

ANDHRA PRADESH

MAHILA SAMATHA SOCIETY

*** R E P O R T ***

1993 - 1994

THE PROGRAMME

The Andhra Pradesh Mahila Samatha Society is a part of the Mahila Samakhya project which was launched in the State in January, 1993.

OBJECTIVES

The Mahila Samakhya Project presupposes that education can be a decisive intervention towards women's equality. Its overall goal is to create circumstances to enable women to better understand their predicament, to move from a state of abject disempowerment towards a situation in which they can determine their own lives and influence their environment, and simultaneously create for themselves and their family an educational opportunity which serves the process of their development.

Within this framework, some of the specific objectives of Mahila Samakhya are as follows:

- a) enhance the self-image and self-confidence of women.
- b) create an environment where women demand knowledge and information; thus empowering them to play a positive role in their own development and the development of society. Where this demand is articulated in a structured manner, specific inputs will be designed and introduced in order to meet their educational needs.
- c) create informal educational structures which respect women's pace and rhythm of learning, given the multiple demands of household, and changing agricultural seasons.
- d) build mechanisms which enable adolescent girls working in their homes, in agriculture and in the formal and informal sector to get an opportunity for formal education.
- e) revitalize the existing educational structure and build mechanisms to ensure that women monitor their own education and the education of their children.

In endeavouring to generate this demand, the programme seeks guidance not from targets, but from certain inviolable principles, which have been kept in mind at all stages of implementation:

- a) the initial phase, when women are consolidating their independent time and space, is not hurried or short circuited.
- b) women participants in a village determine the form, nature, content, and timing of all the activities in their villages.
- c) the role of project functionaries, officials, and other agencies is facilitative and not directive.
- d) planning, decision making and evaluation processes at all levels are accountable to the collective of village women.
- e) education is understood as a process which enables women to question, conceptualize, seek answers, act, reflect on their actions, and raise new questions. Education is not to be confused with mere literacy.
- f) the educational process and methodology must be based on respect for women's existing knowledge, experience and skill.

The Andhra Pradesh Mahila Samatha Society has had a long gestation period. The first meeting to introduce the Mahila Samakhya programme was held in July, 1991. At this meeting women from different walks of life, academia and the voluntary sector participated. In addition there were officials of the State Education Department and the District Collectores of Mahabubnagar and Medak as well. The concept of Mahila Samakhya was explained in detail by Ms. Srilathta Batliwala, then State Programme Director of Mahila Samakhya, Karnataka and Ms. Vimala Ramachandran, then National Project Director. The response of the participants was enthusiastic. There was general consensus that a programme of this kind would greatly help in the advancement of

women's development. The group was appreciative of the flexible and innovative definition of education that was being built into the programme. To avoid confusion with other organisations in Andhra Pradesh, which are also known as Samakhya, it was proposed that in Andhra Pradesh the programme be called 'Mahila Samatha'. A small core group was then identified to prepare a preliminary proposal for Andhra Pradesh. Five backward districts in Andhra Pradesh were identified where the programme could be started. The State Government forwarded its proposal in November, 1991 to Government of India, to be considered by the Indo-Dutch Appraisal Mission. The Appraisal Mission visited Andhra Pradesh during early 1992. At a subsequent meeting convened in August, 1992 by Secretary Education, Government of Andhra Pradesh with Secretary Education, Government of India and other State Officials and NGOS, the formal sanction and extension of the project to Andhra Pradesh was informed. At this meeting it was decided that, in the first year, the programme would be launched in the districts of Mahabubnagar and Medak, both backward districts with the lowest female literacy rates in the state. The society was registered in September, 1992. Ms. Kameshwari of the University of Hyderabad was invited to come on deputation as State Programme Director and she joined in late December, 1992.

LAUNCHING THE PROGRAMME

The process of launching and grounding the programme was initiated in January, 1993. During January and February, District officials and NGO's in Mahabubnagar and Medak districts were appraised about the programme. In Mahabubnagar, discussions were held separately and individually with District officials and NGO's working in the area. In Medak, however, the programme was introduced through a formal meeting of district officials and NGO's, convened by the District Collector. The response in both places was very encouraging and positive. These interactions helped in identifying the specific mandals where the programme could be launched and functionaries for the programme.

The choice of mandals in both the districts was governed essentially by the following criteria : backwardness and high levels of poverty, absence of NGO's in the area and contiguous mandals which allow for organic growth and facilitate greater interaction between village groups. Consequently, Makthal and Utkur mandals in Mahabubnagar and Pulkal, Andole, Alladurg and Regode mandals in Medak were selected. Simultaneously the process of identifying functionaries for various levels was also started. We needed village level coordinators, who are responsible for monitoring activities in a cluster of 10 villages and a District Programme Coordinator and Resource Person for each of the districts.

For the village level coordinator, formal education upto 7th class and above, a minimum age of 18 years as well as an ability to read and write Telugu, and a willingness to live and work in

the assigned cluster of 10 villages were laid down as prerequisites. Realising that it may not be possible to find fully trained and experienced women for the post of District Coordinator, an undergraduate degree, at least one year's experience of working in a rural area or with a NGO, fluency in reading and writing Telugu, and a willingness to tour extensively, were the qualifications sought in prospective candidates.

Our experience in trying to select these various functionaries was mixed. The response for the post of village level coordinators was very positive and encouraging, and in the case of Medak district, overwhelming. In both districts, young women were identified with the help of DWCRA officials, the Woman Welfare officer and NGO's. In Mahabubnagar, women from the State Service home with an educational level of 10th class were also identified as possible candidates.

Since the success of the programme depends on being able to recruit motivated women, who are willing to work and live in rural area, screening workshops were held to shortlist suitable candidates prior to final selection. Through the screening workshops an attempt was made to assess the interaction and communication skills of the participants, their openness to new ideas and their understanding of social problems. The screening workshops included games, group discussions on education and women's empowerment, writing exercises etc. In Mahabubnagar, after the screening workshop held on February 24-25, 10 out of the 32 participants were shortlisted. In Medak at the screening

workshop held on April 7-8th, 12 out of the 60 participants were shortlisted. The formal selections were done in both districts by a duly constituted committee.

The process of identifying a suitable candidate for the post of District Programme Coordinator proved to be an uphill task. In Medak, for instance, attempts were initially made to try and get a woman from the District Administrator on deputation. When all such efforts failed, an open advertisement was issued and 26 women applied. Selection was done based on performance in a group discussion followed by an interview.

