

Explorations

Annual Report
1992-93

Mahila Samakhya
Gujarat

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Mahila Samakhya Gujarat

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mahila Samakhya (Education for women's Equality) Programme is unique in its approach towards women's education. As the project document of September 1991 remarks "the approach has been integrated into comprehensive educational projects and accepted as a viable method for mobilizing adult women for literacy... Mahila Samakhya programme 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."

The approach

Mahila Samakhya Gujarat has the state level office in Ahmedabad which co-ordinates the district units at Baroda, Rajkot and Himatnagar. The district unit has programme staff called resource persons/consultants and administrative staff. Sahayoginis are honorary workers who are the link between the district and the village. She is supposed to co-ordinate activities of 10 villages. At the village level women's collectives (called mahila sanghas) are formed who in turn carry out activities. In the villages there are sakhis who are village level co-ordinators. Sakhis are selected by the Sangha women. Mahila Samakhya Gujarat has adopted Sakhi Rotation model as per which Sakhis are selected for a period of one year who receive training and get "stipend for learning". After one year Sakhi rotation is done and Sangha select new batch of Sakhis. Sangha women take decisions about number of Sakhis, monitoring of her work, dismissal of Sakhi if she does not work etc. The objectives of the programme include awareness generation and enhancing self-confidence and self-image of women. The process is long and requires patience and commitment.

The content

The programme lays special emphasis on training. Training is a continuous, process oriented participatory exercise. They can be skill-based or can impart new set of values and attitudes. The programme is need-based and the role of programme functionary is that of a facilitator or a catalyst. Looking to the process-oriented, need-based approach, there are inbuilt flexibilities in the programme. There is a provision for Literacy, support structure components and trainings. Support structure components includes "Collective space" called Mahila kutir, child-care centre and other collective experiments for water, fuel and fodder etc.

Following pages express the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the processes of Mahila Samakhya programme in Gujarat.

2. THE YEAR IN BRIEF

1992-93 was the fourth year for Mahila Samakhya Gujarat. And it was the year of "CHANGE". The activities included various committee formations, explorations about committee work, planning in the districts, new recruitments and training of new recruits, technical inputs to the districts by the newly recruited State office staff and a real take off for MS. Gujarat through new directions. This year Mahila Samakhya Gujarat stepped forward by defining directions to the programme.

DIRECTIONS TO THE PROGRAMME

"It is important to set a clear goal for programme as well as what we have done and what we have achieved. We should work out areas to give a clear direction to the programme" as the Chairman in the Seventh Executive Committee meeting on 30th June, 1992, commented. Based on the discussions and retrospections five areas were worked out by the committee.

Literacy was one area in which aspects like girls' enrolment in schools, literacy of women in the age group of 15-35 and Linkages with 'Total Literacy Campaign' (TLC) were considered. Legal aid and security was another area where issues of legal awareness and assistance to women on civil side were taken into consideration. Economic development was the the third area where the aim is to help helpless and deastitute women in the villages. It was remarked that MS should work to provide necessary linkages with the ongoing schemes at the taluka or district offices of the coecerned government departments. To enable women to harness the resources, information dissemination and education in the area can be taken by Mahila Samakhya (MS). Child care support was the fourth and health was the fifth area of operation. Mahila Samakhya's role will be in the directions of health education and health care.

It was decided that in these identified areas of operation and direction for the next five years, depending on the area of work being decided by the districts, future plan of action will be worked out.

Committee formations :

As proposed in the seventh Executive Committee meeting five groups were supposed to work out details and suggestions for the implementation of the programme through micro and macro level planning. The committee consisting of district/state level functionaries and experts from respective fields were constituted in July 1992 and they started their work.

HEALTH COMMITTEE

The Health Committee consists of--

(1) Dr (Mrs) Lataben Desai	Co-ordinator
(2) Representative Health Department, Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar	Member
(3) Ms Mita Pandit	"
(4) Ms Manisha Thaker	"

The committee is headed by Dr Lataben Desai from SEWA Rural, Jhagadia. Two meetings of health committee members took place one on 7th August and another on 19th Septemer. Besides these meetings, number of visits were paid by Lataben's representatives to MS districts for needs assessment. Even MS district teams went to SEWA Rural, Jhagadia for exposure, planning involvement and senaitization on health issues. After intensive exercise the committee came out with its report and remarked that there is a need to emphasise that no generalisations can be made because of the considerable local variations depen-

dent upon the local demands, quality and accessibility of available health care. This will require modifications not only at the planning but also at the implementation level. The committee concluded that by being aware of the strengths and limitations of Mahila Samakhya staff and Sangha women, it would be desirable to delineate roles and responsibilities when the one or more of the five identified activities get implemented.

The health programme should be initiated in a phased manner but on a smaller scale to start with, to assess the feasibility and desirability and to demonstrate the strengths of Mahila Samakhya staff and iron out technical problems which may emerge during the implementation.

* CHILD CARE COMMITTEE

The child care committee consists of-

(1) Ms Indu Capoor	Co-ordinator
(2) Mrs Rajalakshmi Sriram	Member
(3) Mrs Mirai Chatterjee	"
(4) Ms Vandana Nag	"
(5) Ms Manisha Thaker	"

This committee is headed by Ms Indu Capoor from CHETNA. The first committee meeting was held on 10th August at CHETNA, the second one was held at Baroda on 15th September, and the third one in October at Anand. Apart from the formal meetings the committee consulted several individuals and organisations before finalising the recommendations. The committee report gave detailed outline on implementation side suggested that Mahila Samakhya has a very crucial role in firstly building the knowledge and skill base of the child care functionaries. The committee expressed that MS should also ensure that the existing Government schemes reach the most needy and vulnerable groups of the community in such a way that they are "user friendly", "women focused" and also "community oriented."

* ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Economic Development Committee consists of-

(1) Mrs Renana Jhabwala	Co-ordinator
(2) Representative from concerned Government Department	Member
(3) Ms Shakuntala Mehta	"
(4) Ms Sumitra Thaker	"
(5) Ms Manisha Thaker	"

The committee headed by Mrs Renana Jhabwala met for the first time on 19th August at SEWA Ahmedabad. Involving district project functionaries the second meeting took place on 19th September and the third one on 22nd September. The committee listed down priorities of Ms districts and have identified possible economic areas. The committee report divided into three sections - Economic activities which can be taken up by Sanghas, role of Mahila Samakhya and funds and personnel-gave brief account of past experiences and possible interventions

in the area of economic development. The committee remarked that it is to be remembered of MS role which is that of a facilitator for Sanghas and not of an implementator. However, at particular times and for particular activities it may be necessary to play the implementator role until such time as the Sangha is ready to take it up. The committee felt that although MS's main work is as a linker and that of a catalyst, the role itself will require a great deal of effort, access to resources and personnel.

*** LITERACY COMMITTEE**

The Literacy Committee consists of-

(1) Mrs Anita Dighe	Co-ordinator
(2) Shri A. J. Shukla	
(3) Representative Lokbharati Sanosara	Member
(4) Representative (from DIET side) Aparadh pratibandhak Mandal	"
(5) Ms Shakuntala Mehta	"
(6) Ms Nita Hardikar	"
(7) Ms Sejal Dand	"

The committee is headed by Dr Anita Dighe from Delhi. Two days workshop was organised at the head office on 21st and 22nd September. Number of invitees and committee members participated in the intensive planning exercise that took place during the workshop. Besides exploring past literacy experiences of MS, the final report of the committee states possible options of literacy activities in MS districts. As TLC is initiated in Sabarkantha district the committee felt that MS can be involved in number of ways in TLC. For non-TLC districts literacy camps for a cluster of villages considering earlier experiences can be organised. The committee suggested that villages that are inaccessible or have single teacher schools should be given priority.

*** LEGAL AID COMMITTEE**

The Legal Aid Committee consists of-

(1) Mrs C. T. Mishra I. A. S.	Co-ordinator
(2) Mrs Gitaben Johri I. P. S.	Member
(3) Ms Amiben Yagnik, Advocate	"
(4) Ms Manoramben Thakor, Advocate	"
(5) Ms Jahnvi Andharia	"
(6) Ms Preeti Sheth	"

The committee headed by Mrs C. T. Mishra met on 28th August at the women and Child Development Commissioner office. After involving few other people in the committee, the second meeting took place on 19th September listed down the information about various offices and departments set up at the district. Based on the suggestions received in the meetings the broad goal of the committee was as follows :

"As a part of the process of empowerment MS will work actively to help women gain access to legal information, legal aid, administrative and judicial systems

and resources that provide a sense of justice, security and dignity."

After giving strategies and suggestions, the committee concluded that these are short term strategies that would have to be reviewed regularly and evaluated after two years. Lessons and recommendations from these reviews would then be incorporated in further planning legal issues in MS.

Co-ordinating the committees :

On 11th November committee co-ordinators meeting was held which discussed the implementation plan for these five areas. The group came out with the feeling that MS will have to keep in mind the limited human resources and will have to act as a resource mobiliser. It was also clarified that MS does not intend to create parallel structures and there is a need of management, technical input and capacity building within MS. The concluding meeting of committee co-ordinators was held on 3rd March, 1993, in which probability of committee co-ordinators involvement in District Resource Group was explored. Possibility of creating external review mechanisms with the help of committee co-ordinators is being examined by MS, Gujarat.

