low, even with a myriad NGOs and institutions working in the development sector.

Gujarat MS has been beset with multiple administrative and management problems and issues since over a decade. But the programme has hurtled along at the field level despite them. One of them has been the quick turnover of the State Programme Directors at the state level, due to which the programme has received setbacks. Even the Indo Dutch Evaluation Mission of 1995-96 pointed out that there is constant shuffling of State Office and District Implementation Unit (DIU) personnel. Staff shortage has always been an issue along with frequent transfers and turnover. This has affected the growth and qualitative development of the programme in steady cycle.

The Indo-Dutch Review Mission of 2001 also reiterated the need for consolidation and autonomous functioning of the programme. This did not happen so the programme has been impeded in consolidating and achieving its goals. The intensive inputs required for consolidation have been subverted due to short term leadership stints of officials on deputation from government or others who leave before the results of any planning initiatives become visible. The long pending management and administration related issues concerning programme inputs, co-ordination of activities, alliance building, loose regulatory mechanisms and non transparent financial dealings have culminated in a virtual stagnation of the programme at both state and district levels at present.

The current mid term review mission in the 10th Plan Phase is certainly critical, as it has to take into account the management and implementation issues in the programme in order to streamline and revamp it to achieve the goals within the stipulated time frame remaining. The National Office and the State government have to take cognisance of the deterioration of the programme and adopt stringent measures to streamline it, so that the grassroots level federations can become sustainable before end of the 10th Plan Phase.

At the outset, it may be mentioned that programme issues are at their zenith of mismanagement which has called for a cessation of contracts of all staff by end of December 2004, to make way for new selections and revamp MS Gujarat by weeding out negative elements and obstructionists.

Though the programme covers a large geographical area in terms of expanse, the impact on the ground, reveals less than 40% success even after 15 years of interventions and many sahyoginis who have been with MS since its inception. In Baroda, Sabarkantha, Banaskantha and Rajkot where a large contingent 85 experienced sahyoginis are functioning, the number of sanghas, which are strong remains low. However, it is in these areas that the programme has a small visibility with a few strong federations, alternate structures for health and social justice (only 25%) together with other social changes that have come about. Consequently, what emerges as positive, as reported in our experience in the field does not speak for the whole programme. Therefore, the impact of the programme has become visible only in a limited sense in scattered pockets. Ultimately, since the programme has experienced a decline in both quality of output and impact (as reported) it has to be remodeled for the remaining phase of the 10th Plan to enable the sapling that have scope for sustainability to survive.

Expansion and Outreach

According to the 10th Plan document of Mahila Samakhya, the programme in Gujarat was slated for expansion in educationally backward areas to reach out to the poor and marginalized women. In Gujarat, MS operates 17 educationally backward blocks in 7 districts as represented in Table 1 above.

Currently, MS Gujarat, has not expanded either in new districts, new blocks or new villages in the same blocks. This is because, implementation of the programme within the perspective of the 10th Plan document was proposed in the Executive Committee meeting of 5/2/2004. Subsequently, there were changes in the leadership of the programme at the State Programme Office (SPO), which also hindered the implementation process. Meanwhile, the districts, particularly those which have been in operation for the last 15 years - Rajkot, Baroda, Sabarkantha had already made some initial plans for the withdrawal of sahyoginis from areas where the sanghas had become strong and formulated federations for self – reliant autonomous functioning. Even in other districts, which started later, the district units had made sketchy plans for the new pattern of operations. However, these were not concretized, so block level structures as envisaged in the new phase have not come into operation.

This new pattern under the 10th Plan proposes strategic shifts to take into account the growing maturity of the sanghas to enable their autonomous functioning and that of the emerging federations. In the process the role of programme functionaries, especially in older areas is to move in the direction of providing resource support to clusters of sanghas and federations. At the same time the MS programme is poised to play a critical role in larger recent government interventions for girls' education through National Programme of education for Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) schemes. The status of the perspective of the 10th Plan in MS Gujarat is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Status in Gujarat as per 10th Plan requirements

Issues	Requirements	Status in Gujarat
Critical coverage New Expansion New Districts	Minimum coverage of 250 villages in a district Select educationally backward blocks Start operations with 100 villages and then move on to 250 villages	Not yet in 3 districts started in 2000-01 Programme already operational in educationally backward blocks No new blocks or districts of expansion yet
Structural changes	Withdrawal of Sahyoginis in old areas within two years Block units with 1 Junior Resource Person -JRP (50 villages and 2 Cluster Resource Person - CRPs (25 villages)	Withdrawal of sahyoginis in the old areas/districts not undertaken as of 2001. New block level structures not in place.
Strengthening of Federations	MS DIU to play a role in the co-ordination and management of Mahila Shikshan Kendras, Nari Adalats, Sanjeevani Kendras Capacity building of federations through trainings and resource inputs and alliance building	Some Nari Adalats/ Sanjeevani Kendras strengthened through trainings, exposure and financial autonomy. Similarly some federations are capable of functioning autonomously -50%
Expansion in new areas	Withdrawal of sahyoginis in 5 years and shift to block level structure	Pending.
Dissemination of MS strategies and resource support to other sectors	Expanding the pool of trainers to include sangha women and other MS personnel	Pool of trainers available. Their skills and competencies to be enhanced for further qualitative inputs at Federation level
Role in GOI programmes like NPEGEL and KGBV	Work in model clusters of educationally backward blocks for linking up with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for gender focussed inputs for girls education	Some understanding of role to participate in interventions but no concrete planning at district level to implement the programmes.

State Resource Centre to meet increasing demand for inputs for concretising MS experience	Provide information and technical support to Federations Develop/ disseminate gender strategies, information pedagogy for women's empowerment and education Network with other organisations and programmes	State Resource Centre not yet envisaged. In adequate capacity development and skill enhancement inputs for information pedagogy & women's literacy. Visible only at district level than at state level
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District teams have thought about the structure of the new teams at block/cluster level, that is operations without sahayoginis, through JRPs and CRPs. They have also planned complete withdrawal of sahayoginis in blocks (about 2-3 blocks) where strong federations and alternative structures have emerged. For sanghas that are not yet fully autonomous, or linked up with federations, capacity building measures have been identified to an extent. However, in the context of the dispensation that the contracts of all personnel would be terminated as of 31st December 2004, with provisions for reselection after due process of interviews, the programme activities are in a state of flux. An additional reason is the non-transfer of grant funds from GOI, since August 2004, which has hampered field level activities.

Only in some districts like Rajkot and Sabarkantha have some of the strong sanghas been participant in the expansion process indirectly. In the course of their work they have developed relationships with groups of women from adjoining villages, which would like to undertake similar initiatives as in the sanghas. But these are not very significant in number as once they come together the new sanghas need other capacity building inputs which the sahyoginis are not able to provide on a regular basis.

3. Inputs/ strategies for information dissemination, knowledge building, skill development

The district teams have done only some work, with whatever limitations, in the period 2001-2003, for enhancing the knowledge base, awareness and information level of rural women through different strategies such as:

- Melas/ camps for health have been organised in Sabarkantha, Baroda, Surendranagar and Panchmahal.
- Conducting trainings in the five core areas of operation - Education/ Literacy, Health, Panchayati Raj, Economic activities (sustainable agriculture, cottage industries, natural resource management) and law. These have mainly been for the core teams of federations who have to take them further to the sanghas. There is a need of follow up processes at sangha level.
- Strengthening their knowledge through workshops in these core areas and also management of federations, accounts/ book keeping, administration of sanghas, maintaining records etc. One time inputs have been made to some federations only.
- Meetings with women from other states at the large national level workshop - Sanghamitra - where they discussed about federation formation and sustainability. Expanding their horizons through exposure visits to other districts and other states to learn from multiple experience – to some extent only – after Sanghamitra.

- Linkages with other NGOs, government programmes and issues at district and block level through contacts and working relationship with Taluka (Block) Officials, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), Revenue Officers, Panchayat members, Rural Technology Institute, Chetna, Sewa Rural, Swati, AKRSP and Agriculture Science Centre in some districts.

Dissemination of information and knowledge has taken place through songs, street-plays, posters, pamphlets, and video documentary on certain activities and issues, used during melas and camps. This is not available in all districts and requires further simplification for use by sanghas, as literacy levels of many women are still low.

At district level, where staff is available and has connected with local institutions, NGO groups and government departments the training inputs and workshops with sanghas have impacted learning among women. They have been able to use their skills and new learning to apply it to their needs. But since sanghas, especially the strong ones, are growing fast in terms of economic activities, education and literacy, legal issues/ casework and health management their demands for information and training are tremendous. Even the medium level sanghas need the same after they have started to deal with the problems coming forth in their every day dealings. The accelerated pace for seeking information, learning and action has not been met to the extent of their needs.

The new generation of learning and monitoring materials and strategies desired for them is not available. Actually, sanghas need basic pictorial, simply worded formats for monitoring of sangha/federation activities, training tools to reach out to more women, basic strategy designs/steps to deal with issues at sangha and village level and also step-wise modules to use during trainings. Education materials, both for training and for learning needs to be more gender focussed, particularly for literacy centres and Balika Shikshan Kendras (BSKs). Both for adolescent girls and adult women continuing education strategies and materials have to be developed. For post literacy. Also proper learning assessment tools are desired to evaluate the learners for further sustained inputs.

Linkages with mainstream processes for women's literacy and girls' education are sporadic and scattered in some blocks and villages of the programme lacking a continued connectivity over a period of time. The recent Saksharta Deep literacy effort is one such example – the sangha women in all areas of MS operation were not involved and neither were the kishoris (adolescent girls) who had passed out from the BSKs.

The strategy for MS partnership with NPEGEL and KGBV is yet to be clearly worked out at district level. There is potential for federations and sanghas to take on the ECCE centres in three districts, so a plan should be chalked out to hand over the responsibilities to them.

Over the last year the above activities have being much reduced and also not held in the planned schedule way because of non- availability of funds and managerial and administrative issues due to disturbances at SPO and district level.