By the end of May, 1993, two consultants in the State office and personnel for the 2 District Implementation Units were selected. As on date Medak DIU has one District Coordinator, a Resource Person and 9 village level coordinators. Mahabubnagar district has a District Programme Coordinator and 7 village level coordinators. The services of all personnel except those on deputation were engaged on a contractual basis with a fixed honorarium.

After the personnel were selected, a 3 day orientation meeting was held in the state office during the first week of June. The entire team had an opportunity to interact with each other. At this meeting, the organisational structure, philosophy and broad objectives of the programme were explained. In the project document, the village level coordinators are termed as "Sahayoginis" (facilitators). The new APMS team objected to the use of this term saying it was disturbingly close to "Jogini". After considerable discussion, a substitute was found in 'Mahila Karyakartha'. After this meeting, the team visited their mandals

to familiarise themselves with their allotted areas, mandal offices and to collect basic information on the mandal and bus routes.

Since orientation and training of staff is critical in such an open ended programme, training was planned in 2 major phases for the district teams and a process of continuous critical review, built in. The first phase of training was done in June and after 8 weeks of field work a second combined training was organised in September to address the issues and problems that had arisen in the initial weeks of field work.

Between June to August, the teams in each district met for weekly review meetings. These were gradually replaced by fortnightly meetings and by December both teams shifted to a monthly review meeting of 2 days. These meetings were forums for sharing experiences and collective analysis of field problems and facilitated in building team solidarity. Each success of every team member was a moment of joy for everyone and boosted the morale of the entire group.

SPATIAL PRESENCE

Since the number of villages for programme implementation was determined by the number of Mahila Karyakarthas and the size of the mandals, in Medak which had 9 karyakarthas the programme was launched in the 4 mandals of Pulkal, Andole, Alladurg and Regode. And Mahabubnagar which had 7 Karyakarthas, the programme started in Utkoor and Makthal mandals. In the initial phase, the karyakarthas were divided into teams of 2 or 3, and each team began visiting 4 villages. As the teams gained confidence, new villages were visited and from the end of September, the

Karyakarthis started visiting villages individually. The Karyakarthis evolved their own strategies for covering the entire mandal. Though initially, villages connected by bus were visited, slowly more interior villages were included. One of the strategies employed was to leave out a village located between 2 villages, which the Karyakartha had to necessarily cross to go to the neighbouring one. This paid off richly. This frequent and casual passing through, most often aroused the curiosity of the village women who were not visited and resulted in their compelling the Karyakartha to start visiting their village as well and spending time with them. By January, 1994, each Karyakartha was looking after 8-10 villages and in some cases hamlets as well, and in both districts the selected mandals were almost fully covered.

By the end of March, 1994 the spatial coverage of the programme is as follows :

District	No. of mandals	No. of villages and hamlets covered
Medak	4	91
Mahabubnagar	2	67
		158

PROBLEMS OF ENTRY

It was with great trepidation that the teams began village visits. Lack of field experience and self confidence made the issue seem larger than life. In Medak district all the fears were more than confirmed for some Karyakarthis who faced severe resistance in some villages. For the rest and particularly in

Mahabubnagar district, entry into villages was relatively free of conflicts. The initial curiosity, suspicion and hostility was gradually replaced by warm acceptance even in the most problematic villages, by the end of October.

The initial problems encountered were compounded by the fact that the Karyakarthas quite literally applied an idea discussed in the first training. In the training the Karyakarthas were cautioned against depending on the sarpanches and local elites to approach women. They were urged to develop a close rapport directly with poor women in the village. This led to several problems in both districts. Women were unwilling to talk to someone who had not met the sarpanch. In Mahabubnagar, the Karyakarthas were quick to learn from this experience and henceforth met the headman first before entering a village.

In Medak there were many more problems. Who are you ? Who employs you ? Are you radicals ? were frequent and repeated questions. In Posannapet, Andole mandal and Chevella in Alladurg mandal, the hostility took alarming proportions. The APMS functionaries were gheraoed in one case by over 100 people. Fortunately, the presence of mind and, the determination not to add to the hostility and confrontation saved the day. In Chevella the threat was more worrisome. Immediately, the MRO of the mandal who was informed of these incidents, interceded on our behalf.

These problems were discussed at length, and several decisions taken:

1. Identity cards be given to all APMS staff.
2. That a village meeting be held in all the problem villages.

3. That all sarpanches be first met as a matter of course and the programme explained to them.

4. It was also decided to boycott Chevella village to bring some social pressure on them.

Consequently, plastic identity cards were given to both the district teams. The SPD also wrote and contacted the superintendents of Police giving details about the programme and the areas in which the Karyakarthis were working, along with a list of the entire DIU staff. Copies of the letters were also given to the Circle Inspectors of the concerned mandals. This was followed by a series of village level meetings in the problem villages, which were attended by the concerned Karyakartha, DPC, RP and SPD/Consultants from the state office.

In all cases, the meetings helped to clarify doubts and suspicions. In Posannapet, Devanur and Chevella, the entire community and particularly those who had threatened, apologised and insisted that the Karyakartha come to their village.

In Regode mandal, even the identity cards did not make much of a difference. The sarpanches demanded that letters be brought from the MRO. Since the Karyakarthis had already established a good rapport with the mandal functionaries, they got these letters of introduction on their own.

Besides establishing one's identity and credibility, there were other problems as well. Almost the first question that arose was what the Karyakarthis could 'give' to the villagers. "What will you give us/get us"? This was almost immediately followed by a demand for loans. The women, very often prompted by men, began demanding material benefits. Many Karyakarthis felt blocked here,

because, they were unable to deal with this question of loans. And without resolving this question, the women would not be motivated to come together. The logic was "If you are neither a nurse nor a doctor nor can get us loans, why should we talk to you ? If you can give us something, then talk to us or else go away".

These problems were discussed time and again whenever the team came together for review meetings. Some Karyakarthas were able to deal with issue in a commonsensical way - by explaining that they were not going to get the women loans but would be willing to tell them about the procedure/process of obtaining them. At other places the demand itself died down as the Karyakarthas talked and directed attention to other issues, voiced even in passing, by the women.

The Karyakarthas were able to develop a good rapport with the women almost from the start. Songs have been very useful in breaking the ice and getting the women to talk.

In the initial weeks, several lessons were learnt. Any attempt to directly establish contacts with women without the prior permission of village leaders and men was bound to be problematic. Time spent in explaining the programme to as many people as possible in a village was well worth it.