INPUTS TO THE DISTRICTS-NEW ALTERNATIVES

With two resource persons at the State office, possibility of technical inputs for the districts opened up within Mahila Samakhya. Resource person for Health and Trainings, did number of trainings for Sangha women of Sabarkantha and Rajkot district. During village level camps of two days each she covered 221 women from 20 villages. She also participated and facilitated the workshop for adolescent girls in Sabarkantha district.

Documenting process-New Avenues :

With a full time person to take care of documentation at the head office, Mahila Samakhya Gujarat ventured into new avenues of documenting processes. * **"The Awakening"** : After "Unfolding", Mahila Samakhya Gujarat prepared the second document covering activities and processes that took place in the year 1991-92. The report was published and distributed to various departments, institutions and individuals.

* **"Apani Vat"** : There was a need to have a common link, between all the villages of Mahila Samakhya Gujarat, which can create two-way communication channels between State and the villages. A newsletter titled "Apani Vat" (our chat) was initiated from the State office in April 1992. The newsletter is meant for Sangha women. The mode of delivery is at present through Sahayoginis besides it is sent directly to the Sanghas who write to State office. It is delivered to the Sangha women and/or Sahayoginis read it aloud in Sangha meetings wherever no one is literate.

The first issue which was brought out in April, discussed the concept of MS and components of the programme in simple Gujarati language. The second issue was brought out in August which discussed three events of the districts and answers to the letters of Sangha women. The third issue came out in November where concepts of Sakhi, Sangha and Sangha formation were dealt with. The fourth issue was published in february prior to international women's Day which included women's responses about the concept of sangha, letters of women and importance of women's Day.

The newsletter is gaining popularity among village women and number of letters are received at the head office creating two-way communication channels. Another impact is at the village level among outside groups. As one Sahayogini remarked, "Till now Sarpanch and other people used to think that I just talk, now when they see these issues they accept that I am doing some work." As the newsletter includes illustrated text illiterate women curiously compare the visual with the text when the Sahayogini reads the issue.

- * **Setting up systems :** State team along with the district teams is now in a process of setting up systematic approaches and formats for reporting at different levels. Even the district teams will have one person working for different level documentations in form of magazines, leaflets and information booklets.
- * **Publications :** This year Mahila Samakhya Gujarat published a pamphlet of "primary information on savings" and a booklet on Lucoria—a major health problem among rural women. The impact of savings pamphlet became visible when office received a letter from Chikla village of khedbrahma taluka of Sabarkantha district. women wrote "We read the savings booklet and on the very next day we decided that we should save. We have opened an account in the bank and 38 of us contribute 10 rupees each every month. Recent reports say that the number of women has increased to 41.

* **Human Resources-New Dimensions :**

Mahila Samakhya Gujarat recruited eight new resource persons/consultants last year. A resource person for documentation at the head office was appointed in the month of April. Another resource person for trainings joined Ahmedabad office in June along with five fresh post-graduates in social work. One Sahayogini of Rajkot district was selected to be a resource person.

Orientation training : To orient new people with Mahila Samakhya ideology and equipping them for their future assignment in MS, a training was organised for one month. The training, first of its kind in MS, was based on needs of new entrants. The programme was designed and carried out with flexible alterations from June 10 to July 10, 1992. The training including two field visits and sessions with 18 faculties from different fields gave the project functionaries valuable direction for their future line of action. Three functionaries one each from Rajkot, Baroda and Sabarkantha districts also partly participated in the training programme. The subjects covered in this training were understanding about government and administrative aspects, finance and accounts, legal aid, Mahila Samakhya programme components, experiences of other voluntary agencies like Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanghathan, CHETNA and Sanchetna, Areas like leadership, motivation, communication, attitudes and values, human relations etc. were also explored in this training programme as the functionaries will have to interact with rural women.

The training provided very good exposure and orientation to the team members and as they wrote in their report. "It was a collective, attentive and lively experience which gave us understanding about ourselves and psycho-social approaches related to Mahila Samakhya. Such trainings should be organised for newcomers so that they have some base when they start their work in the field."

Empowerment training : Through the concept of District Training Team (DTT), Mahila Samakhya Gujarat wants to create human resources within the programme to cater to the training needs at the grass-root and district levels. A step forward was taken in this direction in June 1992.

Janvikas, the training agency, organised the training "workshop on capability building for women's empowerment programme" in June 1992. The workshop was in three phases, each phase of two weeks for theoretical inputs followed by four weeks of field study. 11. Sahayoginis from three districts participated in this workshop.

The dates of three phases were :

- First phase — June 21, 1992 to July 5, 1992
- Second phase — August 2, 1992 to August 16, 1992
- Third phase — September 13, 1992 to September 26, 1992

The Sahayoginis who participated in this training were :-

Baroda District	Rajkot District	Sabarkantha District
1. Smita Pathak	1. Pravina Trivedi	1. Nathi Pargi
2. Lakshmi Rathwa	2. Harsha Bhatt	2. Kanta Solanki
3. Jayshree Jayaswal	3. Saroj Mardia	* 3. Leela Makwana
* 4. Salma Mansoori	* 4. Kirti Thakkar	

(* These Sahayoginis could not attend either of the phases)

The objectives of this training were to develop analytical skills, training capabilities, ability to plan and set out goals and a vision to place objectives of women's empowerment in a women's movement/change perspective. The programme was conducted in a workshop setting with the diversity of women's experiences and background providing the basis for coming together to form a learning / teaching group for a period of three months. In this period, the group strengthened its analytical base through conceptual inputs in contextual areas of gender ideology, socio-eco-political analysis of Indian societal ethos, religion, poverty, etc. The learning / educational processes in the programme were strengthened through practising the learning in the field. The programme was so structured as to include phased field level interventions in term of practising or examining the learning in the field context, thereby providing the basis for further reflection and learning. It is hoped that these trained resources will take up training activities in the coming year.

Celebrating the events

This year also Mahila Samakhya Gujarat celebrated World Literacy Day and International women's Day. As this year 8th March was 'Holi' festival day, women had decided to celebrate the day before or after 8th March. In all approximately 12000 women participated at 13 celebrations. Besides emphasising on the importance of these days, another important objective of such celebrations is to create common forum and "time and space" to rural women who hardly step out of their doorsteps. This year additional opportunity of "learning" came to women in form of SAMATA - Gyan Vigyan Jatha of women for education, equality and peace. The Jatha travelled all over India between March 8 to April 9, 1993 through eight regional women's Kala Jatha troupes and 3500 performances.

Mahila Samakhya Gujarat also hosted SAMATA in its three districts providing information on literacy to rural women. 4000 people watched 5 performances because of MSS. The impact of the SAMATA celebrations reflected in increasing demand for literacy skills in all Mahila Samakhya districts.

Programme Evaluation : New Way

Since last year Mahila Samakhya programme had pattern of annual Indo-Dutch Review Mission as per the New Scheme, Indo-Dutch Review Mission will review the programme every 18 months, i. e. in 1994-95. Till then the two annual evaluations 1992-93 and 1993-94 were to be carried out internally.

In this context to evolve design for the annual evaluation of Mahila Samakhya programme, a meeting was called in October 1992 by the National Project Director office, New Delhi, which was attended by two resource person from Gujarat team. The broad framework was worked out in this meeting. Based on which Mahila Samakhya Gujarat carried out intensive exercises with the district teams. The outcome was indepth and detailed set of parameters and indicators of evaluation for Mahila Samakhya programme. The districts came out with their set of parameters and in January 1993 State office compiled the copy which was placed in National Resource Group meeting held in Delhi.

The panel of evaluators was identified and their availability to spare three months for phased evaluation was inquired, The Eighth Executive Committee meeting of March 4, 1993 approved the name as - Dr. Indira Hirway, Mr. Vijay Sherry, Dr. Neera Desai and Dr. Ila Patel. Mahila Samakhya Gujarat will soon witness its first internal evaluation by external evaluators.

3. BARODA DISTRICT REPORT

District profile,

The area of the district is 7794 sq. kms. The population according to Provisional Population Total : Census of India 1991 : is 3073357 of which 52 per cent are males and 48 per cent females. The literacy ratio of the district is 55 per cent. Literacy ratio among males and females is 61:39. The sex ratio is 916 females which is lowest among three Mahila Samakhya districts.

Mahila Samakhya Baroda covers 147 villages of 7 out of total 12 talukas of the district. The focus of activities is mainly tribal population and landless families.

Baroda In Brief DIU is working in 147 villages of six talukas : Waghodia, Dabhoi, Padra, Chotta-Udaipur, Naswadi and Sankheda with the team of 22 Sahayoginis. One of the major developments last year has been on the front of Sangha consolidation. Sanghas have shown independent decision making, and have asked the 'Sakhi honorarium' to be transferred in the name of the respective Sangha. The strategy is now shifting from working with 2-3 women to working with a core group of 10-15 women from each village from the very beginning. A "Sangha training module" has been evolved to meet this need which draws

open the training content largely from the old Sakhi training module. On human resources front one consultant joined in June, and another in October. One left and two other resigned in January. Two resource person / consultant came to Baroda from Rajkot in March 1993.