Sanghas

So far, there are 1571 Sanghas in operation, out of which about 660 are strong, 552 medium and 359 are weak Sanghas. This means, that approximately 42% strong sanghas are able to tackle issues at family, community and village level, because they have some degree of conceptual understanding of these issues through MS. Not only can they take up issues but have become participant in village level forums for education, health, village development, issues of violence, putting up grievances and demanding accountability from the government functionaries and officials. They have come along way from breaking their shackles of silence, oppression and suffering both at home and in the sphere of the community. This has been the fruit of inputs, discussions, reflections and issue based action over the last 10-15 years. These sanghas have been able to coalesce as federations or mahasanghas at cluster level that is among a group of 30 - 40 sanghas.

Sisar sangha in Muli Block , Surendranagar district

The team met the women of the sangha in Sisar village at random on the second day of the field visit in Surendranagar. This is mixed case sangha (Harijans, Darbar, Paghi, Naroda and Daima castes) of about 20 members, who vary in age from 30-75 years. Ramoben who is also a member of the federation is the leader of the sangha. She is about 35 years and has two of her daughters studying in the MSK at Doliya. The sangha was proud to relate that they give importance to girls' education and have seen to it that all school going girls and boys attend school regularly. They monitor the out of school and irregular children ensuring that they do not bunk school for doing work in the cotton fields. The women also monitor the attendance and regularity of teachers in the government school situated in the village. The sangha confidently reported that their village is alcohol free. When there are cases of family discord there are taken to the Mahila Panch. They keep a track of the services of the ANM and have requested her to come regularly to the village for health services, she also facilitates them at the PHC. These women have done away with the money-lender as they have their own savings and credit activity for small loans. For domestic consumption the sangha purchases wheat and cooking oil in bulk to economise and put by the savings in the sangha. The members take responsibilities in rotation to take up and monitor village level activities. The village Sarpanch too is a member of the sangha and has facilitated toilets for women, drinking water and regular meetings of the Panchayat and Gram Sabha. The sangha women participated in the literacy campaign in the village to ensure that other women join the camps. The sangha expects MS to help them explore avenues/linkages for income generation activities and vocational training for quite a few girls who have completed class XII. This village is quite aware about the issue of child marriages so they do not take place since the sangha has merged as a strong group.

PS -This type of sangha is not a norm, but a unique exception, which can become a model.

The medium group of sanghas, which approximate to about one third of the total number, still continue to be dependent on the sahyoginis/programme for guidance and capacity building, even though they are able to take up some issues and activities on their own. They require both support and capacity building inputs from the programme as well as from the stronger sanghas and federations, in areas where they do not feel confident. This is particularly the case of say a public issue like rape, or dealing with the Taluka Development Officer, or an issue like drinking water which affects not only a single village but perhaps an entire cluster. They need clarity on the approach or strategies to

involve the larger group, also backup from the programme in terms of linkages and alliances from the larger network of sangha clusters.

The third group of sanghas, which are categorised as weak sanghas constitutes 23 % of the entire programme in both old and new districts. Some of them are new sanghas, while other are weak in terms of sangha formation and collective processes. In areas where the sahyoginis have left (e.g. Dabhoi block in Baroda) or have been withdrawn to other areas sanghas have been left without guidance. Other reasons why sanghas are weak are- strong caste/social divides or even when there is political interference. In a couple of blocks a single sahyogini is working with 20-30 sanghas so they are not able to learn and grow at the normal pace because she is not able to facilitate inputs to the group of sanghas. For instance in Surendranagar the programme covers 157 villages in 3 blocks and has 60 strong sanghas and 70 weak sanghas after six years of inputs. There are 9 sahyoginis who are unable to provide proper support and guidance to the 100 odd, medium and weak sanghas who need to move up from this level. The sanghas of this category continue to be weak in their understanding of issues and collective processes.

However, in general, the sangha women certainly do bring forth the following:

- Awareness and information levels - women's rights, entitlements

Sanghas, whether very strong to function autonomously or those who are yet not fully empowered to work as collectives, still do have a high level of awareness about women's rights regarding dowry, maintenance, wages, redressal for violence and atrocities. They are able to articulate their voices and demand family and social justices in small and large spheres through collective action, *morchas* (agitation), negotiations and meetings. For problems like drinking water and link road to village, they have able to negotiate with Panchayat and Taluka Development Officers to avail these facilities for the village. In several cases, women have demanded accountability from village health workers to assist an immunization and rendering other health services. Thereafter, they have developed friendships with the ANMs to attend to the health needs of the village on a regular basis. Those sangha members, who are members of the Panchayat, are vocal and conscious of taking up development agendas and women's issues in the Gram Sabha and Panchayat meetings. They have also started inspiring other women Panchayat members to become active and participant in village administration. In tribal areas (Dang, Panchmahal), sangha women are trying to break harmful traditional habits, customs and rigid orthodoxies.

- Ability to strategize and address social and gender issues - impact

The presence of sanghas has certainly, impacted the social structure of the community and social values in the most marginally deprived and backward areas of the districts. Sangha women themselves say that the age of marriage of girls in their areas of operation has risen to 18 years and above. Though only in about 20-25% of the area, but nevertheless it has started to happen consciously. This has largely happened in sangha women's own families, where their daughters are attending schools, going to the MSK or going to residential schools like the Vikas Vidyalaya (residential institution run by a

charitable trust for girls and young women). The impact is not so visible in communities, which are rigid and stay away from sangha influences due to social hierarchy.

Women have become very vocal and active on issues of violence whether at home or socially. They are able to raise questions and ask redressal regarding wife beating, custody of children, rape and molestation, *stri-dhan* (a girl's assets generally in the form of jewelry), torture, cheating, polygamy, adultery etc. They have also made interventions in all male *Jati* - Panchayats (caste panchayats) through the Mahila Panch and the Nari Adalats to negotiate for women's cases. After the first Nari Adalat was set up in Baroda in 1995 many others came up in other districts. This goes to show that the gender justice, counseling and casework of Nari Adalats is very much in demand by women.

The strategies sangha women engaged in order to fulfill their demands and to ask for their entitlements and rights are through collective action by moving as a group to the Panchayat or to the Taluka Office or to the school to place their viewpoint to seek assistance. When help does not come immediately, the members take turns to visit the office or person at intervals to make known their grievances and ask for action update. In cases of violence and other forms of social injustice several sanghas of a cluster or even a block get together to pressurize for justice and action. They take initiative to support the aggrieved party by insisting on social justice through the law enforcement machinery and the alternative Nari Adalats. They have now the courage to even negotiate for village level politics asking for drinking water, land for the Kutir (sangha hut) and even an approach road to the village by saying that they will not vote if this does not get done.

In areas where the sanghas have taken up saving activities, though on a small scale, they have impacted in out doing the exploitative money-lenders in their business. Through sangha savings, they have taken up small level credit activities to help women get ready loans at low interest rates (2%). Each sangha has its own rules regulations and norms. In this way, the sangha savings/funds have not only eased the financial burden of poor marginal women, but made them self reliant for small credit needs. They have in this way expanded the other activities of the sanghas with the interest recovered, which is subsequently used for income generating activities whether individual or collective. More than 13,000 women are involved in savings activities with a sum of over Rs. 85 lakh in circulation. Sanghas are also contributing to federations by way of membership fees. A small percentage of sanghas have taken up economic activities (bag making, herbal oils/powders, sustainable agriculture, vermi-composting, bamboo craft etc.), but need more clarity on sustaining what they are doing to be able to contend with the larger market forces. Many others that want to start small ventures need assistance for feasibility analysis to choose the right product for manufacturing and assessing the market trends for absorption of the product.

Awareness about women's health and its management has helped them to improve their own health and that of the community through alternative health practices and the use of traditional medicines and home-remedies. They have even made the traditional mid-wife (*Dai*) aware about safe and healthy pre-natal and post-natal practices. In remote areas,

those women who are associated with the health centres (Sanjeevani and Jasood Kendras) also assist the ANM in rendering her duties with more efficiency.

- Impact on education of girls/ children and their own education

As regards education, they have become active campaigners for girls' education and education in general at village level and at cluster level. They are able to monitor the attendance of children and girls in schools and ensure that teachers are regular and actually teach when they come to the school. Some impact on women's literacy has been achieved through literacy camps, literacy classes, BSKs and awareness through celebrations like world literacy day and Shaksharta melas (Literacy fairs). Adolescent girls who are dropouts or have never been to school have been mainstreamed through BSKs. Women have participated in literacy camps organized through SSA under the Saksharta Deep Programme where sahyoginis and teachers from SSA have participated in holding the camps. MS has ensured that women from sanghas participate in this campaign.

In the extremely backward areas of migrant and tribal populations the sanghas have not been able to monitor and develop a consciousness about the continuity of girls'/children's education. Children are engaged in cotton picking and other farm work during the short (four month) agricultural season for economic sustainability of the family. They have added to the success of campaigns for enrollment but have not been able to impact retention. There may other school based reasons too for the non- participation in regular education, besides attendance. This was found in both Surendanagar and Baroda, which were visited. The SSA's initiative to introduce migration cards for children who move with parents for economic reasons, to attend school in the place of migration, has yet to take off. MS sanghas could take this up with families that migrate to ensure that their children do not miss out on education.

ECCE Centres

In a number of villages where the ICDS Programme of the Government has not reached Ms runs ECCE centres with the assistance of Bal Sakhis and the sangha women.. The team visited two such centres at Vejalpur and Panvelpur in Vaghodia block (Baroda district). Established in 1991, they cater to the needs of pre school children of under privileged women in the area. The environment of the centres was found conducive to the overall growth of these children. There were 17 girls and 16 boys at Vejalpur center and 13 girls and 10 boys at Panvelpur centre varying between 0-5 years of age. The centres run between 10.00 am to 3.00 p.m. The children bring their food with them and the centre also serves supplementary nutritive food once daily, which is facilitated and supervised by sangha women.

The first centre (at Velajpur) is run in the sangha kutir, which was constructed by the sangha with assistance from the Panchayat and MS funds as well. It is located near the village primary school, so it has seen many children move to the school since its inception. Children who come here are from the mixed community of the landed gentry Vaghelas, Muslims and Vasava who are employed in agricultural labour.

The second centre at Panvelpur operates in the Panchayat Ghar offered by the Sarpanch since it started in 1991. The Sarpanch herself comes to serve in the centre and monitors the cooked food supplied by the sangha, which spends about Rs. 460 on a regular monthly basis. Some

supplementary funds for nutrition are added by MS along with toys play materials, charts, mats etc. The health staff of the Primary Health Centre, who visited them regularly for health check-ups, immunized the children. The children were also prepared for their subsequent admission to primary school. Around 15-20 children annually go to the village school from these centres.