GROUP FORMATION

Right from the beginning, in APMSS, the centrality of a women's sangham at the village level was recognised as critical to the programme. The sangham is seen as the nodal point around which the programme revolves. Given the limited resources which individual poor women command, it is believed that the pooling of human and material resources would facilitate the realisation of the programme objective of women's empowerment both for the individual woman and the collective. This view has formed the basis for the orientation and training of APMSS staff. Rather than identifying and working with one or two active women the focus is on organising a group in each village.

The process of group formation moved gradually from individual interactions to group meetings. This process was not smooth in many cases. June to September, was spent in house to house visits. The DIU core staff accompanied the karyakarthas on these visits. By the end of August many of the initial problems of entry were overcome. In a few villages in Makthal mandal, for instance groups of men and women began coming together after the initial one month itself. In Utkoor mandal, in Mahabubnagar, the stage of group meetings has taken much longer to reach. In both districts, by August women began sitting together in small groups.

The karyakarthas were now being asked to come on specified days to meet the women. The first three months were problematic as a result of our inability to articulate the programme objectives clearly. The team was totally flummoxed by demands of 'What will you give us?' This lack of conceptual clarity and an inability

to carry forward group discussions became the focus of the second combined training workshop held for both the district teams in September. The team was helped to relate demands and issues to the programme objectives. For eg:- exercises were done to demonstrate how a demand for loans could be used to initiate a discussion on indebtedness, lack of credit and how loans often result in getting caught in a vicious cycle of further indebtedness.

Different strategies were considered to facilitate group formation. In several villages in both districts, issues of accessing government schemes and facilities like ration cards, pensions, maternity assistance for agricultural labour, the PHC, served as a catalyst for group formation. This demonstrated for the village women the effectiveness of a collective.

By October, women in several villages demanded that the karyakarthas come for night meetings on the grounds that more time could be spent in discussion. This was a clear indicator of the trust and rapport that had been established. The number of women attending meetings began to increase and participation ranged from 15 to as high as 60. While the size of the group never remained constant, in each village a core of 5-6 women began to attend meetings on a regular basis.

In November, a series of cluster meetings of 3-5 villages at a time were held in both districts as a means of strengthening group processes and to enable women from different villages where APMSS is working to interact and share their experiences. It was also meant to provide us an occasion for discussing the programme and its objectives and forge lateral linkages between village

groups. Doubts continued to persist - Will women give up a day's wages ? Will they be willing to meet their own bus fares ? After considerable discussion, the DIU's decided to take the plunge. A series of cluster meetings were organised in both the districts. The response was beyond one's imagination. Participation in these meetings ranged from 50-120. In some case women had walked 10-15 kms to attend the meeting.

Not only was there no demand for reimbursement of bus fares or the day's wages, but many groups were enthused to seriously consider what they, as a group, could do. The outcomes of these meetings were several. The pace of group formation was accelerated in some areas and group solidarity increased. Village groups began to articulate more freely what their agendas were. This in most cases was followed by specific actions to address the issue. The discussion on the need to acquire new skills to be able to redress one's problems drew an enthusiastic response. Consequently, it was decided to start a series of trainings in the areas of handpump maintenance and repair, health and literacy from March onwards. To each of these trainings sangham women agreed to send a team of two women to acquire the new skills and also to bear the costs of their travel.

For the APMSS, the overwhelming response was not only a validation of the programme but also boosted the morale and confidence of all.

Several questions, however, remain. When can we call a group a sangham ? How does one sustain a group ? At this stage of the programme what is our role as facilitator ? Though the concept of the sangham does not seem alien to the village women,

nevertheless, it remains an area of concern for us. Based on the experiences of the past one year, the teams arrived at a common understanding of the 4 different phases of group formation, namely from individual interactions, to small group discussions, to groups which clearly articulate their needs and priorities and begin to address them with considerable inputs from the karyakarthas and finally to sanghams which are strong and independent, which are capable of analysing problems, planning and acting upon decisions with almost no help from the Karyakartha. In addition, further criteria were also identified to determine whether a group could be called a sangham or not.

1. Regular weekly meetings of 20 or more women.
2. Steady and regular participation.
3. The group giving itself a name and selecting group leaders.
4. An interest in learning new information and willingness to participate in cluster meetings, etc. The group taking the initiative in deciding on a course of action on an issue or problem identified by them.
5. Funds being raised within the groups to meet travel expenses of members participating in meetings and trainings or visiting mandal offices on behalf of the sanghams.
6. Maintenance of accounts.

Within the context of the foregoing discussions, the status of the 158 villages APMSS is working in is as follows :

<u>District</u>	<u>Total no. of villages</u>	<u>I phase</u>	<u>II phase</u>	<u>III phase</u>	<u>IV phase</u>
Medak	91	17	46	28	-
Mahabubnagar	67	24	23	20	-
	----- 158 -----	----- 41 -----	----- 69 -----	----- 48 -----	----- - -----

THE PROCESS

Our journey for the past one year has been like a roller-coaster. The myriad issues and demands that have emerged from the field have turned, in some cases, the most hostile of villages into strong, articulate sanghams, whereas elsewhere star sanghams have disintegrated into squabbling factions. Once the initial distrust and hostility had been overcome, the blitzkrieg of demands and issues identified by the women took us by storm. As an immediate response, the Karyakarthas were able to initiate activities such as meeting mandal officials and filing applications. In responding to these issues and demands, however, they were unable to carry the group beyond a certain point, and fieldwork began stalling. A reunderstanding of the programme and its objectives took place before the group felt strong to push the programme forward.

Many of these issues and demands have initiated a very encouraging process, the most significant one being the formation of cohesive groups in many places. At a few places, civic amenities have been accessed, at a few others, the sangham has saved enough to open its own bank account.

What each of these activities has demonstrated, time and again, has been the power and effectiveness of collective action.

Given below is a brief synopsis of various issues that have emerged and the many processes which have been set in motion, as a result.