Learning Together

* **District Staff** : In the last year district staff represented Mahila Samakhya Baroda at SAMATA planning meetings, national meet for all Mahila Samakhya district functionaries at Banda, Uttar Pradesh, and workshop on research in women's health organised by WODSIC. The district also worked on the concept of cluster office at taluka level, which will take time for actualisation.

* **Sahayoginis** : In this phase Sahayoginis jumped a stage, as earlier the procedure was to try and meet the needs of a village, after 'Lok Sampark' by mobilizing women. Now Sahayoginis take up an issue, say water, and mobilize not one village but the women of all her villages and try to solve the issue. Four Sahayoginis participated in "capacity building for women's empowerment training" organised by Janvikas. Sahayoginis of Baroda district hold two to three cluster level meetings with Sakhis and even with their peer groups every month. Every month there has been review and reflection of Sahayoginis work in the fields and planning for the next month is also done. The district functionaries provide necessary support and guidance to them.

Apart from doing intensive exercise on evaluation parameters in November 1992, the district team had sat together for reviewing activities of the year 1992 in December at Chandod. all the Sahayoginis and the district staff reflected upon previous year's activities and progress.

In some of the new villages Sahayoginis have done away with Sakhi rotation and are concentrating more on Sangha building. With reference to legal issues Sahayoginis participated in legal literacy material development workshop organised by DRISHTI—a voluntary agency in October 1992 Number of Sakshi also participated with them. In October they also participated in health workshop organised in collaboration with Bhartiya Gyanvigyan Jatha. The workshop provided information on common health problems in women and young children, primary measures on health care, nutrition and preventive measures. Sahayoginis also actively participated in large number of child care trainings and workshops.

* **Sakhis** – During the last year Sakhis were oriented to number of subjects such as status of women, importance of literacy, methods of Sangha building, skills in effective communication, observation, listening, etc. In the last year two Sakhi orientation trainings for Naswadi cluster (35 new Sakhis) and Chhota Udaipur cluster (27 Sakhis) was organised in April and May. Four Sakhi reflections of Naswadi and Chhota Udaipur Sakhis covering 123 of them took place in July and September. Another Sakhi reflection for Dabhoi, Padara and Waghodia Sakhis took place in December. Besides Sakhi trainings Sakhis meet in cluster meetings to share and reflect upon their experiences. Today the district has 196 trained and 59 trainee Sakhis making the total of 255.

* **Sanghas** – Baroda district carried out Sangha village level shibirs covering 50 women. Sahayoginis are going to the villages and are working with the group of women. The groups are still at a stage where they gather on issues and then

disintegrate. In order to crystalise these groups and giving them inputs in terms of need of Sangha formation and issues on which Sangha can work, shibirs were organised. The exercises proved useful as women shared their issues among themselves and came closer to each other. Three shibirs of two days each were organised for the Sanghas of waghodia, Sankheda and Padra talukas. The content mainly dealt with exploitation of women in family, status of women in society, importance of Sangha in collectively tackling issues of different types, literacy etc. Sangha groups also took part in number of literacy camps, child care trainings and workshops, legal workshop etc. Besides frequent interactions with Sahayoginis, district functionaries and outside visitors creating 'space' the women use their collective strength in solving various issues like water, functioning of child care centres, social issues, alcoholism in the society, etc.

Celebrating the events :

Baroda district celebrated International Women's Day for five days at five different talukas. The programmes were on 6th March in waghodia, 15th March at padra, 18th March at Naswadi, 22nd March at Sankheda and 23rd March at Chhota Udaipur talukas. Approximately 7000 women participated in these sharing experience. They rallied and shouted slogans, sang songs, girls did 'garbas' and folk dance, Sahayoginis spoke of importance of Women's Day and they along with village women did role plays on different issues like law, water, fuel, wood, Mahila Kutir etc. SAMATA Jatha performances became part of the programme at Sankheda at Chhota Udaipur and were well received by the audience. Chhota Udaipur programme was organised in collaboration with two other voluntary agencies: Anandniketan Ashram, Rangpur, and Vikas Jyot, Baroda. All these programmes were attended by number of guests Sarpanchas, CDPOs, TDO, teachers, medical officers, representatives of voluntary agencies etc.

ISSUES IN THE DISTRICT :

*** Literacy Activities :**

Literacy activities continued in scattered nature in Baroda district. In April third phase of literacy camp took place at Chhota Udaipur covering 40 women. In May, three Sahayoginis organised literacy camp at Jaski village in Naswadi taluka. In June at Ambali village in waghodia taluka two days camp was organised, follow up of which took place in September. In June at Malu village in Sankheda taluka 25 women participated in literacy shibir for five days. Attempts are made to organise local night camps so as to impart literacy skills at convenient time and place for village women.

*** Legal Issues :**

In the beginning of the year many incidents had occurred in the villages of waghodia especially Devadiya, Narmadpur Amodar and Vyars where women are being harassed either by their husbands, in-laws or the village men. There have been cases of serious violence against village women. As a result women were forced to seek police protection and legal help. It came out that the results were not satisfactory because in most of the cases women do not know about their rights with regard to police station; what is the procedure of lodging a complaint

and what are the take-care aspects, what is the follow-up, who can do what and how etc. They also expressed the need to know about their rights related to dowry, maintenance, child custody, divorce, property rights, information about free legal aids, from where to get it and how etc.

With the objective to share these information, Baroda DIU organised a one-and-a-half day workshop for the Sakhis of waghodia and Dabhoi taluka. For this purpose Mr Martin Mackwan, legal activist, Mrs Geeta Parikh, lawyer, and Mr Raval, Baroda police Sub-Inspector, who have been working in this field for a long time were invited as resource persons. In this workshop women shared their experiences with the police, and they in turn were given information on how to lodge complaints, what is F. I. R. and what details have to be included in it, what are women's rights with regard to police station and their officials, what are the provisions of laws related to maintenance, divorce, property, adoption, custody of children, rape, eve-teasing, dowry, what are police procedures, cognisable and non-cognisable offences, raids on boot-legging, etc. 57 women from 20 Sanghas of Waghodia and Dabhoi participated in this workshop. Besides this workshop number of Sahayoginis and Sangha women participated in preparation of legal literacy material (audio-visual film and booklets) for the voluntary agency Drishti.

*** Health issues :**

"SEWA Rural" Jhagadia, a voluntary agency working in the area of health, had earlier been contacted by Mahila Samakhya to impart trainings to "Mid-wives" (Dais). By the end of this year 12 Dais completed their four phased training while 5 others could attend either of the phases. These Dais have been registered in the nearest PHCs by the Sahayoginis.

As health is one of the areas of intervention into villages, one-day meeting was organised for planning future activities with SEWA Rural team in connection with Health committee interventions. Mahila Samakhya Baroda also organised a 3-day health workshop for the Sahayoginis and Sakhis in collaboration with Bharatiya Gyan Vignan Jatha. The content of the workshop was to identify the common health problems in each cluster, primary information on health care, institution and good eating habits. Bhavai, puppet shows and discussion methods were used for training. Based on their experiences in the workshop and planning meeting. Sahayoginis organised number of health melas. Eight cluster level health melas were organised in August December and February covering 1045 village women. Besides sharing primary information on health, these melas proved good entry points for new villages. Highlights of the mela were: posters on common illness, parsonnels from PHCs discussing symptoms, treatment and preventive care for common ailments. Role plays on cleanliness (Hygine) and health care were also done by Sahayoginis. In September one workshop for preparation of materials for Bharat Gyan Vignan Jatha was organised at Vishwamitri. 35 Sakhis and Sahayoginis participated in this exercise and came out with material on health and environment issues.

*** SUPPORT STRUCTURES :**

In the support structure component of the programme woman take on many

activities collectively and strengthened their groups through these activities. Baroda district worked on child care centres and nurseries in the last year.

In Mahila Kutir component three women from Baroda district took part in masonry training at Mangrol, Rajpipla in the beginning of the year along with Rajkot women. Slowly the demand for 'common space' is rising in Baroda district villages. The district unit is preparing itself to cope up with this new demand.

*** CHILD CARE :**

During this period the child care project entered into the last phase. In December 1992 final documentation of the project in form of three reports- "Women's Development and Child Care Experiment At Evolving Alternate Models", "Training for Child Care: A Participatory Training Module for Village Women" and "Bal Sanchar Margdarshan" (in Gujarati) were submitted. Dialoguing with the village Sanghas, and mobilizing them towards setting up of child care supports in their villages had already began last year in the project villages. Committees of village women comprising of Sakhis, influential women, mothers, elderly women, and Anganwadi workers were formed to monitor the child care centre. Child care centre workers (Balsakhis) were selected by the Sangha. Other details like the place to run the centre, timings etc. were also discussed with the Sangha. Number of trainings were organised for various levels Sahayoginis, Committee members and Balsakhis.

For the Sahayogini trainings, Ms Mina Swaminathan, Project Director of ACCESS, Madras, who has been working in this field for a long time was invited as the resource person. The highlights of the trainings in April and July 1992 were: evolving child care models, training contents and strategies at each level and stimulating activities for children as per their age and need.