The children looked clean, happy and healthy. The activities at the crèche include teaching children rhymes, tables, story telling and imparting basic information on health and hygiene. Hafiza and Lalita who manage the centre at Vejalpur also play a central role in the MS programme. Hafiza is on the health committee of their federation and Lalita is a member of the legal committee. Such centres are ready for receiving grants under NPEGEL through the sanghas so an effort must be made to transfer funds to them so they manage, monitor and run them independently.

Literacy efforts to educate women have been on in Rajkot, Baroda and Sabarkantha on a wider scale than in Banaskantha, Panchmahal, Surendranagar and Dang through literacy classes and camps. They had linked up with Nirantar Shiksha scheme of DPEP in Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, Surendranagar, Baroda and Rajkot in some blocks. The learning and retention levels of women have to be assessed for further inputs so that they are not literate merely for the sake of writing their names. They require reading and writing materials for continuing their education linked to their daily lives, livelihoods and environment. Women in all districts do require continuing education to sustain the literacy efforts and maintain constant contact with teachers.

Though women receive training on various subjects and issues they need to have better literacy skills to manage the affairs of sanghas and mahasanghas. Possibly MS could develop special primers/curricula for women that would enable them to continue their basic literacy and at the same time get information and training in core areas. This would expand the demands of learning from women and also round off their education with the acquisition of skills and competencies. In Surendranagar, a survey was conducted in 8 villages to assess the literacy rate of the area. The results show that literacy rates for women are far lower than shown in official records of these villages. Such surveys have been done in other blocks/districts too, but have not been collated and analyzed to assess trends for planned inputs to strengthen the education of women.

Literacy classes with women need further evaluation to assess their learning levels. A review in Baroda district brought out that women have numerical information in their heads but have difficulty in writing numbers, can identify some words and make small sentences. The reading writing and learning skills of women who have participated in the literacy classes needs formal assessment. This could be taken up in the context of different levels of learning or stages of learning, with assessment after each stage. In the present context of sanghas and federations demanding economic development activities or more information on health, panchayat, environment etc the learning materials could be developed on these subjects so as to help women to get subject matter information as well as pick up contextual literacy. Baroda, Banaskantha, Sabarkantha and Surendranagar districts could have developed a focussed strategy for women's literacy because there are many villages here with women's literacy rate below 10%.

Vatavacha village in Sayla Block, Surendranagar

During the period of review, Saksharata Deep (Literacy campaign) was underway in all villages of Gujarat under SSA. The objective was to reach out to the illiterate population so that they would learn to write their names at least. The evaluation team visited Vatavacha – an interior MS village to witness the processes. The Sangha women of the village, adolescent girls, youth and many male members of the community including the Sarpanch and panchayat members had gathered to discuss their problems.

What was surprising was the non-involvement of the BSK girls in the literacy campaign. We assumed that they would have been voluntarily involved in literacy campaign. This was a learning opportunity for BSK girls to work with sangha women and link up with wider social processes. But the MS functionaries had not coordinated this.

The Sarpanch informed that elected members were not participating in the activities of the Gram Panchayat. The male members of their families were representing them. Given the kind of experience and exposure the sangha women have, their non-participation in the Gram Sabha and village body was rather revealing. It is however, not easy for women to take on the challenges of politics. They felt diffident to enter public place so far reserved for male members. Elected women representatives required support from the sangha women. The Sarpanch assured us that the 2 elected women representatives will be encouraged to participate along with 5 sangha members as observers. This village Panchayat also accepted the challenge of achieving 100% literacy within 2 years with the involvement of youth and women in this endeavour.

MS needs to organise regular training workshops for elected Panchayat members to develop their confidence to attend the meetings, participate in the proceedings and to encourage them to take up women's issues. Forging links between mahila sanghas and grassroots level government bodies must facilitate a functional convergence at village, block and district levels.

The Balika Shikshan Kendras (BSKs) are fulfilling the need of dropout girls to continue their education in Rajkot, Baroda, Surendranagar and Panchmahal catering to adolescent girls. The students were identified through surveys conducted in the areas there were large numbers of drop out girls. The six BSKs are operational in only some blocks of districts where 20-30 girls are enrolled in each, taught by part time and full time teachers. They are prepared to appear for the class five and class seven exams depending on the level at which they dropped out.

The space and environment of the BSKs is large (availability of buildings for BSKs are not a problem due to many charitable Trusts in the state) and conducive for learning, where the girls stay for a year to prepare for their exams. The care free look of the girls and the cheery smiles speak of their happiness in staying together and concentrating on learning as a full time activity. The daily routine is well chalked out to occupy them with lessons as well as extra curricular activities, which they would not have taken up a regular school. In the two BSKs visited, in Surendranagar and Baroda – the former had 33 students for two different levels and just one teacher, while the other had 16 students and three teachers. This was an imbalance that would impact the learning achievements of the girls, but was the result of non-availability of teachers for a residential set up due to unwillingness to move out of the area.

BSK teachers need further capacity building on gender issues, social diversities, classroom transaction and processes, socio-mental development of young adolescents in order to enhance their education prospects. This will ensure that girls who pass out from

BSKs are able to connect with sanghas on social issues. Teachers for all Balika Shikshan Kendras need a common format for teaching, besides taking up the regular school curriculum.

BSKs in Surendranagar and Baroda

Sangha women have realised the importance of education for themselves and their girls. The MS programme in Surendranagar has maintained constant touch with girls who dropped out of literacy classes. A Balika Saksharta Kendra has been started in the house of one sangha member with 20 such girls in the year 2000. These girls were then admitted in a primary school. In 2001, a survey was conducted to find out the dropout rate amongst adolescent girls and subsequently a workshop was organised with these girls. These efforts culminated in restarting the BSK in 2002 at Doliya (Sayala block) with 54 girls in a large rented place, belonging to a Jain Trust with proper facilities.

In the following year, 26 girls took advantage of this BSK at Doliya. At the time of our visit, 33 girls were studying appear for mainstream examinations of standard 5 (17 girls) and 7 (18 girls). It was planned that they would be linked up with a residential school for further studies till standard 10th. A total of 133 girls have taken advantage of the BSK at Doliya. Many of them (70) have continued further studies at Vikas Vidyalaya.

The girls looked happy and cheerful. They had access to a library and games such as volley ball, badminton, even cricket and yoga practice. They were also acquainted with sewing/stitching and beauty culture, about which their mothers were happy. A single teacher was catering to both the classes as the second one had left. She managed the BSK along with her teaching duties. The girls were basically taught the formal school course in the routine manner. This probably because the teacher had not been exposed to new pedagogy. At the same time the girls were not clued into basic general knowledge or to the social issues of the area. At least 50% of the girls said they were involved in cotton picking when they were home. Six of the girls were engaged to be married, at a later date. The girls were unaware about issues of child labour and child marriage.

The team also visited the Balika Shikshan Kendra (BSK) at Jarod, in Baroda district. Sixteen girls were housed in spacious section of a private school of a Trust. BSK was started to help the younger girls to achieve certain basic minimum level of education so that they could then join the mainstream education system. So far 119 girls have benefited from this BSK in Baroda. This BSK underwent a crisis due to threats from unwanted elements so the strength of girls in the present session was reduced from 80 to 16 as parents withdrew their girls. Now there are 3 teachers for a small group of girls.

The pattern of teaching using regular text books is the same as in Surendranagar BSK. The girls start their daily routine with morning ablutions, cleaning and breakfast. Prayers, at an altar set up for the purpose follow the breakfast. Then the classes are conducted as per a timetable till 4 pm. After that the girls are free for extra-curricular activities following which they study on their own and then the day ends with dinner.

In both BSKs the girls require far more exposure and general awareness and information than imparted to them at present. For this teachers need specialised inputs on women's issues, political awareness, general knowledge and competencies to use more participatory classroom practices. There is also a need for tracking these girls and helping those who do not join mainstream schools to continue their education through distance learning. The MS field staff now faces a demand from older girls, who have completed class 10 or 12, for technical/vocational training in preparation for employment activities.

- Women's participation in Panchayats

The visibility and voices of women in Panchayats has been phenomenal in some MS areas because of the training inputs to women Panchayat members and others of the Gram Sabha. They have become conversant with the functioning of Panchayats, the administrative set up, their roles and responsibilities, agendas for village development while negotiating their spaces in the male dominated self- governance arena at village/Taluka level. The men in the Panchayats are learning to listen to women and also to understand their leadership role. This may not be a happening thing in all Panchayats, but nevertheless a beginning has been made as elsewhere. Due to awareness, Mahila Sarpanches have dared to raise questions about practices in Panchayats.

By submitting proposals for no confidence if they disagreed, women members have exerted their power. Sangha members and MS functionaries support them. Women have started attending the Gram Sabha and members have demanded their rights to sit on a chair as equal members of the Panchayat. A district wise break up of women at different levels in Panchayat is indicative of their growing participation in the political arena. However, all women members elected are not equally knowledgeable or active players.

Table 5: Women's Participation in Panchayats

No	District	President Taluka Panchayat	No. of women Sarpanchs in Gram Panchayat	No. of women Panchayat Members
1	Sabarkantha	1	20	80
2	Rajkot	3	117	502
3	Surendranagar	1	56	360
4	Panchmahal	3	90	22
5	Vadodara	-	20	113
6	Banaskantha	2	35	220
7	Dang	1	3	29
8	Total	11	319	1024

Source: Annual Report 2002-03

Federations

After the Sanghamitra Workshop held in New Delhi, 2000, sangha women came back with a renewed vision for themselves, to consolidate their work in order to sustain awareness building, knowledge creation, dissemination, capacity building for self - management and also to have a larger network of women's collective at cluster and block level. The process of federation formation has commenced in the last three years in various ways and processes. At present, the federations in 23 blocks are at different level of maturity and autonomy depending upon the inputs rendered and the socio-economic situation of the area. The size ranges from a coverage area of 15 to 74 villages. All the federations have a central working committee along with five different committees in core areas. The members of this core committee are drawn from the different sanghas of different blocks.

The processes of building federations has started in two ways:

- Through the Core Committees which take up women's issues agendas in a concerted way, with training inputs, exposure and proper consolidation processes
- The Registration of the federation, with the Core Committee, after which capacity building and training are rendered to them.