HEALTH

Little needs to be said about the appalling health status in rural areas. With nonfunctional AMNs, doctors and PHCs, the rural

population is largely at the mercy of quacks and witch doctors. In both Medak and Mahabubnagar, a very commonly voiced problem in the beginning was irregular visits by the ANM. Wherever the issue arose, the Karyakarthas facilitated a meeting between the women and the ANM. In Kitchanapalli and Saibanpet villages of Andole Mandal, Medak district, for instance, such a meeting has resulted in the ANM visiting the village regularly. Similarly in Peddajatram, Dasaradoddi, Kachwar, and Kothapalli villages of Mahabubnagar district, the women have succeeded in getting the ANM to their village on a regular basis. Lack of immunisation, skin diseases, fluorosis, gynaecological problems, ill health of children, were identified almost everywhere. In many villages, children handicapped due to polio is a common sight. In many villages the need to access schemes and facilities for handicapped children was expressed by the women of Burrandibba, Gadipeddapur and Isojipet village of Alladurg and Pulkal mandals (Medak district) respectively. In response to this, the DIU staff collected the relevant information and passed it on to the Mahila Karyakarthas, who in turn, discussed it with the women. This information was received enthusiastically and followed up with the sanghams of Isojipet, Burrandibba and Gadipeddapur visiting the concerned offices. Similarly, residents of Yerraram village (Andole mandal, Medak district) suffer from acute fluorosis. Though a fluorosis treatment plant is attached to the borewell it has been disconnected by the villagers. Confronted with this problem, the Karyakartha took a newspaper item on fluorosis and discussed it with the women. In a recently held cluster meeting the issue was discussed again and the sangham is showing interest

in wanting to do something about the problem.

Along with accessing existing government facilities and schemes, an alternate system of medicine - namely herbal medicine, is being explored. Two Karyakarthis in Medak district who have been trained in the use of herbs used their knowledge effectively in building rapport initially and later in training sangham women. Scabies is a common health problem for which a herbal paste made of neem leaves, turmeric and a pinch of salt has worked wonders in many villages. To create greater interest and answer queries, the karyakarthis have also been using 'Darwazalo Dawakhana' - a book on herbal medicine brought out by Deccan Development Society. At the same time, efforts are also being made to discover the hidden knowledge, rural women have, of herbal medicine. In Peddajatram for instance, a karyakartha came across one woman who has knowledge of about the use of 60 odd herbs. In Kachwar village, Makthal mandal, Mahabubnagar district, women undertook the exercise of identifying as many herbs as they could in the village, with the help of the karyakartha.

Immunization and alcoholism being fairly common problems in almost all the villages, there was a need to address it in some form. Hence, information posters on immunisation were brought out. These posters are in the form of a story and revolve around a woman called Rukkamma. This story (called 'Oka Oori Katha') is about a village named 'Shanigramam' which is so named because of the number of children who die of diseases, here. The reader meets one such village woman, Rukkamma whose child is afflicted by tetanus. Rukkamma, however, believes this is due to the curse of 'Shani'. There follows an explanation of the scientific cause

behind tetanus and how one can prevent this disease by immunising the children and pregnant women on time.

The story ends with Rukkamma and her sangham deciding to call the ANM to their village for immunising all the children and pregnant women. Thus the village is no longer called Shanigramam but Anandagramam.

The original story was written in English and later translated into Telugu. It was translated incorporating the local words used in the Telangana region. The story was then written out in bold letters on a chart. Many pictures, illustrating what had been written were drawn and painted. The bold letters, it was hoped, would enable neo-literates to read easily and make the material visually more attractive.

These posters were field tested in two villages in Mahabubnagar and Medak districts. When used in Dasaradoddi village, Mahabubnagar district, the women decided to get the ANM to their village and actually got many children in their wada, immunised. The karyakartha reported later that now they do not allow the ANM to use the needle without sterilising it first. Similarly, the karyakartha's produced charts/posters on the ill effects of alcoholism and used them in the viillages.

Accompanying women and children who are unwell, to the PHC and meeting the doctor, have enabled the karyakarthas to build trust, goodwill with sangham women and also interact with the district administration. Similarly, in Auslonpally village (Utkoor mandal, Mahabubnagar district) leprosy is a very common problem. When the district leprosy control unit visited the village, the concerned karyakartha mobilised those afflicted to come for a check up and

collect the medicines. This enabled the villagers to access this health service, which, though existing was nonfunctional because no one knew when the unit visited the village.

As result of the various activities and discussions that took place in reponse to the issue of health, informal gatherings have gelled into more regular, relatively more cohesive groups. Issues such as diarrhea management, nutrition, pre and post natal care are discussed in Sangham meetings, Over a period of time, an interest in wanting to learn more about health issues was expressed by the women, in response to which, a series of monthly training programmes have been initiated in the district. Health work is a very vast and extensive area to chart and we have only scratched the surface. The long term goal is to build a competent cadre of health workers who are able to monitor the health status of the village and enable the sangham to access existing schemes and services.

GETTING CIVIC AMENITIES

The issue of getting civic amenities for the village has catalysed thinking on several issues such as literacy, health, saving etc.

Both Mahabubnagar and Medak districts are drought-prone, very dry areas and the issue of water arose in the very beginning. Women complained of insufficient water sources, handpumps which had lain unrepaired for months and in a few cases of unclean, worm-infested water. This issue resulted in interactions with the concerned mandal officials, namely the MRO and the Deputy Engineer.

Women from Burranwada thanda, Regode mandal, (Medak district) met

the MRO and filed an application for the repair of their handpump. Similarly, sangham women from Kansanpalli, Serimallareddipalli and Kondareddipalli (Andole mandal, Medak district met the Deputy Engineer to demand that their village handpumps be repaired as soon as possible. Their counterparts in Saibanpet went a step further and even met the MLA in this connection. As a consequence of this strongly articulated demand, the repair of handpumps is now being attended to much earlier than before. In fact at a few places, the mechanics of the water department have solicited the karyakartha's support in identifying villages where pumps are broken down. In Sultanpur village, Pulkal mandal, Medak district, an article on the district budgetary allocations for handpumps was read and the women decided they must access the sanctioned scheme as far as possible. Similarly, the courage and grit shown by sangham women of Karne village, Makthal mandal, Mahabubnagar is worth mentioning.

A new handpump was sanctioned for the village. Though there was no handpump in the SC wada, the sarpanch directed that the handpump be installed close to his house. The sangham women were, however, determined that the pump be installed in their wada because otherwise they would have to walk very far. When the water department officials visited Karne for installing the handpumps, the women nearly sat on a dharna near the site proposed by the Sarpanch. They forced the water department to come to the SC wada and had the pump installed there. Banglathanda in Alladurg mandal medak district has only two or three pumps, of which one had been nonfunctional for a long time.

Though the mechanic came, after a formal complaint was made, to the thanda and collected money from the villagers for purchasing spare parts, he never returned. In the meantime, the women brought another mechanic from a nearby village and got the pump repaired. However, the one who had cheated them of their money was not to be spared. They located him in Alladurg and got him to repay the cash.