Number of workshops were organised in April, May and November covering various topics like 'Need for child care support', 'Need for committee and its roles and responsibilities', 'Need to work in a group to meet the common goal, 'Ideal image of a child care support', and linking it to other components of MS like NFE and Health. In these workshops problem issues like Nashta, Contribution, place, etc. were all tackled. 40 to 50 committee members from nine villages attended these workshops. Three training workshops in May, June and July for two, three and five days respectively were organised for the Balsakhis. The content mainly dealt with 'Needs of 0-6 years old child', 'Stimulating activities for 0-3 and 3-6 years old as per their age and needs and programme planning. The Committee members as well as the Balsakhis were oriented in preparation of play materials using indigenous materials. In November workshop on activities for physical-motor development of children was organised for 32 Balsakhis. A collection of songs, games and stories was also prepared.

Under the child care project, in the period of April to June, eight child care centres were operationalised-four in Chhota-Udaipur and two each in Dabhoi and Waghodia talukas. The centres are well utilised and are functioning from morning to noon. However, there is a demand from the village for providing "Nashta" for their children. In one village, namely, Patiapura the process had to be discontinued as the women did not feel a strong need for a child care support. Besides trainings and workshops, project staffs and Resource Persons had a number of

informal interactions with Sahayoginis and Balsakhis in whose villages project is operational.

Apart from child care project centres, Baroda district has nine child care centres in operation since 1991 which covers approximately 270 children. One more child care centre started in December making the total tally of 17 child care centres in Baroda district. In Jaski village of Naswadi Taluka women expressed a desire for child care support as they work on farms in hilly areas carrying their children. The Sangha sat several times to plan for various aspects of the centre. Since mid December Jaski Sangha is running the child care centre with two Balsakhis and approximately 25 children without any financial support from Mahila Samakhya. The Balsakhis get the Nashta from the Anganwadi. The Sangha has made application to the DIU for financial support.

Nurseries :

25 Sangha women from Lunandra village of Sankheda taluka collectively ploughed and prepared for sapplings on 5 acres of land with a support from Mahila Samakhya. In January '92 they had planted 10,000 plants and one hand-pump and a well was functioning at the time of plantation activities. But later on due to water scarcity and other exigencies results were not that encouraging. What is remarkable is that Sangh use the whole process and many of learning interactions were note worthy.

Water Issue :

It has been found in many villages of Baroda district that there is insufficient clean drinking water. The Sahayoginis mobilized village women around this concern and approached the taluka level officials. In some villages the problem has been solved, but in majority of the villages the situation had not changed.

The first step in this direction was to educate the women about their right to clean drinking water. Secondly a small research was done to understand the situation of drinking water. The Sahayoginis took the questionnaire to the village and along with the women collected the information. The information was then compiled and it was found that many villages do not have clean/potable drinking water and at present depend upon open wells, streams or river for their water supply

This data was presented to the collector who promised to look into the matter and take immediate action in those villages where the situation is grave.

It is the sole responsibility of women to fetch water. If the hand-pump or the well-machine goes out of order then they are the sole-sufferers. Therefore it was felt that "Hand-pump caretaker" training will be a step towards remedying this situation, Gujarat Jal Seva Nigam was contacted for the purpose. During this training the women were oriented to different parts of hand-pump, and how and why a hand-pump does not work, e. g., which part gets worn out easily. The training also dealt with water borne diseases and the most important part of the training-whom to contact, where to apply in case the hand-pump does not work.

For each village a pair of "spanner were given to open/tighten the nuts and bolts of the head of the hand pump. 85 women from Naswadi and 36 women

from Chhota Udaipur have taken the advantage of this training in April and June 1992.

It is heartening to know from the fields that many of the "Hand pump caretaker" have taken their tasks seriously and are taking immediate actions when the hand pump goes out of order. However, there is still delay at the sarpanch level when the situation is out of control for village women.

Interactions :

In Mahila Samakhya, sharing is learning and interactions with outsiders as well as internal people create forums of learning. Last year number of visitors explored Mahila Samakhya Baroda. Five people from Bihar visited Baroda district in April. Karnataka Mahila Samakhya team came to the district in July. In November 17 students of MSW programme from Tata Institute of social Sciences, Bombay, along with two of their faculty members came to Ms Baroda for their rural exposure visits. They even stayed with families at Nalvant, Sodhwad and Mankodi villages of Chhota Udaipur taluka. In february 1993 a team from voluntary agency Vikas Jambusar came to Baroda district along with their village women (like our Sakhis). The purpose of the visit was to get first hand experience in starting child care support systems in their villages.

Even the district functionaries participated in SAMATA Planning at Delhi and Ahmedabad and all Samakhya meet at Banda, Uttar Pradesh. Sahayoginis also went for Yuvati Shibirs organised by voluntary agency CHETNA. Interaction with police department, voluntary agencies, Bharat Gyan Vignan Jatha, PHC officials, SAMATA Jatha etc., gave opportunities to widen the perspectives and obtain new set of information.

Future Plans :

The district wishes to concentrate on sangha formation and strengthening the existing Sanghas. In the coming year, the district unit will have to plan for Mahila Kutir and savings groups activities. The focus will also be on five issues. Looking at it there is a need for more clarity and networking regarding the five issues. The possibility of linkage with the forthcoming Total Literacy Campaign is explored. MSS will take role of motivator and provide linkages with MSS villages. Number of Yuvati Shibirs are also planned considering the emerging needs in the villages.

Baroda DIU also plans to build a strong network with voluntary organisations working in the area and build up support systems with voluntary and government bodies to strengthen activities related to the five areas, i. e. child care, literacy, health, legal and economic development and create an environment of friendly co-operation.

4. RAJKOT DISTRICT REPORT

District profile

The area of the district is 11203 sq. kms. The population according to provisional population total : Census of India 1991 : is 2509142 of which 51 percent are males and 49 percent females. The literacy ratio of the district is 58 percent. 59 percent of the males and 41 percent of the females are literate. The sex ratio as per 1991 Census is 947 : 1000 in the district.

Mahila Samakhya Rajkot is spread over 12 out of 13 talukas of the district. The district covers 107 villages and is mainly working with lower and economically backward castes. In some villages mixed groups are also functioning with ease. In Brief The year at District Implementation Unit, Rajkot was quite eventful. There was an expansion in human resources for a time being but the year concluded with no staff at the district level, as two resource person/consultant shifted to Baroda from March 1993 and two resigned in January. Because of this Sahayoginis of Rajkot came out with their fullest potential. The DIU is functioning in full swing by Sahayoginis and occasional support from State and other districts. Though there were changes at the district level, the programme in the villages remained unaffected and as a matter of fact has widened its horizons.

Learning together :

The programme provides excellent opportunity of learning at all the levels and to all the people from district staff to Sangha women.

* **District Staff** – In July two resource person/consultant joined the district office who were fresh post-graduates from social work. They did the needs assessment of new Sahayoginis for their further training – using knowledge in skilled intervention for Sangha building, communication skills, report writing, decision making and primary inputs on five issues identified by Executive Committee. The training of new Sahayoginis was organised based this needs-assessment. One of the district functionaries visited Bangalore for a workshop in August 1992. The workshop was organised for the workers of Mahila Samakhya who had been associated with Ms since its inception. Two resource persons went to Banda for all Mahila Samakhya resource persons meeting in January 1993.

* **Sahayoginis** – Ten new Sahayoginis had joined in February 1992 who had their orientation in March last year. Two of them left Mahila Samakhya making the total tally of 19 Sahayoginis. The average age of new Sahayoginis is more than that of old Sahayoginis. As the impact of older Mahila Samakhya villages becoming visible, the work in new villages was easier for them. In a new months time the village women started asking the Sahayoginis to organise a meeting outside their village. We see this as an impact of the experiences of Sangha women from nearby older villages of Mahila Samakhya. Ms is seen by these women as an opportunity to get out of their villages to seek new experiences and thereby add to their knowledge.

Four Sahayoginis participated in empowerment training organised by Janvikas one of them could not remain present for third phase. There is no doubt that this training will lead to improve their interventions in the field and their training skills. Based on the needs assessment done by the new Resource person Consult-

ants, new Sahayoginis reflected on their field experiences for three days in November 1992, where one of the trained Sahayoginis Participated as a trainer. In December Sahayoginis group went for a exposure trip to voluntary agencies of Ahmedabad and nearby towns. Because of the disturbances in Ahmedabad, the trip had to be shortened. the group visited Tribhuvandas Foundation and Mahila Jagruti Sanghathan at Anand. This provided inputs for health and legal issues to the Sahayoginis. In the month of February, Sahayoginis group called for a workshop to clarify their roles and to plan for their work. This workshop was attended by the State programme Director and resource persons/consultants from other Mahila Samakhya districts. It clarified Sahayogini's role and provided inputs on five issues.

* **Sakhis** – Sakhis of the first batch did play a very important role in the selection of the Sakhis for the second batch. On the basis of their own experiences they made changes in the criteria for selection, such as, if in the Harijan Vas–there are two basic divisions based on surnames they decided that one woman from each of the sub-division should be selected. This they said would increase participation. The average age of Sakhis of second batch is less than that of the first batch. At the village level Sakhis have taken up many activities independently. Follow up of widow pension forms was done entirely by them.