Of these this the former model of federations is stronger, more autonomous, having a presence with the critical mass due to bottom up processes that have gone into their creation. Some federations, like these in Rajkot, Baroda are more sustainable, though they need inputs to function as fully autonomous bodies eventually. Consequently, the programme is in a position to withdraw from such blocks, as they are quite self-sufficient and can act as resource group in the same block. While the latter model of federations, need more input for self-management and autonomous functioning in order to carry forward their agendas and take other sanghas along with them. Despite their formal registration they are still dependent on MS for guidance and training.

- Institutional processes and the agendas of federations

The registered federations at the clusters block a core committee of members responsible for the operation of the committee having a Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary and two other members. This group is supposed to manage the accounts, planning of the inputs and strategies for action on issues, extend support to sanghas for capacity building and information sharing and providing training inputs when necessary.

Members of core teams on five major areas further support the core committee / sectors: health, education, Panchayati raj, economic activities and legal assistance. Each of these committees is composed of five members who have knowledge and expertise in the area so that they are able to extend support to the sanghas. Similarly, a member from each of these committees is represented in the core committee of the federation.

The members of the core teams are drawn from the sanghas. Each of the members is required to pay a membership fee to the sangha and sanghas further contribute annual membership fees to the federation to have a corpus of funds to be used for giving loans to sanghas and have money for day to day functioning.

- Ability to address social and gender issues -impact

The federations have taken up issues of violence against women, in a sustained manner by creating alternative system of giving justice at the block level. The Nari Adalats as mentioned above have been successful in addressing issues of domestic violence and other issues pertaining to family discord. However, issues of violence are taken up as cases but not as campaigns against domestic violence. Other campaigns against child labour, child marriages and dowry prevalence could be envisaged through the network of federations.

- Extent of autonomous functioning.

Nari Adalats in Baroda and Jasood/ Sanjeevani centres are very good examples of autonomous functioning, however, they do require more inputs in capacity building, managerial skills and handling finances and report maintenance. Jasood Centres as well

as Sanjeevani Centres require validation of their medicines by appropriate authorities and proper packaging and organisational skills for successful running. Nari Adalats requires wider linkages with sanghas to take on the prevention of violence against women. They need financial resources to consolidate their centres and business ideas to make these alternate structures financially sustainable, especially the Jasood/ Sanjeevani kendras.

- Ability to demand accountability of local government structures/ services

The sanghas aligned with federations are also quite vocal in Gram Sabhas and give support to elected women members and Sarpanches at the village level. They are able to identify and prioritise their needs and get them implemented through village Panchayats. They have identified women beneficiaries at the village level and link the needy women with many Government schemes and programmes – widow's pensions, old age pensions, ration cards, housing scheme, medical assistance scheme, Suvarna Jayanti scheme etc. They are also on the education and health committees and make the village level functionaries / structures accountable to the needs of the village and women in particular.

- Impact on the local community

Many sanghas through the federations have taken up sustainable agriculture (Rajkot, Dang), natural resource management, water and sanitation and work as collectives/ pressure groups to achieve their agenda. Issues dealing with public services at village level for health and education too have been taken up by some sanghas. They have been able link up with the local midwives to help women for pre and post natal care and immunisation where there are Jasood and Sanjeevani Kendras. The PHCs render support during the health melas and Yuvati Shibir (Camps for adolescent girls) through information dissemination and health check ups.

- Tackling women's issues across caste and class divides

The major impact of tackling women's issues across caste class divides has been felt in areas of health, domestic violence, and education to some extent. Since these are issues that affect all groups of women across social class and caste, sanghas/federations have been able to bring them into their orbit. In areas where caste groups like Maldharis, Darbars and Patels are dominant the sanghas from marginalised groups (Dalits, Kolis, Rabaris and Daima) have not been able to impact their power and politicisation. Though they have been able to carve out their space to take up these issues in their own spheres. In the case of public violence like rape by a Maldhari the sanghas were able to take up the case with the police for prevention of bail of the accused and took up the institution of punishment and imprisonment. In some villages in extremely economically backward areas of Surendranagar, Rajkot and Sabarkantha there are multi-caste sanghas/federations that are involved in sustainable agriculture, seed banks, co-operative farming income generation activities.

- Areas of focused inputs and support for federations

While some federations are extended, spreading out over 60-70 villages others are small covering 10-15 villages, depending on the location and spread of villages in the block, the

strength of sanghas which want to come together and the issues over which they are aligned. Their needs and capacities vary according to the leadership rendered at the DIU and the supportive strength of the sahyoginis. In some areas like Dang, Panchmahal and Banaskantha the federations need quality inputs from sahyoginis and DIU, but blocks are scattered and the staff is not able to provide the intensive inputs required. In other areas experienced sahayoginis are there but they themselves are not so motivated or require fresh capacity building themselves so the federations fend for themselves. Federations need critical inputs, as at present about 25% can be said to be on the path to autonomy though not with self reliance or financial sustainability. These are:

- Clarity about operations and role of federations
- How to become autonomous and financially sustainable
- Clarity on role as resource group for sanghas in the cluster/block
- Maintain accounts and use revolving funds
- Viable income generating activities with capacity for product absorption in local markets
- Systems and formats for self monitoring of federations and sangha activities
- Skills to undertake trainings, conduct small surveys, strategies for issues, play a leadership role for sanghas
- Completion of training of issue based committees and their network with committees of other federations
- Network and build alliances with other federations, NGOs and government departments
- Exposure to the working of other federations in the country.

Table 4: Issue based Federations established

No.	Districts	Blocks -villages	Issues
1	Rajkot 333 sanghas	Jasdan – total 64 sanghas	Education Campaign against Child marriages Mahila Panch
		Kotda Sanghani /Paddhari Lodhika – total 74 sanghas	Production Centre Sustainable agriculture / Seed Bank Mahila Kutir Mahila Panch
		Vankaner –total 55 sanghas	Mahila Panch Sustainable agriculture
		Upleta/Jetpur/Jamkandorna – total 63 sanghas	Mahila Panch Sanjeevani Kendra Child Care Centre
		Morbi/Maliya – total 57 sanhghas	Mahila Panch Sanjivani Kendra Child Care Centre
		Vinchiya – 20 sanghas	Nari Adalat
3	Panchmahals 72 sanghas	Ghoghamba – 13 sanghas	Nari Adalat Sustainable

			agriculture/savings
		Kalol – 19 sanghas	Nari Adalat
		Jambughoda –19 sanghas	Nari Adalat
		Halol – 21 sanghas	Nari Adalat
4	Surendranagar 51 sanghas	Muli –13 sanghas	Nari Adalat
		Sayala –17 sanghas	Nari Adalat
		Chotila –20 sanghas	Savings
5	Baroda 100 sanghas approx.	Vaghodia Padra, Pavi Jetpur, Dabhoi Naswadi	Nari Adalat Nari Adalat Nari Adalat Nari Adalat Health Centre
6	Sabarkantha 110 sanghas	Bhiloda – 45 sanghas Meghraj – 15 sanghas Khedbrahma – 25 sanghas Idar – 10 sanghas Vijaynagar – 15 sanghas	Co-op. farming, savings, Nari Adalat Co-op. farming Co-op. farming Co-op farming, Nari Adalat Co-op. farming and Nari Adalat
7	Dangs-(tribal) 50 sanghas 716	Ahwa –50 sanghas	Collective farming, vermi- culture and bamboo craft

Approximately about 700 sanghas are connected with federations through nari adalats, health centres, sustainable agriculture, Panchayati Raj participation, education interventions, savings and other collective activities. This broadly illustrates that the coverage of the programme has been intensive to impact only fifty percent of sanghas in the operational area, in last fifteen years. Of these, those associated with strong federations would be about 400 sanghas, which are capable of going forward once the federations are further consolidated to function autonomously. This means that even though about 40% sanghas are categorised as strong and capable, only 25% of those in the programme are actually able to function as federations or larger collectives at cluster level.

Alternative structures

Nari Adalats

The first Nari Adalat was set up in Baroda district in 1995 to fulfil the need for an alternative justice system, act as pressure group and have a larger collective identity at block level to take up women's legal/social issues. Gradually this phenomena spread to other districts, so at present there are 20 in operation (see table 5). In some districts it is called Mahila Panch, such as Rajkot, Surendranagar. The Nari Adalat/ Mahila Panch is comprised of group of experienced women who have helped resolve cases, or have perhaps had their own cases resolved in this forum, a Sarpanch member or women from the Gram Panchayat, single women, low caste/ upper-caste women or even a former sakhi. Each Nari Adalat has its own composition of a trained core group which takes the responsibility of listening to the cases, following them up and helping to resolve them.

Trainings have been facilitated through Sakshi, Janvikas, Majlis and Legal Advise Centre.

The Nari Adalat/ Mahila Panch is an accessible space for women that are inexpensive, flexible and consensus based to seek justice. The environment is that of restitution of women's rights, in a non-judgemental space where women can speak without fear, shame or guilt. The cases range from – physical beating, mental torture, harassment for dowry, fraud, child custody, alcoholism, adultery, polygamy, harassment for infertility and other causes.

Table 5: Establishment of Mahila Panchs/ Nari Adalats

District	Block
Vadodara –started in 1995	Vaghodia, Paddara, Pavi Jetpur, Dabhoi
Rajkot – in 1998	Morbi, Maliya, Padhari, Upleta, Jetpur, Jasdan, Kotdasanghani, Vinchiya, Wakaner
Panchmahals –in 2000	Halol
Surendranagar – in 2000	Sayala
Sabarkantha- in 2000	Bhiloda, Vijaynagar
Dang – in 2002	Awha
6 Districts	20 Blocks

Nari Adalats have wrought several changes at different levels in the lives of women and also impacted families, the community and the administrative structures of the state. These alternative structures have enabled women to develop an understanding of legal and administrative structures through trainings. While their own personal experiences have enriched them to bring about changes in the lives of the victimised and the people who come into contact with them. In redefining justice with a feminist perspective they have sensitised the judiciary, personnel of the law enforcement machinery and the community/caste Panchayats as well. Through the active participation of the community, village leaders and Panchayat members in the resolution of cases they have altered their thinking through enlisting their participation in women's issues. In many blocks the Adalats are held on a monthly basis at the Taluka head quarters where they have negotiated a fixed space with the Taluka Development Officer to run the Adalat. Here they are able to have ready access to the police, revenue and other officials of the government for assistance. They have actively taken up different forms of family and social violence as skilled negotiators of gender justice.