As an extension of all these activities, the karyakarthas initiated a discussion in sanghams, on how dependence on external sources for technical help, cripples us and makes us constantly depend on others. Instead, if the women themselves master the art of maintaining and repairing the handpump, they will not only acquire a technical skill themselves, but also become self reliant. This was received enthusiastically by the women and the idea of training women in handpump maintenance and repair, germinated. In nearly 40 villages of Medak, this issue has been discussed.

Other civic amenities such as electricity and sanitation facilities were raised alongside other issues.

The women of Khanapur village, Makthal mandal, Mahabubnagar district decided that they wanted to get electricity connections for the SC wada. For this, they were required to deposit a certain amount. Hence, the group undertook saving activity. 11 members saved Rs.5/- each for a period of 5 weeks. The total amount saved, Rs.275/- was paid and the sangham took direct electricity connections. Their counterparts in Bondalkuntha village also succeeded in getting electricity connections. Similarly, in Burrandibba and Chevella villages of Alladurg

mandal, Medak district, as also in Saibanpet of Andole amandal, the sangham negotiated with the sarpanch for bulbs for street lights.

Almaipet village of Andole mandal is way off the main road, hence the sangham here felt that a nameboard of their village was needed. They discussed this issue and pushed the literate men into painting a small nameboard for their village. It is a proud achievement on the highway.

Drainage and sewage facilities in villages are very poor with open stagnant cesspools and uncovered drains. When the MRO of Regode mandal, Medak district, held a revenue court in Venkatapuram village, the women decided to raise this issue with him. They approached the MRO, told him of the poor sanitary conditions and even showed him around the village. They filed an application for construction of drains and sewers. Though the MRO agreed to help, the women have decided to file yet another application, if nothing gets done. Similarly, in Chityala, Bijwar and Kothapalli villages of Manabubnagar district, the demand for construction of proper drains, latrines and even soakage pits has been intense. In this connection the issue of sanitation and health has been discussed time and again by the karyakarthas.

When the sarpanch proved unresponsive, the women of Peddareddipeta village, Medak district, themselves got together and cleared all the drains. In Pocharam, Chilivera, Gorekal, Chevella and Burrandibba villages of Medak district, sangham women have talked to the sarpanch about construction of proper drains in the village.

Since most of the villages in rural areas are not well connected

by bus service, the demand for this facility also had come up in many places. The women of Danampalli village, Andole mandal in Medak met the bus controller in this connection. Similarly, sanghams in Goplapur and Vanaikuntha villages of Makthal mandal, Mahabubnagar district discussed the need to extend bus services to their village. On this issue as yet it has meant interactions with officials in the transport department, which has boosted the strength of the sangham and led to group strengthening.

SAVING

One area of great concern for us in the programme has been the issue of saving. The activity itself was an offshoot from various other demands raised by the women.

Our initial entry into the village was fraught with questions and demands, the most common of which was "what will you give us?". This was inevitably followed by a demand for loans. At a few places this demand was converted into a saving activity. In Tipparaspalli village, for example, the whole issue of savings emerged out of the persistent demands for loans. There were many women in the village who had taken loans but had been unable to repay. A DWCRA programme also began in the village but failed due to lack of market and nonavailability of raw material. These situations were analysed to understand that loans alone are not the solutions to their problems. Also, how could they demand for loans when they had not yet repaid the loans they had taken so far. They had also to prove their own credibility to the Government before demanding money from them. Thus the concept of savings emerged. One woman said, 'We should save but men should

not know about it'. When asked what they would do with the money saved, they said they would begin a vegetable selling unit. Obviously the group had not really analysed if this would be economically feasible. Thus the DW CRA group which failed was taken as an example to discuss the nitty gritty's of the vegetable business. The group had not even thought about wholesale, retail markets, pricing, marketing etc. This entire exercise was very useful in generating their thinking on the feasibility of loans and their use in 'uplifting' their status. Following this discussion the group felt that in order to establish their credibility in the eyes of the loan disbursing authority as well as to think more deeply on the possibility of starting a vegetable selling unit, they would begin saving activity. In Tipperasapalli a group of 9 members are now saving Rs.5/- every week. Similarly in Devanur village of Regode mandal, Medak district, the group saved money and then decided to open a bank account. This activity has also prompted them to learn how to read and write. The sangham in Vanaikuntha village of Makthal Mandal, Mahabubnagar district, has followed a similar course. Here, a group of 38 women are saving Rs.5/- every week for the past 14 weeks. They now have a fund of Rs.2,600/- which has been placed in a bank. The sangham has elected two women as signatories to the account. Two women have learnt to sign their names, which has prompted others to learn as well. Wherever savings has begun, the purposes for which the money is put to use varies from buying slates for literacy to paying deposit money for electricity connection. To tale an example, In Kachwar village (Makthal mandal, Mahabubnagar district), the sangham has

decided to use the savings fund for purchasing slates. In Khanapur, the money saved was used to pay a deposit for electricity. They are now also planning to open a bank account. In Ramsanpalli, Peddareddipeta and Manthoor village of Medak district, the money saved is used to meet the bus fares of sangham women who come to attend training programmes and meetings. However, in almost all the sanghams the money saved has become a revolving fund which is loaned out to members. In this context the norms for circulating this money were worked out by groups, i.e., how much interest to charge, the purpose for which loans may be given, eg:- not to give loans for child marriage and so on. Money is lent out for purchase of grains, marriages, for emergencies etc. The interest charged by the sangham on the loans given was another problematic area. Initially the interest rates were as high as or even higher than what was charged by the local moneylender. This was used to discuss and reunderstand the purpose, meaning and ethics behind the savings activity. For instance, after discussions on why savings had started, the Isogipet group decided to charge a lower interest rate of Rs.3/- per 100 for its members. Initially they had planned to charge Rs.5/- per 100.

Similarly, in another village, some members started sending their contributions through their friends. The group decided that if this was the attitude, then savings could be stopped. The idea of starting savings was not only money but also to get the group together on specified days.

What needs to be emphasised here is that savings activity is carried on as part of the sangham and not as an exclusive

activity in itself. The number of members in the savings group varies from 10-35 women. And these women, are part of a larger group that is the sangham. For example, along with savings the sangham in Saibanpet is also participating in health and handpump training.

Issues linked to savings, such as maintaining accounts has prompted sanghams to think about the possibility of learning the three.

LITERACY/EDUCATION

In the past one year, both Mahabubnagar and Medak have seen a very persistent and continued demand for literacy. The issue of children's education has also been voiced strongly in many villages. Our response to this demand has been, at best, patchy. Whenever the demand has come up, the Karyakarthas have tried to mobilise local resources-literate adolescent girls or women to teach adult women, and in the absence of these, have been teaching themselves. In almost all the villages, the women began by learning to write their names.