In April rotation training for 32 Sakhis of 13 villages took place. Another orientation – rotation training was organised in September where 32 new and 33 old Sakhis from 15 villages participated with great enthusiasm. 22 Sakhis of Upleta and Lodhika talukas got together for rotation-orientation training in October 1992, where one of the Sahayoginis participated as trainer. The first two days of the training were spent together by Sakhis of both the batches. Today, Rajkot has total 138 Sakhis of which 65 are trainee Sakhis and 73 are trained Sakhis.

Cluster meetings of Sakhis also provide forum to share information and reflect upon their activities at the village. Atleast one cluster meeting per month is organised where Sakhis of same cluster come together to plan, reflect and review their field level activities.

While there was an element of lose of the financial assistance for old Sakhis the overriding feeling stated was "No one can take back what we have learnt, so what if the money stops, what we have gained is worth a life time." Sakhis of the second batch thanked the Sakhis of the first batch and said that "You are like the brick that has laid in the foundation of a building. It is because of your effort and the image you created in the village that we have had the courage to become Sakhis."

Sakhis are now able to understand the concept of "Sangha" much better. in one of the meetings, the Sakhis themselves made distinctions in the nature of involvement of women in the Sanghas.

1. Those who are convinced about the strength of Mahila Mandal and whom the Sakhis would approach first if a new idea/activity was to be discussed in the Sangha meeting.
2. Those who regularly attend Sangha meetings but may not take initiative and are passive participants.
3. Those who attend meeting if the Sahayogini/Resource person conduct it or if a special activity is being discussed e. g. preparation of the March, Celebrations study tour, etc.

4. Those who attend the meetings called for currently going on issue/activity in the village.

These of course they said do not form distinct sub-sects but are over-lapping. They even identified number of Sangha women in each category. After this exercise they were clearly able to articulate the goal they all had to reach; maximum participation in the first category; i. e. strengthening MS philosophy in the villages.

Third issue of the district newsletter 'Apno Sad' was published in April 1992 on the topic of Sakhi training. Many Sakhis participated in preparing this issue. Equally interesting is the process of training report preparations. Literate and illiterate Sakhis sit together to document their experiences during the training.

* **Sanghas** - Those women who joined the Sangha formation process about two years ago, are now taking many decisions on their own. They now easily approach the "Sarpanch" or the "Talati" for any work be it personal or concerning a group. For instance in Kothi village of Jasdhan taluka, Hiruben's Family had not been able to get a separate ration card. There were some problems at the village level. She went alone to the Talati and told him if he would not do it, she would go to the Mamlatdar. When nothing happened she went to the taluka office and got her work done.

In Fulzar village of Jasdhan taluka and Mungavavdi village of Gondal taluka, the Sangha women did not approach the Sahayogini to get their hand-pump repaired. They did it on their own. In Daliya village of Gondal taluka and Padavala village of Upleta taluka, the women have worked out ways to monitor quality of food served as a part of the mid-day meal programme. In short, making the local authorities responsive to their needs is becoming "a routine matter" for the Sanghas be it for water or for securing the benefits of drought relief work.

In many villages, the women used to meet earlier for Bhajan Mandals. The change that has occurred can be inferred from a review with Sakhis. "Initially we used to begin a meeting with Bhajans and then in the last 15-20 minutes discussed other matters. Now we first discuss matters like selection of Sangha land, follow-up of decisions taken, reporting of a meeting/workshop attended by Sakhi/Sangha women and then sing Bhajan."

More and more women wish to join in the opportunity to seek knowledge. Sangha women have complained that "why do you only call sakhis out of the village? Can't you organise something for us for a day or so? We cannot come out for long stretches like the Sakhi but would like to go out nevertheless. This has initiated discussion about Sangha training model in few villages.

Lodhida village of Lodhika taluka faced a peculiar situation. The Sangha women were losing faith in MS activities due to pressures from local leaders. In October a training was organised at Gopaldham where 60 women participated to share their understanding of Sangha and sustained their motivation after the training. Women from Fulzar and Navagam villages also took part to strengthen Sangha activities at Lodhida.

In September, one day mela was organised at Barwala, Morbi in which nearly 165 Sangha women from old as well as new Mahila Samakhya villages got together

to explore Mahila Samakhya. The objectives of this mela were to get to know the functioning and objectives of MS from Sangha women and Sakhis of old MS villages. The mela also created clearer understanding among the Sangha about each others cultural patterns. The women talked about their understanding of MS, their problems at village and taluka level and even in their own family. It also helped the functionaries to know how MS helps in inducing changes at individual, family and societal levels.

It is interesting to note that the district newsletter "Apno Sad" and the newsletter "Apani Vat" being sent from the headoffice led the Sangha women of Mojira village to publish a smaller booklet on their own, expressing their experiences with Mahila Samakhya.

Besides individual interactions among Sangha women, group trainings and study-tours on the issues of health and savings and celebrations provide women with the new set of information. Number of visits are also paid to other Mahila Samakhya districts. Sangha women from Rajkot participated in Women's Day celebrations at Baroda and Sabarkantha districts. Such exposures helps them to come out of their cocoon existence and widen their perspectives. Isn't it a step towards empowerment ?

CELEBRATING THE EVENT

Like previous years, this year also International Women's Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm. Rajkot district did the celebrations in two phases. First programme took place on 11th March at Bhid Bhanjan, Jetpur 1300 women from 60 villages got together to celebrate the event. Second programme was on 18th March at Taraghadi village where inauguration of Mahila Kutir also took place. 750 women from 51 villages participated in that programme. Sangha women spoke of their experiences with Mahila Samakhya and did role plays on various issues. Number of people from voluntary agencies and government departments, Sarpanchas and other individuals were thrilled with the zeal and confidence of village women. As one woman in her speech said, "This is our programme and it is the only place where we can come to the microphone and speak about our feelings." The Samata Kala Jatha celebration took place on 28 March where 800 women participated to express their involvement with "Literacy."

ISSUES IN THE DISTRICT

*** Literacy Activities :**

Number of literacy camps were organised in Rajkot district in the first half of the year. One camp in Foolzar was organised in April which was followed up in May. Another camp in Lodhida village was in May. In May-June follow up of Somppliya village camp was also done. Third follow up of Foolzar camp was taken up in June.

Considering these camp-learners demands, one study tour for learner girls was also organised in September for Somppliya village. The objective of this study-tour was to expose them to the outside world and to make them understand education in a broader sense by visiting organisations like Lokbharti and Gandhian Education Institution at Ambla. Nearly 60 girls, Alongwith three Sangha women, two Sahayoginis and two resource persons participated in the tour programme.

The group besides knowing about Lokbharti Sanosara and Gandhian Education Institution, also interacted with the teachers the students and shared their experiences. Exposure to farms, dairy, nursery, bio-gas and other activities of these institutions raised many questions in the minds of girls and they did not gave up questioning unless they were convinced.

The tour created understanding among girls and women about false faiths for 'Bhuvras' and its adverse effects on their community in terms of time, money and deterioration of health conditions. They believed that the students who study don't do farming, it is done only by 'abhan' (illiterate). On seeing that the students also work on farms, the same way as they do, their belief proved wrong. Some of the girls said that they would tell their parents to provide education to their younger brothers and sisters in such institutions. They also learnt about the human body and its different parts. On the return journey the girls were enthused to continue their literacy classes and said that they would share what they had seen and learnt on that day with other girls and women who had not come for the tour.

In the villages where literacy camps were held and in the nearby villages of Jasdán taluka, the enrolment of young girls has increased. Eight girls from foolzar village enrolled themselves in the school. In some villages the girls are now paying a teacher on their own in order to learn to read and write further.

* Social Issues :

In last year's 8th March celebrations, DIU had invited officials from the police department to address the women. They had explained in simple terms what they should do if they need assistance when they are battered or face a threat to their life by their husband or in-laws. This did help in a way to reduce their fear of 'Man in the Uniform'. This also acted as a trigger for many Sanghas to raise questions when a woman is thrown out by her husband or she is beaten up. With the help of sahyogini or Sakhi of nearby villages, the women approach police stations to file reports or Nari Suraksha Gruhs to shelter the battered woman. In one such case of wankaner taluka, because of the perseverance of Sangha women from the woman's village and that of her in-laws village, she was able to return to her child at her in-law's place with an assurance (in writing) that they shall not beat her any more. The assurance provided by Sangha women of her in-law's village gave the woman strength and feeling of security.

In a Jasdán taluka village two women were regularly battered and left at their parents home for long periods. The Sangha women felt that either they should permanently return to their husband or get separation. The women first approached the local leaders (the 'panch') who did little, then they sent a message to the husbands. When nothing came out of it, they filed a case with the police. One of the husbands was arrested and detained for a couple of days. Soon after that the in-laws of the girl said that they are willing for a separation. And the other girl's in-laws came and took her back with them with the assurance that no harm will be done to her.

These issues being very sensitive and complicated in nature, consume time and demand mature and careful interventions. DIU is thinking of some

support arrangements in this matter. At present help of other agencies is ensured as and when such issues come up. Even discussions on Bhavari-Bhateri case provided forums to functionaries to reflect upon such issues.