This alternative justice forum has given women the courage to make private concerns political in a forum where their voices are heard. The emergence of the decision making powers of women as a collective and a pressure group has given them the confidence to influence positively the lives of those who are victimised. Though Nari Adalats and Mahila Panchs are emerging as a good social force and forum, all are not at the same level of maturity as experiences and the circumstances of their formulation are different in each area of operation. This is dependent to an extent on the capacity building inputs rendered to them, conceptual clarity regarding violence as a women's issue, forms of violence in the area, support from the community and the law enforcement machinery and their capacities to work efficiently in the dispensation of gender justice.

In areas where Nari Adalats are fairly recent or have been in operation in the last couple of years, they require interventions in the form of more clarity on violence as an issue. They also need to develop systems for managing and operating with more efficiency and without the assistance of the sahyoginis. The women need to be trained to document specific significant cases that have set a precedent in the area for gender justice. The Adalats require holistic linkages with sanghas in their cluster so as not be isolated as a separate platform for justice in order to develop a wider understanding of violence against women, particularly among its perpetrators, to see its impact in the reduction of violence in the community. Their linkages with the federations as a whole are also critical to enable them to develop proposals and screen them before taking them on, so they could also play the role of legal counsellors to the federations.

Where Nari Adalats are a strong presence they need to use the inter sangha linkages within the federations to take up campaigns against child labour, early marriages, dowry, alcoholism and family violence with the assistance of the community and other allies in the area

International Centre for Research on Women conducted a study to look at Innovative, Women- initiated Community Level Responses to Domestic Violence in Baroda and Rajkot Nari Adalats/ Mahila Panchs in 2002, which brought out the positive impact of this structure.

Jasood */Sanjeevani Kendras

These are alternative health centres run by sangha women in Naswadi, Kanwat and Pavijetpur blocks in Baroda and Upleta, Jetpur, Morvi and Maliya blocks of Rajkot. They have been involved in organising health camps, Yuvati Shivirs, training of midwives and sensitisation of government functionaries - ANM, PHC personnel and ICDS workers. While other health related activities also took place in some of the districts (Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, Dang, Surendranagar and Baroda) related to Reproductive and Child Health under Integrated Population Development, immunisation, aids awareness, safe motherhood programme and infertility assistance to childless couples the health centres are by far a unique concept.

They have helped the women to come forth with their own traditional knowledge and skills as healers and develop a holistic understanding of health to manage health better through practical everyday usage of home remedies, local herbs, traditional grains/cereals and age-old practices. With the facilitation of trainings through Ayurvedic University, Chetna, Sewa Rural and other resource persons some women with aptitude and prior knowledge of alternative medicine have been trained. These women identified common health problems of women during discussions, mini-surveys and camps that they never before talked about or shared among themselves. The remedies to these problems – skin infections, leukorhea, heavy bleeding, prolapsed uterus, menopause, arthritis, anaemia and common seasonal ailments were also not readily available at the PHCs.

The Jasood Kendras open on a fixed day of the week when women can come for examination and seek remedies for their ailments. They also set up stalls during village

fairs to reach out to the larger public. The members who run the centre have received training for identifying symptoms, handling various types of cases, identifying the different types of herbs and roots, collecting them and making the medicinal preparations. The preparations are made according to the traditional Ayurvedic methods and are tested among themselves before being dispensed to others. The cases are registered and documented so that the centre has records of patients and of types of cases handled. The Sanjeevani Kendras make a lot of preparations for general consumption like hair oils, toothpaste and pain relievers for sale to customers who want to use local products. These products are beginning to have a large demand, so have a potential of a small-scale business for the Kendras.

Jasood Kendra at Tankhala, Naswadi Block Baroda

One of the success stories of the MS programme in Baroda is the six year old Jasood Centre at Tanakhala, Naswadi block, run by sangha women to enable women to have access to inexpensive and effective herbal medicines. Their traditional knowledge about herbal medicines has been strengthened, by organising several training workshops on the collection, preparation, use of herbal medicines. The Jasood Kendra has on display several charts and posters on the use of medicinal plants for use in common women's ailments. Each sangha takes the responsibility of replanting medicinal plants and preparing medicines for particular ailments. These medicines are then sold in the weekly bazaar in Tankhala.

The Jasood centre opens once a week on Thursday between 12 to 4 p.m. It provides basic health care to the local poor women particularly. Conducting health and midwifery training courses, organising yuvati shibirs and other health camps has enhanced women's knowledge about reproductive health issues. Women who help in running the Jasood center are trained to register cases, maintain records, write detailed case histories, do a speculum examination for gynecological complaints and dispense appropriate medicines. They claim that they treat problems of leucorrhoea, excessive menstrual bleeding, anemia and infertility through usage of medicinal plants.

A significant contribution of the Jasood centre is the reduced maternal and infant mortality in the nearby villages of Naswadi. Birth registration has also improved. Women are now more aware of the need for regular antenatal and postnatal check-ups, childcare, breast-feeding, and role of nutritious diet, hygiene and sanitation. There are 128 dais in this block, who have been trained in safe birthing practices. They identify antenatal high-risk factors and advise these women to go to the PHC for delivery. There are 40 health committees at Naswadi and women of these committees take turns to run the Jasood centre.

Women's collective strength and social action has made an indent into the existing health care structures and has proved a viable alternative system for health care delivery to rural women. However, the MS programme needs to validate these women's traditional knowledge of medicinal plants through recognised research institutions in Gujarat and efforts should be made to patent some of the medicines.

* The name Jasood is derived from the hibiscus flower, which is used in treatment of gynaecological problems.

4. Resource Center

The state office is almost non- functioning and unable to provide any research, training or capacity building support to the district units. In the last two years, no training or any capacities building workshops have been organised by the SPO for the district functionaries. There are no common training manuals available on five core areas to

impart training to Sangha women/core committees. Many Sahayoginis have not undergone trainings for refresher inputs in the core areas. Even at the cluster level, meetings and discussions are not organised regularly. Even though there are many institutions, organisations and experts in the various sectors in Ahmedabad and Gujarat, there have been no linkages to associate with them or seek their assistance for capacity building inputs and consolidation of federations at the state level. There was no state level visioning exercise to plan for the 10th plan phase.

There is a need to impart fresh inputs to the personnel at DIUs. The staff need to have strategic planning for enhancing their knowledge base, obtaining information and developing skills required for implementing the programme in enabling the federations in becoming autonomous so they in turn become financially and operationally sustainable. New systems of monitoring, reporting and review need to be evolved to strengthen the sanghas and federations for self-management.

DIUs have identified training needs for sahyoginis, Bal Sakhis (ECCE teachers) and sangha women which have to be planned at state and district level with competent resource groups. These have to be assessed in terms of numbers and level of training to be imparted.

Table 6: Identification of training needs during internal evaluation

No.	Training Needs	Districts
01.	Sangha Training	Dang, Surendranagar, Panch Mahal
02.	Maha Sangh (Sayoginis, Committee members)	Sabarkantha, Baroda, Banaskantha, Surendranagar, Panch Mahal.
03.	Training of Sahyoginis	Banaskantha, Surendranagar, Panch Mahal, Dang.
04.	Training for Documentation (Sahyoginis, DIUs, Women of Nari Adalat)	Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Surendranagar, Dang, Panch Mahal.
05.	Training in 5 core areas (Sahyoginis, DIUs)	Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Surendranagar, Dang, Panch Mahal, Baroda
06.	Bal Sakhi workshops (Sangha women, Bal Sakhis)	Sabarkantha, Panch Mahal, Baroda

5. Inter-linkages/convergence with National/State level programmes and organizations

The following table shows the linkages made with institutions and organisations made by Gujarat MS. The majority of them are at district level to provide inputs to sanghas and mahasanghas and some training to sahyoginis. These were more prominent in the years 2000-2003, but not in the last year. The networking and linkages for programme support to ensure capacity building at state level have been the weakest, leading to a feeling of stagnation among the DIU and sahyoginis. They have faced a lack of vision to take the programme forward in the field with the federations, because of the incapacity of the SPO to guide and support them with concrete steps and strategies. Training inputs have virtually come to a standstill at the state level.

Table 7: Inter linkages and convergence at different levels

State	Organisations/ Institutions	Purpose
DPEP/ SSA	Nirantar Shikshan NPEGEL, KGBV, ECCE	Adult education Linkage to implement the scheme in all the MS districts – at present more clarity required to work in partnership with the district and block structures of SSA
District	DDO, BEO, BRCs/ CRCs Vikas Vidyalaya/schools District Health Dept, Chetna, SWATI, Sewa Rural, UNICEF Rural Training Institute, Integrated Population Development, AKRSP, WCD, Swashakti, Gujarat Water Supply Board, Agriculture Science Centre, Farmers Training Centre ICRW, Sakshi, Janvikas, Majlis Gujarat Vidyapeeth	Facilitation for education initiatives, enrolment, exams for girls, obtaining text books for MSK girls, for literacy classes for women and adolescents. Mainstreaming of MSK girls Health trainings of sangha women, health camps, dissemination materials Training and resource inputs for livelihoods and savings, credit to sanghas and participation in Panchyats Research and legal trainings for Nari Adalats and Mahila Panch Literacy materials for literacy centres and camps
Block/village	TDO, PHCs, ANMs, Block Pramukhs, Pradhans, Banks, Gram Swarozgar Yojana, teachers	Federations and sanghas have accessed these functionaries of the government to access government schemes, take up their grievances, resolve village level issues etc.

Interface and linkages of MS with Adult Education and for NPEGEL and KGBV are vague at the district level, with poor clarity for partnership or interaction. There is potential for linkages for ECCE centres and for NPEGEL through the model schools involving mahasanghas/sanghas to extend support for monitoring and retention of girls, mini-surveys to identify potential students for NPEGEL and KGBV. The DIUs have yet to make concerted, planned efforts to develop the partnership with SSA.