Girl child education has been consciously discussed in cluster meetings. Though village women seemed to be very keen and enthusiastic about prompting girl child education, our Karyakarthas have been unable to carry the issue forward, at places. The demand for adult literacy, however, has been met squarely. The issue itself was arrived at through different ways. At a few places, savings has led to literacy through the need to maintain accounts, e.g. Vanaikuntha. At a few others, literacy was discussed as a skill building activity. Wherever the Karyakarthas are teaching literacy to women themselves, there has

been an effort at developing innovative teaching methods eg:- the use of stencils and flash cards, rangoli etc. In Kotwanpalli, village of Regode mandal, Medak district, 40 women are learning to read and write. Similarly, in Pagidimarri village of Utkoor mandal, Mahabubnagar district, literacy became the central issue around which the group was initially mobilised. Here, the Karyakartha has been reading simple stories and children's literature, to sustain their interest. At many places, women are demanding female instructors for the night school. Since the Karyakartha cannot become a permanent instructor in the village, the need for training village women as instructors was mooted. One or two women from each of these villages will be trained every month, who will in turn teach the remaining sangham women. This idea has been received very enthusiastically.

A common problem with the learners is lack of slates and enough reading material. Though the TLC programme is functioning in the district, slates and other material seldom reach the villages. Thus, women from 15 sanghams have demanded that slates be supplied to their villages. In Mahabubnagar, the Department of Adult Education is being approached for the supply of literacy kits. Along with literacy for adults, children's education has been the focus of sangham discussions in many places. Sanghams in Pareval, Yernanpalli and Khanapur villages of Makthal mandal Mahabubnagar district, want regular teachers to come to the village. The women of Pareval are filing an application with the Mandal Education Officer towards this. Similarly, in Kondapur village of Regode mandal, Medak district, the women met the Sarpanch about getting a good teacher for the local school. In

Gaddempalli and Ankenpalli villages of Makthal mandal, Mahabubnagar district, the sangham has been enquiring about information on hostel facilities for blind children.

Hostel facilities have been accessed at a few places eg:- in Pulkal mandal, where the Karyakarthis helped a girl child from Pocharam to gain admission. Initially, when the Karyakartha had tried to disseminate the same information, they had been suspected as child lifters. The demand for the very same information is now picking up in many villages. Though it must be added that the issue of girl child education has been pushed to some extent by the programme itself, the response has been very positive. One of the activities that has been slated to push this issue forward in a month long girl child camp. This will prepare girl children between the ages of 9-11, to access hostels wherever possible or at least the local school. Information on these hostels and also homes for orphaned children has also been collated by the DIU.

While we are very clear that literacy alone cannot be equated to education, there has been a sustained demand in this area. To meet this demand, the DIU teams have undergone two workshops/trainings on literacy and its methodology. In Mahabubnagar the application of this training is strongly evident.

ACCESSING GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

A very significant and encouraging development over the past one year, has been accessing of various government schemes by sangham women. Meeting the concerned mandal official and filing applications has become commonplace.

Almost every sangham has initiated work on getting widow pensions, old age pensions and maternity assistance. In a few cases the group was successful almost immediately. In a few others, the activity has not proceeded beyond meeting officials. For instance, in Lingampalli and Dasaradoddi villages of Makthal mandal, Mahabubnagar district, the sangham has stalled at the stage of filing applicataions for widow and old age pensions. When the demand arose initially, the Karyakarthis and DIU staff collected information on the schemes and discussed this with women's groups. This sharing has proven very effective in building the group and gaining their trust. In Andole, Medak district, women who were seeking old age pensions went to meet the MRO along with the Karyakartha. When the MRO actually came down to meet them, he explained the scheme of old age pensions and the number who would benefit from it. For the women this was an exhilarating experience as they said this was the first time they had met an MRO.

Sangham women from Chevella, Burrandibba, Banglathanda, Gorekal and Vatpalli of Alladurg mandals have applied for old age and widow pensions, though no success has been achieved so far in getting them sanctioned.

Maternity assistance for agricultural labour is a very well known scheme in rural areas. We were initially surprised at the number of villages in which this demand arose. Almost immediately, the activity of meeting the PHC doctor was undertaken. In Pulkal, with the assistance of the Karyakartha, the women were successful in getting the doctor to disburse on the spot, maternity assistance to ten women whose cases had been pending for

sometime. At least 2-3 women each from Burranwada thanda, Burrandibba, Chowdarpalli, Kotwanpalli and Gorekal villages (Alladurg mandal, Medak district) have been sanctioned this money, through these interactions.

Alongside accessing of the scheme, the related issue of maternal and child health has also been discussed, specially its linkage to the immunisation scheme.

The demand for other schemes such as tailoring units, arose sporadically. At a few places, such as Kotwanpalli in Regode mandal, Medak district, a sangham woman who was interested in learning more about the 'pranganam' scheme visited the vocational centre and gathered the required information.

OTHER ISSUES

SOCIAL FORESTRY:-

Though no concrete activity has been undertaken on this issue, it has been very heartening to note the keen interest and enthusiasm the women have shown in wanting to green their homes and villages.

Many women have also voiced interest in turning this into an income generating programme i.e., tending and sale of saplings. In Vatpalli, Devanoor, T.Lingampalli, Thatapalli and Chevella villages of Medak district, the Karyakartha used this issue to discuss availability of water, market for the saplings, the gestation period etc. The DIU staff collected relevant information about the social forestry scheme. However, no activity has been undertaken.

ANGANWADI/CHILD CARE CENTRE

As a corollary to improving educational facilities for children,

the need to start child care centres where it did not exist and improve existing ones, was raised in many group meetings. At a few places, the problem was the location of the child care centre. The Anganwadi centre was sanctioned for SC's but located in the BC colony. In Sindole village and Andole Kotala of Andole mandal, Medak district, the women's group has succeeded in getting the Anganwadi shifted to the SC wada after talking to the concerned CDPO. In Mahabubnagar district, however, this issue has been raised in very few sanghams.

In some instances, the karyakarthas, who have already been trained to work with children have shared their knowledge of songs, games and how to engage children in a creative way with the Anganwadi teachers and ayahs. This has resulted in gaining their cooperation in mobilising groups and also in gaining acceptance in the village.

Since some of the mandals in which the programme works are not covered by the ICDS scheme, various possibilities have been discussed at the DIU level about starting child care centres. However, no concrete activity has taken place in this regard.