Is it possible to be selective in taking up cases? Is it advisable to wait for linkages and supports when case needs immediate action and solution? After four years of intensive rapport building, the relationships of the village women with the programme functionaries are such that there are no clear demarkations of personal and programatic interactions. Contrary to it the role of Mahila Samakhya programme—that of a catalyst—creates dilemma for programme staff. The alternative solutions are explored.

*** Economic Development :**

A demand for some economic activity has once again been voiced by the Sangha women. Based on the past experiences and the directions given by the Executive Committee, the nature this time was slightly different. The objective is not to give direct relief but to make efforts in the direction to create some assets. In lieu of this, Possibility of savings group is being discussed in many Sanghas. Seven Sanghas have already started with savings groups on their own or with the help of Sahayoginis while many others are in a process of forming one.

Savings groups were promoted also because the need was felt to create binding force among Sangha women in form of some continuous (concurrent) activity which can keep Sangha alive and active. Savings is one such activity which can keep Sangha compact and provides feeling of oneness. Even women can identify themselves with the savings as their money are at stake and the process also builds up their self esteem.

In the process of forming saving group many questions on rules, management of finance, roles and responsibilities, etc. are raised by women. One of the answer was a savings tour for Sangha women from five villages of different talukas. In october 42 women from Dholra, Paad, Taraghadi, Amarnagar and Kundhech villages visited SEWA Ahmedabad and MAHITI UTHTHAN, Dholera. Besides providing information to women this tour provided them "time and space" which MS talks about. It also gave the women opportunity of sharing their experiences in their villages and in several other meetings.

At present Sangha women of three villages have opened up their savings account in bank, the Sangha women of one village have opened up their account with post office while Sangha women of three villages are keeping the collected amounts with them and are thinking of opening their savings account with bank.

*** Health Issues :**

First and foremost step for any activity is detailed database. Primary data on health has been collected in most of the villages. The data shows that some talukas have acute health problems like irregularity and even absence of health services, traditional method of pre-natal and post-natal care, strong faith in

superstitions, lack of information on preventive measures, etc. A study-tour of SEWA Rural, Jhagadia, was organised in November for Sangha women of Jasdan, Morbi and Jetpur talukas. which facilitated in providing primary information on health and functioning of Primary Health Centres.

The State office resource person for health and trainings did three trainings for 9 Sanghas covering 133 Sangha women. In february training for health and savings was organised at Pipliya village of Morbi taluka. In March two trainings were organised; one on 25-26 March at Gondal for 43 women of Lodhika and Paddhari talukas and and another on 30-31 March at Navagam village of Maliya taluka where 61 women gathered to know more about their body and get information on savings activity.

Besides tackling health issues like female anatomy, women health problems on maturation, lucoria, sterility, etc. points of savings group formation, its rules, access to government services etc. were also included in the training.

Such interactions and exposures have created health consciousness among Sangha women. Their visits to Primary Health Centres for ensuring proper services is now common.

SUPPORT STRUCTURES :

*** Child-care**

In Rajkot district six Sanghas run child care centres with Mahila Samakhya financial assistance catering to about 160 children. Sanghas have continued to raise contribution from their members and panchayats, and have identified appropriate place for running the centre. There are committees to take care of purchases and stock and monitoring and assistance to the centres. More Sanghas are coming forward with the demand and the process have been initiated.

In May initial training was provided to child care centre workers and the committee members. The focus was on how to engage the children with creative paper work, story telling, action songs and to understand the development needs of the children. The reflection of all the six child care centre workers took place in September.

The second training of eight workers was organised in September with the NGO that runs several ICDS anganwadis in urban Rajkot. The objective of the training was to reflect upon the problems faced by the workers and devise daily scheduls for the centre. The health care aspect of the children was also discussed. In November educational toys were distributed to the centres and private doctor visited the centres for measles vaccination. Lot of flexibility was allowed in initial stage with the centres. The idea was to gradually consolidate the experiences in the field and then set up a more or less standard pattern. The process is on in the district.

*** Mahila Kutir**

The much awaited Mahila Kutir construction finally began in June 1992. Lot of enthusiasm was generated a year ago had died down. Also the final paper work and permissions came through only by late summer. Last year some of the Sangha women had attended the 20 day skill training in masonry. They decided to

bulid a round Mahila Kutir with dome-type roof that they had learnt to construct during their training.

It was a tough job constructing the Kutir in summer heat. Though all the women had decided to give free labour, finally there were twelve women who worked and devoted their time and energy in completing the building. They were assisted actively through labour and guidance by the Mahila Kutir committee formulated at the DIU. The last bit of the roof and the flooring remained incomplete for a long time. It was also difficult to do it in within budgetary Limits. Finally in february Sahayogini group gathered together to complete Taraghadi Mahila Kutir by donating labour for last touches. The Kutir was inaugurated by the village woman on 18th March 1993 as a part of women's day celebrations. The women who contributed labour were honoured in public.

On the whole the construction of this "space" that women can call their own has created ripples in the village and even in the taluka. There were many who looked askance when Sangha women enquired and bargained about the prices of steel, bricks, sand, cement etc. The women of Targhadi village are really proud that they were the first to construct the Mahila Kutir and that they did it in wake of many odds.

Previously it used to take a long time for the process of getting land. Because of State intervention, since last few months Mamlatdars have started taking keen interest and are pressurising village Talatis in distributing land within short period. But this has in no way made the work simpler. Documents get delayed at one level or other. At present 33 villages are at the final stage of which 12 have received for land. In one village of Jasdan taluka possession of land has already been taken by Sangha women.

* OTHER ISSUES :

Besides major issues, there are numerous small issues that are dealt with by the Sangha women themselves. Five new handpumps were installed and seven were repaired in different villages by Sangha women. Number of villages have improved public distribution system for which credit goes to Sangha women. Even in kundhech village the shop-keeper used to sell the goods in black market. He was from the other village and therefore he used to open the shop for short time. The shop used to be closed for most of the time. The bills were faulty. As a result of pressures from the women now he announces his arrival and the billing malpractices have stopped. Number of women panchayat members have become active because of their exposure to Mahila Samakhya. The earlier quiet members are now raising their voices and even inquiring the matter when their signature is asked. Number of forms for various social defence, social welfare, health and rural development schemes of government were filled and follow up of which is being carried out by Sakhis.

CONCLUSION :

Sahayoginis who had joined in 1989 have now started taking an active interest in the process of defining the future goals and processes of Mahila Samakhya.

Sahayoginis during this phase have started handling trainings and reflections of Sakhis independently. New Sakhis will soon be taken up and concept of Sangha training is also explored.

The DIU on the whole is on the threshold having crossed the initial stage. It requires a definite direction to carry forward the aspirations and dreams of the Sangha women and project functionaries.

5. SABARKANTHA DISTRICT REPORT

District profile

The area of the district is 7390 sq. km. which is lowest among three Mahila Samakhya districts. The total population according to provisional population Total : Census of India 1991 : is 1758036 of which 51 per cent is male and 49 per cent female. The literacy ratio in the district is 50 Per cent and 64 per cent of the are literate. Female literacy ratio is only 36 per cent which is lowest among three Mahila Samakhya districts, while sex ratio is highest as 976 females per 1000 males.

Mahila Samkhya Sabarkantha covers tribal as well as non-tribal population of 109 villages of 6 out of total 10 talukas of the district.

In Brief :

In the last year Sabarkantha district concentrated mainly on two issues : literacy and health. The process of acquiring land and preparation of Mahila kutir activities also gained momentum during this period. With the addition of two new members in the district team from September 9, 1992 the work roles were redefined at the district level. One resource person from the district went for three month training course to New Delhi in August who left in January. As three out of total 13 Sahayoginis were on maternity leave, shortage of human resources was felt and the process of getting new Sahayoginis will be initiated in the forthcoming year. The district covers 109 villages of 6 talukas of the district.

LEARNING TOGETHER :

Important development in the area of training was furthering of the concept of District Training Team (DTT). Three Sahayoginis from Sabarkantha district attended the Empowerment training organised by Janvikas.

One Sahayoginis was not present for the third phase of the training. These These sahayoginis participate in sakhi trainings as co-trainers. It is hoped that empowerment training will help in forming a traing team of Sahayoginis who will have newrole and new responsibilities in the coming years.

* Reviewing Progress :

The monthly Sahayogini meetings are in a way informal reviews of the work at the village level. Sabarkantha district frequently carries out its internal reviews. After the August 1992 review, this year also in March 1993 the internal review exercise was done by the district team. The group clearly spelt out the issues, problems and pressures, supports and directions of the programme in the district. It came out clearly that women in the programme has reached a stage where they can take group decisions, accept other woman as a woman irrespective of their castes and even write letters to district and state offices. Besides internal review, the district team had also contributed in deening state level evaluatation parameters by doing district level exercise in November 1992.