Interface and linkages with other related government departments at district and Taluka levels are present in some districts like Rajkot, Surendranagar, Baroda, Sabarkantha, Banaskantha and Panchmahal where more support has been enlisted by the sanghas/mahasanghas to obtain government programmes and schemes for the women. Through their contact and negotiations with Taluka level officials, Sarpanches and Panchayat members they have helped to access benefits for over 5000 women. This illustrates that once they were aware of programmes and schemes they made the effort to access them.

Partnerships with non-governmental organizations and programmes have been for trainings at sangha level in some districts for income generation (Swashakti, District Village Development Agency, IPD (participation in Panchayats) and Unicef and Chetna (

RCH and alternative medicine). Some of these agencies have given funds to the tune of Rs 19.75 lakhs as grant and material and other support worth Rs1.06 lakhs at district level.

Though local level linkages and alliances have been forged by some of the districts, the state level linkages with resource organisations have been weak. Ahmedabad and Gujarat as a whole has no dearth of institutions from which to access resource persons and consultants for programme inputs to render capacity building support at all levels. However, this has not happened over the last couple of years, while there was ample opportunity to draw from the state network to strengthen the programme. This is major draw back of the SPO due to which the programme has become isolated and has not been able to expand its vision or grow substantially with quality inputs. The few partnerships that were developed were more at district level and were limited in scope for a short duration.

6. Organizational Issues

Gujarat Mahila Samakhya has witnessed drastic swings in management recently over the past year and before that too there have been frequent changes in leadership at SPO and transfers of personnel at DIU level. The issue of state level leadership has been contentious because of the non - availability of a full time SPD from the government who is tuned and sensitive to the MS philosophy. Neither has an appropriate person from the open market been available who has remained long enough to set the trend for efficient, people friendly, democratic management processes and procedures. Since an empowerment programme like MS requires trust oriented, decentralised and process oriented management the leadership at the state level has to create a conducive environment for such a model of management. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in Gujarat MS, which has negatively impacted the programme to such an extent that now its systems need review and complete revamping to continue further.

With no full time SPD at several intervals and also no team of programme staff at SPO the DIUs have taken on their decentralised and autonomous status too far, misusing their powers to suit their ends. This came to full exposure in the tenure of the last SPD – April to October 2004- during the course of her field visits to familiarise herself with the programme. Several happenings were highlighted in the field reports that raised the following issues in the districts:

- Irregularities regarding use of funds and project assets – Panchmahal, Surendranagar, Dang, Rajkot
- Separate accounts at district level for funds received from other projects with no notification to SPO of putting up before EC – Surendranagar, Panchmahal
- Short term engagement of relatives/staff on payment in the programme at district level.- Panchmahal, Surendranagar
- Diversion of funds to personal organisation/s from MS – Panchmahal
- Funds received in personal names for projects - Surendranagar
- Disregard for norms and rules of MS- Panchmahal, Dang, Baroda

- Cases by sahyoginis to demand permanent jobs in MS and other issues
- Cases against programme personnel by their colleagues in order to harass them.

This resulted in action by the SPD for -

- Termination of staff at short notice due to irresponsible behaviour and financial irregularity
- Transfers of district staff to alter the situation.

However, matters were further complicated when irregularities were also exposed at state level, in which the SPD herself was involved. This related to large sums of advances from Baroda DIU both for programme and for purchases to the tune of over 5.7 lakhs, without timely adjustments. This was done after the accountants in the districts, were reverted to their parent departments and the charge given to others. Besides this, there were equipment purchases and other expenditures made at SPO without following transparent purchase procedures. Even the unit costs of items were highly inflated. Ultimately, the whole exercise of the SPD's efforts at the district level regressed due to the irregularities at the SPO itself. The auditor's report spells out the misuse of power and authority by the SPD and the negligence of following financial rules. Here the accounts officer at the SPO, even though from the government, did not properly guide the new incumbent nor report any happenings to the Principle Secretary (Chairperson of the MSG Society) or the National Office.

The happenings in the districts and the state office over eight months (April-October) have shaken the programme that was in any way not too strong and steady. Consequently, it has also undermined the faith of the state government in recruiting an SPD from the open market. The state government is of the firm view that MS should have a person from government as SPD. In fact, the events of the last few months have presented a scenario where the worst can happen when autonomy and decentralization are taken too far, without discretion. However, this is not the case in other states of the MS programme across the country. It is with this background that the programme is on the verge of coming apart administratively. It has to be salvaged with a sincere, experienced SPD and team at the state level, together with re-organisation at district level too. If an appropriately sensitive and functionally efficient leadership is not there at the SPO the programme would have to be managed with an alternative interim model till the end of the 10th plan phase. In the current circumstances it is envisaged that the latter would be more appropriate.

Recommended interim strategy for consolidation in remaining 10th plan phase –

- **No expansion** in new villages, blocks or districts
- **Withdrawal from blocks** where one sahyogini only, where programme is in 30 or less than 30 villages, districts where less than 50% sanghas are still categorized as weak.

- Conduct a **quick assessment of strong, potential and weak federations**. Identify blocks with strong federations covering 30-60 sanghas, where self sufficient Nari Adalats and Sanjeevani Kendras are functioning. These should definitely be made self- sustaining units in areas where their work extends over 30-60 villages.
- **Block as the focal point of planning**-After short listing blocks plan resource support to them through block resource centers, maybe 1 BRC for 2-3 adjoining blocks, staffed by 1 RP, 2JRPs and 2-3 CRPs constituting a multi-disciplinary team to render resource/ training support to strong federations in clusters. This team to placed at one central block among a cluster of 2-3 federations. If there are some federations with a potential for becoming autonomous nearby these blocks, then the strong federations can assist them.
- **Reduction of DIU team and staff** – 2 senior RPs or 1 DPC and 1 RP, 1 data entry person, 1office assistance, 1driver and 1 peon. Accounts services to be out-sourced. All meetings/trainings to be held at block level. Resource materials training modules etc placed for usage at block level. Also transfer of extra furniture etc to block level.
- **Relocation of DIUs among 2-3 districts with lean staff structure** and larger focus at block level operations with block level teams to strengthen federations within a limited time frame of 15 months, preceded by a three- month strategic planning phase including a vision workshop. (total 18 months)
- State level – A small team of 2 senior RPs and 2 consultants to assist the district teams in strengthening/building federations to become autonomous. Team to develop linkages with training institutions, banks, resource persons and development of modules, materials for learning and monitoring and self- management. Team should travel to districts give inputs and to plan and review quarterly. This team should be rendered expert **guidance through an external, short-term panel of consultants by the National Office** (6 members –planning/ management, institution building processes, material development/ documentation, training/ capacity building and financial systems) who have considerable expertise **to facilitate back stopping** on a quarterly/six monthly basis. State office team to be assisted by 1 office assistant, 1or 2 data entry operators, 1 peon, 1 driver (if car is there). Accounting services to be out sourced.
- The programme, time- frame and plans of operation chalked out, should be adhered to and **monitored strictly by the National Office, NRG members and EC**.
- **Strategic planning with the new set of personnel at state and district levels** along with a visioning workshop. Activities should be planned in detail with the federation members, to be completed in a set time frame of 18 months – March 2005- September 2006 (or latest December 2006). An external review to be conducted before the conclusion of the 10th Plan phase.

- It would be worthwhile to focus on the above, when staff recruitment is conducted at state level, so as not to overload the programme with personnel for a short period. Another consideration to be made is that skills and competencies be assessed efficiently so as to reduce investments in capacity development after selection, because of the short time frame of the interim phase.

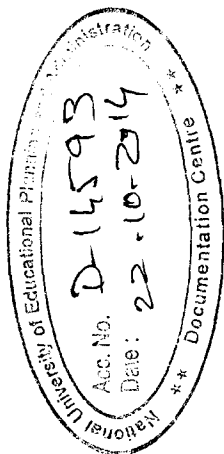
During the internal evaluation done a couple of months ago the districts outlined core areas in which they had capacities/strengths and those in which they were in need of assistance. When future planning is done these need to be kept in mind. But the DIUs must also reckon to what extent the sahyoginis, sanghas and federations need capacity building, along with numbers and grading so that inputs are appropriately catered to with efficiency. Hence needs have to be spelt out with care.

Table 8: Status of activities in MS districts as per internal evaluation

Districts	Status of activities	
	Strong	Average
Sabarkantha	Education, health, Panchayati raj, networking with government agencies, ECCE centres	Nari adalat, federations, economic activities
Banaskantha	Economic activities, sangha, health, networking with other agencies	Education, nari adalat, ECCE centres, Panchayati Raj
Rajkot	Understanding of Sanghas, federation, health economic activities /vermiculture, nari adalat	Education
	Panchayati raj, mahila kutir, ECCE centres, benefits of government schemes	
Panchamahar	Sanghas, health, economic activities, nari adalat, BSKs, nari adalat	Federations, ECCE centres, documentation
Vadodara	Sanghas, nari adalat, documentation, health centres, economic activities, understanding of 5 core areas	Federations, ECCE centres
Surendranagar	Sanghas, BSKs, legal literacy, Panchayati Raj	Documentation, federations, DIU
Dang	Economic activities, health, education	Sanghas, Panchayati raj, legal literacy, federations

7. Issues, Recommendations and Strategies

Issues	Recommendations	Strategies
<p>(A) Finance-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund flow from GOI is low. Only 85 lakhs received on 29.2.04 and 23.8.04 this year, and 25.0 lakhs from SSA as advance. Annual estimated budget of Rs 4.5 crore submitted for 2004-2005. No money for salaries of Nov. and Dec 2004. No funds for programme activities since June 2004 as reported in EC of 17th July 2004. • Activity vs management expenditure low due to the above reason. Most funds released to districts used to pay honoraria of staff only. (See annexure I) • Financial irregularities, lose regulatory and check mechanisms regarding purchase and advances. Bulk purchase of poor quality small items/ equipment at inflated rates. Large sums of advances drawn by state and district personnel in the name for programme expenses which are not settled timely. • Salary structure as per 10th plan not in operation • Cash payments of salary to sahyoginins and even to DIU staff in some cases. Norms and guidelines not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular fund flow to MS, Gujarat as per approved budget of the year, in this case 2004-2005. Release of funds on quarterly basis with due completion of formalities with GOI by MSG. Budget should not be approved in the ongoing financial year but before the financial year is to commence. • Timely release of funds to state for transfer to districts. SPO should take into account financial requirements of districts, before indulging in expenditures for expensive equipment and sundry luxuries for the office as was done by the last SPD. • Review of financial rules and regulations to make them stringent and effective. Large advances to personnel to be checked and settlement monitored. Rules to be adhered for payments in cash and by cheque and for purchase of any item or payments to consultants or resource persons. • Should be implemented by the time new staff is in place in 2005. • Strict directive from SPO to stop the practice. This was noticed by an earlier mission in 1998 also but MSG paid no heed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds to be released by GOI as soon as possible to clear back- log and plan for remaining phase. Budgeting and planning of activities to be done in Jan/ Feb, before the financial year begins. Approval of EC by end Feb or beginning of March. Budget sent to GOI with previous ten months' expenditure statement and expected expenditures for two remaining months. • Financial tracking and guidance by the SPD and Accounts Officer to ensure completion of formalities for seeking funds from GOI and following up expenditures of DIUs rigorously. • Strict norms of release of advances. Sub committees to be constituted to review the financial rules and norms of MSG, purchase, unit costs of field activities, and programme planning and monitoring. • Committee to be constituted or if constituted should place the structure before the EC for approval and implementation. Guidelines from other states can be referred to as well. • All personnel to be paid by cheque if the rule is that payments over Rs 1000 to be paid by cheque. Norm to be incorporated in rulebook.