RATION CARDS

Many of the initial interactions of the village women with mandal officials, has been on this issue. In about 30 villages of Mahabubnagar district this issue was one of the first to be voiced. The MRO's have had to meet groups of women and received innumerable applications for ration cards. Women from Dasaradoddi, Khanapur, Kachwar, Bondalkuntha and Lingampalli villages, Makthal mandal, Mahabubnagar district, have filed applications in the MRO's office.

Apart from applying for ration cards, the distribution of foodgrains by the ration dealer has also been dealt with. In Garlapalli village of Utkoor mandal, Mahabubnagar district, a group of 10-15 women met the ration dealer alongwith the Mahila karyakartha and demanded that he give them the allotted amount of 10 kgs. Similarly, the women of Burrandibba met the Patwari and got him to ensure that the ration would be supplied according to the amount allotted.

In Lingampalli village, (Makthal mandal, Mahabubnagar district) the dealer was not supplying the village with control priced sarees. The women met the sarpanch, the MRO and brought pressure on the dealer to bring them control priced sarees. This achievement brought the group together and they have even named themselves.

SANGHAM HUTS

Though the programme in AP is very new and we had never anticipated this issue, much to our surprise and delight, the process of trying to build a physical space of their own, has been taken up in six sanghams of Medak district.

The lack of a place where women could hold meetings, without being stared at or even ridiculed by men, was discussed in a few sanghams. The only alternative, the women began saying, was to have a space of their own. Hence, it was that the women of Mudimanikyam, Thadadanpalli, Possanpet, Isojipet, Basvapur, Peddareddipeta and Ramsanpalli met their respective sarpanchs and demanded that some space be allotted to them for holding meetings. In most cases, the Sarpanchs have been positive and discussions on allotment of land have started.

A combined meeting of all these villages was held where the need, use and resources needed to build the hut were discussed. It seems too premature to predict how many sanghams will actually build their own huts in the months to come. But, the fact that the group has identified such a need at such an early stage speaks highly of their sense of togetherness and solidarity. A great deal of preparation is needed, both on the part of the sangham and the programme, before anything is finally done in this area.

Though the groups still have to come a long way before they can become strong cohesive independent sanghams, the processes have been set in motion. It is prudent to add here that many times many issues have gone unaddressed due to negligence and indifference on our part. Follow up has been very difficult and at a few places where sanghams could have surged forward, the pace has been retarded. On the other hand, we have made headway in villages in which we thought we would be simply unable to work.

A very encouraging trend has been the initiation of training programmes for sangham women in specific areas of skill building such as handpump maintenance and repair, health and literacy. This has been largely in response to the demand for these inputs in the field.

Thus, the rollercoaster goes on

TRAINING OF SANGHAM WOMEN

The issue of transferring skills and knowledge to sanghams is seen not only in the context of addressing the immediate problems articulated by women but also as part of the process of empowering them. Though many issues were identified by the women, three were more commonly expressed - health, literacy and inaccessibility of drinking water. In response to this a series of trainings have been initiated from March, 1994. The major objective of these trainings is to develop a core of self-reliant women in each village, equipped with knowledge and skills.

HANDPUMP MECHANIC TRAINING

Not surprisingly, the problem of drinking water scarcity came up several times as both Mahabubnagar and Medak are semiarid, drought prone areas. The scarcity of drinking water is further compounded by illmaintained, defunct handpumps. In several meetings women demanded that APMSS should help in getting new handpumps and in the repair of defunct ones. At this juncture, discussions focussed on whether women could learn how to repair handpumps. The initial skepticism gave away to great enthusiasm when the success story of the Banda women handpump mechanics was related. In Medak, in particular about 10 women were keen to be trained in handpump mechanism.

To learn from the Banda experience as well as to clarify our own thoughts, a team of women mechanics from Banda was invited. During their visits to Mahabubnagar and Medak during 18th to 24th April, 1994, discussions were held with interested sangham women and Karyakarthas. The two day meeting in Sangareddy included a demonstration repair of a handpump which had been defunct for

four months. This conclusively laid to rest any doubts, questions and skepticism we and the sangham women had.

At present, in Medak a 10 day training is slated for the first batch of handpump mechanics beginning from May 28th, 1994. The training would include not only hands on training of the technical aspects of handpump repair but also discussions on water preservation, community participation in maintenance, hygiene and health. The District Panchayati Raj Engineering department has extended their full cooperation and agreed to send mechanics and give tool kits for the training.

HEALTH TRAINING

The health training programme is really a culmination of various factors that emerged in the past six months, namely,

- a. the keen interest shown by women in wanting to learn more about health issues
- b. the non-availability of adequate medical care
- c. the need to develop local health resources.

The training programmes were launched in both the districts with the major objective of 1. creating a cadre of village health workers who can provide elementary health care, till such time that medical care is available. 2. Accessing government health facilities as far as possible. 3. To build upon and develop skills in the area of herbal medicine.

It was decided that the training would focus on three major areas.

1. Maternal and child health.
2. Existing government health schemes and facilities.
3. Herbal medicine.

These areas being very extensive, the training has been planned in a phased manner. Divided into five units of 1-2 days each, each phase will focus on different areas of relevance to the

above. Thus, the major components are :-

1. Women's health status.
2. Health problems specific to women.
3. Post and pre natal care.
4. Safe delivery practices.
5. Contraception.
6. Nutrition.
7. Health problems specific to children.

The corresponding government facilities with regard to each component and the relevant herbal medicine, are important inputs as well. As a precursor to the training, an exercise was initiated with Karyakarthis on collecting preliminary health data about their sanghams. The purpose was to quantify some of the health problems to be discussed in the training. (eg:- infant deaths, causes etc.)

As of date, two phases of the training have been completed in Mahabubnagar district and one phase in Medak district. The focus has been on presenting the data which has been collected and discussing causes for the low health status of children and women in villages. Herbal medicine for common ailments, safe delivery practices, prenatal and postnatal care etc., has also been discussed.

LITERACY TRAINING

A series of monthly literacy training programmes for sangham women has been planned starting from the month of June, 1994. As has already been mentioned, the demand for literacy arose fairly early in both the districts. In Mahabubnagar, this demand has been sustained evenly by the karyakarthis, many of whom are teaching literacy in their sanghams. Looking at the continued and keen interest of the women, the idea of training two to three

women as instructors for every sangham, has been discussed in meetings. Hence, it has been planned to launch training in this area. The karyakarthas have also been using many of the innovative teaching, learning methods that they learnt in the two literacy workshops.