* **Sakhis** - Last year seven reflection/rotation/orientation trainings of Sakhis took place. In April 1992 Sakhi reflection for 29 Sakhis of khedbrahma and Sakhi orientation for the second batch of 21 Sakhis of Bhiloda and Meghraj talukas was organised. Four Sakhi orientations for khedbrahma taluka covering 97 Sakhis took

place in October, November and February, 44 Sakhis of Bhiloda reflected themselves in January. In the process of Sakhi rotation, it was realised that because of the rotation old Sakhis feel neglected and show disinterest in Sangha activities. To know their feelings and find alternatives to remedy this situation acceptance level of both the groups was to be raised. In July a workshop was organised where 60 Sakhis of both the groups (old and new Sakhis) participated. These trained and trainee Sakhis from 23 villages of khedbrahma taluka came out with their problems in this two-day workshop and the result was better relationships and cohesiveness in the group.

By the end of the year Sabarkantha district have 114 trained Sakhis and 99 Sakhis from 3 Talukas of Sabarkantha are under training making the total tally of 213.

* **Sanghas** – Sangha in Sabarkantha is a flexible concept covering 8 to 30-40 women in a village. Sangha meetings are features of Sahayoginis and resource persons work in the field. In many Sanghas women now organise meetings on their own. They are taking up issues and approach Sahayogini or district as and when they need support. In number of villages where Sakhis have not been selected the processes are going on at the group level. Some Sanghas do not want to Select Sakhi but want to work at the Sangha level. Mahila Samakhya is preparing itself for Sangha level trainings. 21 Sangha from Sabarkantha have so far directly written letters to the State office in response to the newsletter "Apani Vat". Skill trainings in the last year included completion of the four phase training for two batches of Dais. 32 Dais (trained midwives) from 21 villages of khedbrahma, Bhiloda and Meghraj talukas participated in these trainings. Besides that number of health and savings trainings for Sanghas took place. Now the Sarpanchas and males also actively participate in group meetings.

Celebrating the events :

Sabarkantha district witnessed number of celebrations this year. After Literacy Day 1992, Women's Day was celebrated for whole week at six different places and SAMATA – Gyan Vigyan Jatha performances were hosted by Sabarkantha district in the March end. Women's Day celebrations were organised in the villages of six talukas on 2nd to 6th and 12th March 1993. 2000 women from 92 villages participated in these programmes and did role plays, sang songs, danced, rallied around the village and even shouted slogans. The programmes were attended by adult education officer from Gandhinagar, TDO, Mamlatdars, Sarpanchas and representatives from voluntary agencies.

SAMATA programmes were organised at two places – Chikla village of Khedbrahma taluka and bhavnath of Bhiloda taluka. 800 women participated actively in these performances. They sang songs with SAMATA team and even did their role plays on literacy. Undoubtedly these programmes helped in building up pro-literacy atmosphere in and around Mahila Samakhya villages.

*** ISSUES IN THE DISTRICT**

*** Literacy Activities :**

Since years literacy has been one of the prime issues of the district even in its tribal areas. World Literacy Day and preparation for Total Literacy Campaigning (TLC) were the main events this year. One resource person from the district

attended the training course on methodology of Women's Education and Development from August 20 to December 12, 1992 at NCERT Campus, New Delhi. Another achievement in literacy activities of the district is operationalisation of the concept of volunteerism in literacy. Number of school going girls have been involved in imparting literacy skills to village women. Now new groups are also coming up who get their trainings from old groups. This association earned new dimension when those girls asked for information on health, vocational courses, etc. In the process of giving clear directions to the programme Literacy Committee spelt out new openings to literacy activities in Mahila Samakhya districts.

* **Workshop with adolescent girls** - The literacy volunteers of Bhiloda and Meghraj talukas voiced the need to know about health problems, vocational courses, etc. It was realised that involvement of these volunteers was not only to continue literacy activities but they have formed their groups at the village level to discuss various social, cultural, and political issues also. They are also a support to women when they take up issues of water, road, light, etc. Where they have to give applications. They are future mothers as well. Keeping these in mind and to motivate them through token of appreciation a workshop was planned from 18th to 21 July 1992 at Vishwamangal, Anera. 60 volunteer girls in the age group below 20 years from 20 villages of Bhiloda and Meghraj talukas, shared information about women's anatomy, reproductive system, social defence schemes khadi - Gramodyog, District Industries Centre (DIC) etc. In a concluding programme on 21st July, District Collector distributed certificates and token of affection from MS Sabarkantha to the volunteer girls. About 350 village women who had participated in literacy classes also gathered on this occasion village women from Rajkot and Baroda district also came to attend the programme.

* **Literacy Camps** - As Khedbrahma and Prantij talukas of district have low literacy levels and negative attitude towards girls education, it is difficult to get volunteers. The option out is village level camps. Last year six village level camps in Khedbrahma taluka and one camp in Prantij taluka was organised covering 96 women.

In Bhiloda and Meghraj talukas volunteers have contributed a lot in continuing literacy activities at the village level. The impact of literacy activities in the villages of Sabarkantha district became visible on the occasion of Literacy Day celebrations. And by the end of this year, as the vacation period in the school begins number of volunteers will start their work in full swing and with great zeal.

* **Literacy Day 1992** - In spite of heavy rains and almost inaccessible way to the place of celebration nearly 800 women gathered at three different places. The celebrations were organised at three occasions - Isari village school, Bhavnath temple and Demati Ashram at Lambadia. In Isari village about 175 women from 14 villages of Meghraj taluka gathered and sang songs, danced, wrote their names, drew pictures, reviewed their work and saw small exhibition on literacy. At Demati Ashram at Lambadia about 125 women of Khedbrahma taluka gathered together. At Bhavnath temple Bhiloda about 500 women gathered to celebrate the day.

* **Total Literacy Campaign** - Since August 1992 the processes for initiating Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) in Sabarkantha district had begun. Mahila Samakhya Sabarkantha participated in number of meetings with District Collector, DDO,

etc Besides providing opportunity of networkin, gthese meetings also helped MS to look at its work with new angle. Even the resource person represented herself in a training for key persons and in the district co-ordination committee. Probability of obtaining literature and material through TLC for our camps is being explored.

* **Role of Sangha Women** - By now in most of the Samakhya villages women have become conscious of importance of literacy and education of their children. Informally they have formed committees to take care of presence of school teacher, supervision of Anganwadi worker, conditions of school building etc. This has created monitoring system at the village level for school and even school teacher. In four villages NFE survey on girl child was also carried out.

Unique case has been noticed in Chhikari village of Meghraj taluka where Sangha women applied for sub-class room (Vaigashala) as number of children in primary school was very high and even the school was quite far off. Now they have a separate teacher for a class room they themselves opened.

Social Issue :

The Rajasthan Bhawari – Bhatari case was widely discussed in the district even during meetings with DSP, Sabarkantha. Village women along with district functionaries did a signature campaign to support Bhawari. In a process of creating support structures, besides memberships of family welfare committee and Nari Suraksha Samiti, one of the Sahayoginis became member of taluka level Nari Suraksha samiti.

In number of villages, as a result of training and interventions, women are reflecting upon social taboos and customs. In tribal villages of khedbrahma taluka drinking habits of male members cause lot of suffering to female members in the family. The women felt strongly about it and wanted to do something about it. They joined hands with local leaders and male members who agreed with their arguments. The outcome was village level committees which take strong actions against drunkards and even people providing liquor. Isn't it a capability of empowered group to take along with them the SOCIETY and move forward in the direction of social transformation ?

Economic Development :

Though economic development as an issue is still at the planning stage, number of villages have savinga groups formed either by the women on their own because of Mahila Samakhya or by the NGO working in that area. By March 1993, there are 14 Savings groups of which 12 are in khedbrahma taluka while Bhiloda and Vijaynagar has one each covering approximately 250 women. Besides savings in khedbrahma taluka, number of villages are planning for growing vegetables in their backyard. In Malapipali village 13 women have started 'Vegetable Garden' which in turn will lead to income for the group provided the activity succeeds in economic terms. In kodaria village also women have planted 'vegetable garden' based on their last year's experience. As the reports say the women have earned profit of one thousand rupees this year.

Health Issue :

Besides making women aware and conscious about their anatomy and health problems, process of creating a group of trained mid-wives (Dais) at the village level concluded for 21 villages where midwives completed their four phases of training at SEWA Rural, Jhagadia. Now Dai meetings are regular feature every month. Dais are doing delivery cases using SEWA Rural kit, creating improved environment for the new borns. Initially the kit was also resisted but slowly and gradually the situation improved. Another important achievement is trained Dais got themselves registered in Primary Health Centre and now they are getting 10 rupees per delivery. The new role of helper and a guide for unmarried girls and pregnant women is smoothly played by Dais with the renewed confidence. They are also looking after the nurse visits, motivating villagers to make use of health services, giving information about minor health problems etc., in a way creating a local level key person for the health issues. This has also created "space" for women to talk about things which they never talked earlier.

Health trainings for Sangha as a tool to strengthen Sangha and to provide health information to women took new dimension. With the help of resource person at the head office, three trainings were organised in September, October and March covering 93 women from 14 villages. One of the objectives in these trainings was to create a dialogue with the ANMs working in the area. Because of health and Dai trainings, number of ANMs and Primary Health Centres are coming forward to join hands with trained Dais and Sakhis of the village. This has created relations with the local health structures in a way improving health facilities for the women at the village level. Mahila Samakhya functionaries are also attending primary health centre staff meetings.