<p>observed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase procedures loose and ignored by signatories at state/district level for withdrawal of money and endorsement of cheques. • Financial monitoring of districts weak, internal audit done recently only. Outsourcing accounts and audit not yet done. • Districts receive funds for projects directly. • Transparency and accountability of expenditures and funds not there. Rules loosely followed at SPO, so DIUs also take license. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase procedures and guidelines need to be reviewed in the context of the recent past, when heavy purchases were made by the SPD through single signature. • Monthly expenditure statements to be tracked regularly. Field visit of accounts officer/auditor from SPO and accountant to districts. Position of Accounts Officer to be reviewed, out source to Chartered Accountant's firm. • Notification of project proposals and funding to EC and also approval by it. • The SPD and accounts officer at state level and DPC/RP and accountant at district level should be accountable together for any financial regularity not only the signatory of the cheque as at present (accountants officer/ accountant does not co sign cheques, but is culpable if irregularity is there. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase Committees to be constituted for purchase of any item above Rs 10,000 at district and at state level. All cheques to be co signed by SPD/accounts person and DPC accounts person. To be spelt out in rulebook. • Check on observance of rules and regulations as per rules and regulations. Vigilant CA to be appointed • Norm for approval of projects and funding through EC and then transfer of funds to districts • Check mechanisms and stringent rules should be framed and observed as per the revised rule book. Financial offences should be made punishable through programme processes. SPD/DPC have to set the precedence for transparency and accountability.
<p>(B) Administration/ Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of SPD is a critical issue in view of the recent misuse of powers and autonomy. Though GoG is in favour of a person on deputation from government or someone from government holding additional charge of MS. This point has been stressed constantly by GoG, whereas it is not the case in any other MS state where appropriate persons have been found from outside government to run the programme. It has also been so in Gujarat earlier, but now the stand of GoG is firm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since advertisement has been placed for the post of SPD, the candidates should be appropriately screened and the past work credentials and records verified of the person selected. The person should be able to shoulder the current programmatic and administrative challenges of MSG. She should be under probation for three months and be guided by someone from government or by other MS SPDs or national office. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The job description and tasks of the SPD should be clearly spelt out. Also her financial powers should be stringently defined and spelled out in the rulebook with check mechanisms in place before she takes charge. She should be given time to observe some other SPDs at work before she takes charge and understands the processes of MS.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of SPO has been basically to transfer funds to the districts when they are available, for over the last one year. The role of guidance, future visioning, facilitation of resource inputs for capacity building and providing strategies for better functioning have been in the back burner. • Arbitrary functioning of SPO. Lack of guidance and support to districts. Poor inter-district cohesion. • Low capacity building inputs by SPO, planned activities not undertaken • Alliance building and networking at state level has come to a stand still, MS is virtually isolated – it has neither credibility with the government nor a contact base with other noteworthy NGOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SPO has to become more proactive with a new, dynamic SPD who can provide guidance to infuse the programme with positive energy for planned implementation. Build linkages and alliances for the provision of capacity building and fresh ideas to the district teams. • SPO has to reorganise itself to become a role model for the districts and to bring together the diverse tangential forces operating with unity and a collective vision. • Some concerted effort has to be made by the SPO to ensure a visioning exercise, training needs assessment for the different levels of personnel and the federations and also to facilitate the capacity building. Rethinking has to be done regarding the restructuring of the programme to focus on resource support at block level for federations and alternative structures like nari adalats and sanjeevani kendras. • Renew the alliances for developing partnerships and to draw on the experiences and the learning's of others. Gujarat has a large resource network that has to be tapped by MSG with which the programme can establish a professional relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of an appropriate SPD and/or senior resource persons to take forward the programme in the 10th plan phase. Otherwise, follow an alternative strategy for the interim period to conclude the programme by the end of this phase. • A great deal depends on the new SPD ??? or leadership at the state level • Undertake a visioning exercise to work towards the autonomy and sustainability of federations. Take up strategic planning for activities and inputs within a limited time frame. Plan out the operations within a new structural framework at field level. Revise systems of transparency and accountability based on trust. • This should be a part of the strategic planning exercise and an effort should be made to build and strengthen alliances to benefit the programme.
<p>(C)Monitoring and Review –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring reporting system ineffective. This has not evolved to the changing needs of the programme and is not consistent to the requirement at present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved monitoring/ reporting systems required. Revamping of programme structure and reporting, quarterly programme review with regular feedback and follow up. Some kind of consistent reporting formats for sahyoginis and federations and sanghas that are usable and illustrative of processes and quantitative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New systems to be developed after reviewing those existing, to have a somewhat uniform pattern. Monthly reporting and review at block level with federations through oral feed back and simple illustrative formats for them and the sanghas. Quarterly reporting and feed

<p>Financial and programme monitoring not co –related Presently budgeted activities not undertaken or monitored because no/ low funds</p>	<p>outreach</p> <p>It has to be taken together in the perspective of planned activities and related expenses. Programme should not get affected due to non- availability of funds. Simultaneous monitoring of planned activities and expenditures is critical for checking diversion and misuse of funds.</p>	<p>back at DIU/state level as per plans made. Ground level processes and data should be shared upwards and information flow transferred downwards and horizontally at district and block level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems to be developed with programme committee (to be constituted), staff and auditors. Surety of availability of funds critical.
<p>(D) Planning –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning is more on the lines of activities vs budget requirements not spelling out strategies and processes at different levels. Follow up of planned activities weak. This may also be due to lack of funds at district level. • Planning for staff recruitment and capacity building. • Up take of district level planning process not a regular process at state level. Follow up district activities by state office is critical to facilitate resource inputs. Districts more or less on their own, with no synchronised programme strategies at field level because of poor guidance from SPO • Capacity for expansion in new areas weak, nor any forward planning with district teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning has to be in congruence with needs of the field – sanghas and federations, with proper review of results and follow up. Inter district sharing and learning should also take place, which has not happened. Districts and SPO should review and plan on a quarterly basis. • Selection of efficient skilled staff from existing pool and from outside to work in small competent teams at block level for rendering institutional capacity building of federations. • Co-ordination for planning and resource inputs to be critically managed by sensitive programme staff at SPO. Inter- district co-operation and sharing to be designed for shared activities for capacity development. • There should be no expansion of the programme under the present circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning exercise with focussed approach to strengthen federations by shifting operations to block level, with assured financial and technical resources. • Strategic planning, for programme delivery, re- structuring of operations, reduction of staff and efficient management monitoring systems to be developed within the first quarter of 2005, with the new staff. National office to assist • Induction of an experienced team at state level along with SPD. The team should take up the above on a priority basis to move the programme forward. • Consolidation of operation in areas where federations have potential for future sustainability

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demands from sangha- for something new, economic sustainability of sanghas/ federations not addressed in a planned way to link them with other programmes. Some efforts in 2-3 districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This should be considered and included in the programme planning once the new teams are in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include members from strong federations, other organisations and district teams for including this in planning along with other interventions required by them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (E) Programme activities • Education • NPEGEL/KGBV/ECCE • ECCE Centres • BSKs • Teachers are weak link in BSKs need perspective clarity and tools for monitoring and management of education. • Clarity on gender/ social issues among girls low. • Post BSK education linkages missing • BSK girls isolated from sanghas/ kishori sanghas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concretise partnership with SSA for NPEGEL and KGBV • Transfer of management and monitoring of ECCE centres to sanghas • Strengthen teachers with training in pedagogy and transaction of curriculum, visioning and gender focussed approach. • Develop an understanding among girls on gender issues. • Develop post BSK work books, reading materials. Involve Nirantar Saksharta, Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Sewa and other resource organisations to help develop such materials and strategies • Work on strategies of involving BSK girls with sanghas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop work plans with districts/ federations and sanghas • Transfer funds to sangha accounts. They should spell out what they will contribute and how the federations will monitor. DIU to keep track of them as well. • Organise state level workshop with BSK teachers and external resource persons and experts to facilitate review of existing practices and develop new tools and methodologies. Invite others who are running similar centres to learn from them • Sahyoginis and DIU personnel can help and girls can help write case studies of sangha initiatives. Information used in Yuvati Shivirs can be shared with them. • Hold review and development of material workshops with core teams of DIU, sahyoginis and teachers with resource persons/ organisations. Also access such materials from different sources and review them for own needs. • Girls can be involved in the literacy centres, in documentation for nari adalats and Sanjeevani kendras. They can help in campaigns against