TRAINING OF APMS STAFF

Given the process oriented approach of the programme, continual training of programme functionaries is seen as critical. Trainings in APMS have been of two types - those which have emphasised on understanding the programme objectives and its relation to the field ; and those which have focussed on specific informational inputs e.g. literacy.

In the past year, trainings of the former kind have aimed at equipping programme functionaries with mobilisation and analytical skills as well as create learning oppurtunities for women based on their demands in the field . It is important to emphasise here that training is not a one-shot or time bound event. It is an inextricable part of a cyclical training, planning, implementation process. Hence, the first phase of training was designed to introduce the programme, discuss gender issues and provide a rudimentary understanding of the District Administration. This was followed by 9 weeks of fieldwork before the group met again to review the problems and experiences of the last 8 weeks and plan the future agenda. The experiences and insights gained in these 8 weeks became the basis for the second phase.

FIRST PHASE OF TRAINING

The first phase of training , conducted in June 1993, was held with the assistance of two resource persons, Dr. Rukmini Rao and Ms. Jamuna Iyer. It was aimed at introducing the new recruits to the programme, to the field, to gender issues and also providing them with basic informational inputs on law and district administration.

The design for the training was arrived at after discussions with representatives from various women's groups and NGO's. Keeping in mind the objectives of this training, the following components were included:

Analysis of gender (within the context of education and work) ; analysis of social structures, importance of collective action ; role of the facilitator; communication and mobilisation skills and informational components on the programme, government structures and Law.

The ten day training programme was divided into three distinct phases - the first four days were devoted to understanding gender relations at work and in the field of education. This was followed by Mrs.Srilatha Batliwala's presentation on the Mahila Samakhya programme in Karnataka and its growth. The final two days were devoted to informational inputs on law and government schemes. Ms. Shailaja, a practicing lawyer in Sangareddy introduced the group to issues of women and law. Mr.Mash Hady, ED of the SC Corporation and Mr.Shiva Kumarappa, Deputy Director, Adult Education, also spoke about DRDA schemes and the Total Literacy campaigns respectively.

After this 10 day training, the teams set out to the field. Initial contacts were made and we faced mixed responses as a few villages were very positive, whereas at a few places, the Karyakarthas were almost chased out of the village. Many issues and demands were voiced in the field, and in many instances, the Karyakarthas were able to respond immediately by organising an activity around the issue. For instance, meeting mandal officials. However, by the end of eight weeks, it became clear

that concretising programme objectives in the field was becoming a problem. Though issues and demands were staring at us in the face, the Karyakarthas were unable to convert them into a continuous learning experience by linking them to other related issues. Thus, they seemed to be a yawning gap between the process of education, which was seen as merely a concept, and field work. Hence the need for a second phase of training was felt where the objectives of the programme could be examined in the context of the various demands and issues that had come up in the field. At the same time it was also essential to relook at gender relations in society, and why we are seeking to empower women through education.

The training would also enable the two district teams to exchange what each of them had done in the last 8 weeks. Looking at the objectives of the training, it was obvious that all inputs, whether on gender or empowerment had to be done within the context of the programme. Hence the idea of getting someone from outside to do the training seemed to defeat the purpose. Thus with great trepidation and fear we at the state office decided to do the training ourselves.

The first five to six days of the training were spent in analysing field work in the context of the programme objectives. This was done through exercises. The first of these was to review the various demands that had come up in the field. We then identified one issue and worked out a plan on how this issue could be carried forward in the sangham. That is, how the issue could be linked up to other related issues to convert it into a continuous learning experience for the women.

At first , when the most commonly voiced issue of loans was taken up, almost everyone's plan of action seemed to end at literacy alone. In the light of this exercise, the programme objectives were reread and discussed, namely that literacy and education are not synonymous, and that we are looking at education as a process of critical thinking. Even as we were doing this exercise, we realised that many of us had operationalised many of the objectives, but had never really analysed it .

The question of why we need to empower women at all in the first place, led to a discussion on the question of gender. Gender relations with specific reference to various institutions- - family, law, health etc. were discussed at length.

During the last two days , specific informational inputs on health were given by Dr. Veena Shatrughna and Ms. Uma Maheshwari of Deccan Development Society.

TRAININGS FOR SKILL BUILDING AMONG THE APMSS STAFF

Of the various demands that arose in the field, literacy seemed to pose the most number of problems for us. This was essentially because, while we felt more or less confident about dealing with the various other demands, none of us were clear about the perspective on and methodology of teaching literacy. Hence we have tried to strengthen ourselves most in this area.

Our district teams participated in two workshops on literacy. The first one, was organised by the APMSS, and conducted by Mr. Shivram and Mr. Murali Mohan, both having enormous experience in the area of innovative teaching learning methods. While undrestanding the limitations of literacy programmes and the

problems of the formal system of education, the workshop also helped to clarify the purpose of initiating literacy work in the programme. We also learnt about innovative teaching learning methods.

Since the question of literacy has always been an area of debate and even contention in the Mahila Samakhya programme, a week long workshop on this issue was organised by Allarippu, at the behest of the national office. This workshop, held in Hyderabad, brought together representatives from different Mahila Samakhya states. The various strategies that have been employed within the programme were discussed as also such issues as the preparation of primers, specifically in the context of womens literacy, the camp vs. center approach, material production, childrens education and our long term understanding of literacy in the programme. Two resource persons, Dr. Sharada Jain and Dr. Suman Karandikar spoke about the Shikshakarmi and the PROPEL projects respectively.

The Mahila Samakhya project sees documentation as an essential input in the ongoing process of reflection and learning. Though different procedures and methodologies have been innovated for documentation, there has been no common understanding of process documentation and its methodology. With the constant emphasis that this programme makes on process, a brainstorming on this issue was felt. Hence the National office in Delhi organised a three day training workshop on documentation, in New Delhi in the month of February, for all the Samakhya teams. This was attended by the core staff, namely the SPD, the DPC's, the RP and the two consultants in the state

office.

In November, 1993, a two day seminar was organised by APMSS on Women's and Girl Child Education. This seminar was mainly intended to bring together various NGO's working in Andhra, and representatives of the state department of education, to share their experiences in the area of womens education. It also enabled us to introduce the programme and build a resource network for ourselves.

Though one of our long term objectives in training is to develop a self sufficient core team of trainers, we still have a very long way to go in this direction. We would like, however, to add here that the training of the karyakarthis in specific areas is going on alongwith the sangham women. This has ensured an equal and balanced transfer of skills.