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All girls from BSKs not mainstreamed or tracked for continuing education • Demand from adolescent girls and those who have passed 10th/12th class for skill development along with education • Literacy centres for women • Learning assessment of women and their gradual movement from basic 3Rs to reading comprehension and purposeful writing not visible. Materials related to their every day use and context not readily available for furthering education. Districts with very low literacy rates such as Baroda, Banaskantha, Surendranagar, Dang need to pay more attention to women's literacy and their learning in the context of strengthening sanghas and federations to become autonomous. • Alternative structures • Nari adalats still need more strengthening as alternative structures. Those that are new require focussed time bound inputs to emerge as strong for a. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure mainstreaming of girls from BSKs and those out side. • Facilitate such courses for adolescent girls through NGOs, vocational institutes. • Evaluation and training of teachers and leaning materials critical for all districts. Learning assessment grades/ levels to be developed. Materials to be accessed, reviewed and developed with resource persons/ experts. Follow up of women's learning with post literacy materials and strategies. Also develop easy self monitoring tools and training materials for sanghas so that they serve the dual purpose of education and self management. • More clarity on violence as an issue in some areas. Disseminate a wider understanding of violence against women, particularly among it perpetrators, to see its impact in the reduction of violence in the community. • Develop systems for managing and operating with more efficiency • Must be trained to do their own documentation of 	<p>child labour, domestic violence and early marriages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkages with institutions like Vikas Vidyalaya, Hostels and vocational Institutes at state level and district level • Develop linkages with other institutions/hostels and track the girls after they leave BSK/ schools to help girls pursue vocational courses • State level initiative required for taking up the exercise and following it up. Identification of resource persons/experts to help do this exercise and provide sustained inputs. Involve Gujarat Vidyapeeth. Sewa and others in developing innovative materials both for literacy centres and for post literacy. • A state level review of nari adalats to assess them on suggested and other parameters and chart a future course of inputs for them as they are at different levels of maturity.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health centres • In some districts only. Some are still not focused though they are involved in health melas, campaigns etc. • Sanghas/ Federations • All sanghas and federations not at same level due to varied inputs and levels of understanding. Medium level sanghas require support from 	<p>specific significant cases that have set a precedent in the area for gender justice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require holistic linkages with sanghas in their cluster so as not be isolated as a separate platform for justice • Linkages with the federations as whole are also critical to enable them to develop proposals and screen them before taking them on, play the role of legal counsellors to the federations. • Take up campaigns against child labour, early marriages, dowry, alcoholism and family violence with the assistance sanghas/ community and other allies • Require sharpening of agendas for action along with clarity of women's health issues in a rights perspective. • Stream lining of health activities apart from making and dispensing herbal remedies. • Proper recording, documentation of cases and success stories. • Validation of prescribed treatments and medicines before marketing. All centres can then market products under one umbrella name/ brand. • Own space and equipment essential for centres to function regularly as medicine sales and patient fees is nominal, while cost of running the centre is considerable • Training for self management and documentation to be facilitated for those who operate the centres • Clarity to be developed about operations and role of federations and how to become autonomous and financially sustainable. And clarity on role as resource group for sanghas in the cluster/block 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State level workshop of all health centres and health core teams with resource persons for further clarity on perspectives and future course of action. • Develop guidelines and action plan for activities of health centres • Facilitate documentation training for them • Facilitate validation through ayurvedic centre or practitioners marketability of product under brand • Inputs for these to establish centres to become financially sustainable in the future. • To be planned as package along with that for others. • Institute a study to document the processes, functioning, impact of health centres on women's changed perception of their health. • Assessment of federations for selecting strong ones into which capacity building inputs will bear fruit for future sustainability is critical.
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<p>federations to become stronger. Whereas strong federations need inputs to become autonomous and sustainable. Programme should with draw from areas / blocks where sanghas are still weak after 6-7 years (or more) of inputs – weak sanghas in all districts. If other sanghas support/assist them, then it is a good sign.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanghas (over 50%)where several years of work has not shown results should be dropped. Operations in in blocks where 20-30 sanghas are there should be withdrawn • Very small federations in scattered areas need review for future potential. Should be dropped after due assessment. <p>Block level structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The block level structures visible are Health centres and nari adalats. The former need a space of their own. The latter are using public spaces of the government structures, but do need their own space. As yet there are no block offices to facilitate JRPs for decentralised operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill and competency building for maintenance of accounts and use revolving funds. Skills to undertake trainings, conduct small surveys, strategies for issues, play a leadership role for sanghas. Completion of training of issue based committees and their network with committees of other federations • Identification of viable income generating activities with capacity for product absorption in local markets • Systems and formats for self monitoring of federations and sangha activities • Networking and alliances with other federations, NGOs and government departments. Exposure to the working of other federations in the country. • Inter federation networks can be developed for cross learning. • Proper planning for suggested inputs for federations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field operations should be focussed at block level, maybe 1 Block office serving 2 contiguous blocks, where federations are considerably strong. • All training and resource inputs channelised through block and block level functionaries – JRPs and CRPs • DIU to play role of district level coordination unit for 2-3 blocks or even 1-2 districts • Facilitation of infra structure for capable/ strong alternative structures and federations only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning of all inputs along with programme planning for skills competencies and trainings. Time frame of 18 months should be kept in mind. • Facilitation of feasibility study for identifying economic activities for sanghas. • SPO to facilitate linkages/ alliances exposure at state level for sustainable federation building – Anandi, SEWA, Small Industries Deptt, Rural Training Institute, Banks etc <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimisation of DIU, with focus on strengthening block level structures in a limited time frame of 18 months. • All resources mobilised, accessed and facilitated through block office – modules, curriculum, IEC and advocacy material etc. • Review/ monitoring activities strategically planned on a quarterly basis. • Local networking with government, other agencies and NGOs through federations to strengthen them. • Develop clarity about block level operations, planning and management among DIU staff & JRPs/ CRPs federations. • Reorganise budget and activity planning
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<p>Training/Documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and documentation not done on equal level in all areas. No cross learning within the programme and from others. Training modules and manuals scattered, literacy materials, curriculum of BSKs and Literacy centres not standardised. Training materials for federations and self monitoring simple formats for federations /sanghas in demand. Documentation good in some districts but lagging behind in others due to shortage of personnel or insufficient skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collation and assessment of training materials used for different levels. • Develop specialised training and literacy materials for needs of sanghas and federations. • Provide training to sanghas/ federations also for documentation and maintenance of records. • Enhancement of documentation skills of district/block level staff imperative. 	<p>from March 2005 in accordance with altered set up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of federations in Block level planning and operations for hands on learning • State level review of all training materials and strategies with trainers form within the programme and external resource persons. • Planning of training and other capacity building inputs in coordination with needs assessment. Follow up critical. • External team to review, with programme staff, all training material and provide assistance to develop modules, teaching learning materials and formats. • Training needs assessment with potential resource group that will provide needs based inputs for various levels. • Fresh materials to be developed on the basis of review of old and current needs of programme.
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8. National Office

In the current state of affairs the role of the National Office too becomes crucial in reshaping Gujarat MS to rise from the quagmire, in the interest of the sanghas and federations that are looking up to the programme for sustaining themselves. The assistance of the national office will not only help the SPO but also enable it to set a direction for the future with a vision for reform together with growth.

The main support can be in the following areas:

- Identification and selection of an SPD from the open market. In case of no such luck, selection of a full time team of 2 senior consultants and 2 resource persons at the SPO, under an SPD in-charge from government (present SPD would be acceptable?).
- Assistance in planning a vision for the remaining phase, together with strategic planning for programme implementation along with all other inputs required.
- Needs assessment for capacity building inputs together with identification of resource persons and experts as per requirements planned for all levels.(see recommendations/strategies).
- Close monitoring through quarterly reviews with the assistance of a backstopping team. (National Office should provide this technical support through its financial resources).
- Sharing/ learning with other MS states at the level of federations on core theme areas – women's and girls education, health, social justice, political participation, economic empowerment – specifically looking at future sustainability and autonomy.

Methodology:

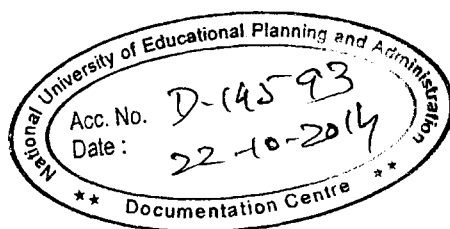
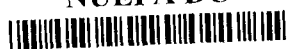
- Meetings with staff of State Office and district level teams at SPO and DIU staff in Baroda and Surendranagar.
- Preliminary meeting Education Secretary and SPD SSA/ SPD MS
- Interaction with representatives of DIET, BRC, Block level officials, NGOs at district level
- Discussions with sangha women and federation members in 2 districts
- Visit to and discussions with Nari Adalat/ Health Centre women
- Visit to ECCE centres, BSKs and discussions with girls at BSK
- Meeting with teachers of ECCE centres and BSK
- Meeting with Panchayat members- men and women
- Discussions with girls studying at the BSK.

8. Itinerary

Date	Activity
12 th Dec 2004	Arrival in Ahmedabad & meeting of team members
13 th	Visit to SPO. Meeting with SPD, SSA Ms Meena Bhatt and Principal Secretary, Education GOG, Mr. Paneervel. Departure for Surendranagar
14 th	Meeting with Mr. Kirti Patel of AKRSP, visit to MS DIU, meeting with Mr. Makwana, Principal DIET, visit to Vikas Vidyalaya, visit to MSK, meeting with sangha women and Federation representatives. Visit to Vatavach village, meeting with Sarpanch and sangha women.
15 th	Random meeting with sangha in Sisar village in Muli Block, meeting with sahyoginis and other office staff at DIU office. Departure for Baroda.
16 th	Visit to ECCE centres in Vejalpur and Pavtepur villages, meeting with Mr. VH Shah, TDO at Vaghodia Block, participation in nari Adalat at Dabhoi block. Visit to Jasood Centre in Tanakhala village and meeting with federation members of Naswadi block.
17 th	Visit to BSK and meeting with sahyoginis and visit to office and meeting with office staff.
18 th	Meeting with DIU teams at SPO, presentation of feedback by mission members and discussion on issues in MS, Gujarat.
19 th	Meeting with accounts officer, review of data, information, meeting with SPD, meeting with office staff. Departure for Bombay – Dr. Divya Pande
20 th	Departure for Delhi – Nishi Mehrotra.
21 st	Debriefing in National Office with JS- Ms V Sarup, NPD- Ms Anuradha Mall and Consultant MS – Ms J. Kameshwari

9. Annexure**Expenditure on management and activities in last 6 years**

Year	Management Cost (%)	Activity cost (%)
98 - 99	40.65	59.35
99 - 00	48.55	51.45
00 - 01	50.01	49.99
01 - 02	47.71	52.29
02 - 03	42.38	57.62
03 - 04	40.43	59.57

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