In August, 10 Sangha women along with Sahayoginis and resource persons visited SEWA Rural to plan for the health issue with reference to health committee formed in Executive Committee meeting.

SUPPORT STRUCTURES

* **Child Care** - In four villages Sangha women applied to ICDS for sub-centres for child care support and they got positive response. In two villages of Bhiloda women have started child centre on their own where the process of taking responsibility is being discussed at the Sangha level. It is found that women have to fight against local pressures and have to struggle hard to take along with them the influentials of that area.

* **Mahila Kutir** - The process of making women aware about Mahila kutir and making Sanghas conscious of the responsibilities had already began last year. Meanwhile, eight villages of Khedbrahma taluka have acquired land for Mahila kutir while other seven will get it soon. Two villages of Meghraj will acquire land soon. Sangha level preparations are on their way and lessons are being learnt from Rajkot experience also. With the objective to make women aware of processes in Mahila kutir and to show them actual low-cost kutir, tour to Rural Technology Centre wankaner, Bhiloda taluka, was organised in December. 73 women from two villages participated in this tour where they explored the possibility of building Mahila kutir in 15,000/- rupees.

Women of Bandiya nu Talav and Danmahudi took part in Women's Day celebrations at Rajkot where they visited Taraghadi Mahila kutir—first the only Mahila kutir of Mahila Samakhya Gujarat so far.

As the year ends everything has been planned for the training of women in masonry skills. For Sabarkantha Rural Technology Centre will provide training to women and even pay stipend to them. Mahila kutir construction will be done as a part of the training.

* **Water Issue** – While working on the water issue, the group feel more cohesive. Sabarkantha is declared as a 'no source' area and women in many villages face lots of difficulties due to shortage of water. In the beginning of this year, efforts were made at Sangha, Sahayogini, district and even State level. As a result of these interventions, 67 villages had applied for water facilities of which in 49 villages it was sanctioned. In 31 villages handpumps have been installed as a result of united efforts of Sangha women and Mahila Samakhya. Follow up of the processes is in progress.

Other Issues :

Issue of Electricity has come up as a result of literacy activities. Number of women came forward with light requirement to carry out literacy activities at night. 11 villages have filled the forms for electricity facilities. In three villages of Khedbrahma women proceeded with application for pucca road. As awareness is generating in the minds of women, they are becoming more conscious of government schemes and distribution systems. Number of beneficiaries for the schemes like ICDS, DRDA, DWACRA, TRYSEM, Nursery, etc. have approached respective agencies. Even the mid-day meal programme for school children has come under critical scrutiny of Sangha women. Number of rationing shop-keepers are forced to give bills for goods sold, in a way, decreasing malpractices in price taking. In few villages women have come forward for the panchayat elections. Even the existing women members have become conscious about their rights and duties.

Interactions

Resource persons paid number of outside visits. One resource person visited Bangalore to discuss problems faced by Mahila Samakhya and another went to Baroda for a child health workshop organised by CHETNA. Resource person Ms Mehta went to Delhi for evaluation parameters meeting in October. Two resource persons/consultants Participated in all Samakhya meet at Banda, Uttar Pradesh in January. Outsiders also explored Mahila Samakhya Sabarkantha. In April Bihar group and in July team from Karnataka Mahila Samakhya visited Sabarkantha to know about its activities. In August members of Drishti, an Ahmedabad based organisation, visited Sabarkantha to know about tribal laws and customs of Adivasis.

Yet other forums of interactions are created while meeting government officials, social defence and family welfare committee members and even during celebrations and camps. These interactions help in strengthening our understanding and spreading the message of "Mahila Samakhya" in the society.

Future Plans

Sabarkantha district will soon witness construction of its first Mahila kutir and second one of the Mahila Samakhya Gujarat. Savings groups being strengthened with training and information inputs, DIU Sabarkantha is also trying for planned intervention in the area of health. In the area of literacy well thought out plans for TLC in the district are being examined. Attempts are being made to strengthen the linkages with government departments and non-government agencies in the area. Soon the district will have its newsletter the title of which is finalised, "Saheli ne Sathware".



Annexure—A

LIST OF MEMBERS OF GENERAL COUNCIL AS ON 31-3-93

A. Ex-officio Members

1. President
Hon. Minister for Education
Government of Gujarat
Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
2. Vice president
Hon. Minister of State
Government of Gujarat
Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar.
3. Chairman
Principal Secretary to
Government
Education Department
Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
4. Secretary to Government
Rural Development Department
Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
5. Secretary to Government
Social welfare Department
Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
6. Commissioner
Women and Child Development
Polytechnic Campus, Ambawadi
Ahmedabad
7. Development Commissioner
Gandhinagar
8. Secretary to Government
Health, Nutrition and
Family Welfare Department
Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
9. Secretary to Government
(Planning)
General Administration Department
Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
10. Director of primary Education
Gujarat State
Block No. 12
Old Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
11. Director Higher Education
Gujarat State Block No. 12
Old Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
12. Director
Adult Education
Gujarat State
Block No. 12
Old Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
13. Director
Social Welfare
Gujarat State
Block No. 4
Old Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
14. Chairman
State Welfare Advisory Board
Paldi
Ahmedabad
15. Director
State Resources Centre
(Adult Education)
Gujarat Vidyapith
Ahmedabad

16. District Programme Co-ordinator
Mahila Samakhya Gujarat
Rajkot
17. District Programme Co-ordinator
Mahila Samakhya Gujarat
Himatnagar, Sabarkantha
18. District Programme Co-ordinator
Mahila Samakhya Gujarat
Baroda
19. Member-Secretary
State Programme Director
Mahila Samakhya Gujarat
Ahmedabad

B. Persons from Non-Government Organisations and Educational Institutions

20. Dr. Lataben Desai
SEWA Rural
Jhagadia
Dist Bharuch
21. Ms Manjulaben Dave
Kasturba Vikas Gruh
Jamnagar
22. Ms Vasuben P. Shah
Advocate
Pritamnagar, Ellisbridge
Ahmedabad
23. Prof Anil Bhatt
Indian Institute of Management
Vastrapur
Ahmedabad
24. Ms Indu Capoor
CHETNA
Ahmedabad
25. Ms Madhu Sarin
48 Sector-4
Chandigarh-160001
26. Ms Shantaben Nagjibhai Desai
Anath Ashram
Surendranagar

27. Ms Shashiben Naik
Matrushree Virbai College
Rajkot
28. Ms Majethia
Gandhi Women's Arts and
Commerce College
Bhavnagar
29. Dr. Anjliben D. Mehta
B.K. School of
Business Management
Gujarat University
Ahmedabad
30. Dr. Taraben Shah
2 Gitanagar
Rajkot

C. Nominees of Central Government

31. Project Director
Mahila Samakhya,
Ministry of Human
Resource Development,
Department of Education,
Government of India,
New Delhi
32. Director
Elementary Education,
Human Resource Development
Department of Education
Government of India
New Delhi
33. Prof. (Mrs.) Amita Verma
Faculty of Home Science
M S University
Baroda
34. Ms Renana Jhabwala
'SEWA'
Bhadra
Ahmedabad
35. Ms Nafisa Barot
MAHITI-UTTHAN
Himatlal Park
Ahmedabad

ANNEXURE - B

List of Members of Executive Committee

as on 31-3-93

A. Ex-officio Members

1. Chairman
Additional Chief Secretary
Education Department
Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
2. Member Secretary
State Programme Director
Mahila Samakhya Gujarat
Ahmedabad
3. Commissioner
Women and Child Development
Polytechnic Campus
Ahmedabad
4. Director
Adult Education
Gandhinagar
5. Financial Advisor
Education Department
Sachivalaya
Gandhinagar
6. District Programme Co-ordinator
Mahila Samkhya Baroda
7. District Programme Co-ordinator
Mahila Samakhya Rajkot
8. District Programme Co-ordinator
Mahila Samakhya
Himatnagar, Sabarkantha

B. Officials of Ministry of HRD, GOI

9. National Project Director
Mahila Samakhya
Human Resource Development
Department of Education
Government of India
New Delhi
10. Director (I. F. D.)
Department of Education
Government of India
New Delhi

C. Nominees of the NRG

11. Ms Ilaben Bhatt
'SEWA'
Opp Victoria Garden
Ahmedabad
12. Dr. Sharda Jain
Sr. Fellow
I.D.S., Jaipur

D. Persons nominated by the President

13. Dr. Sushilaben Sheth
Shri Kanta Stri Vikas Gruh
Bhaktinagar
Rajkot
14. Ms Jyotsnaben Shah
Vikas Jyot
Nagarwada Cross Road
Baroda

ANNEXURE - C

List of Project Functionaries and Administrative Staff as on 31-3-93

1. Ms Kusum Chauhan IAS
State Programme Director
2. Ms Geeta Shah
District Programme Coordinator
Baroda
3. Ms Kalpana Mehta
District Programme Coordinator
Rajkot
4. Nilima Shah
Resource Person
Baroda
5. Ms Vandana Nag
Resource Person
Baroda
6. Ms Smita Jani
Consultant
Baroda
7. Ms Sadgi Joshi
Consultant
Baroda
8. Ms Shakuntala Mehta
Resource Person
Sabarkantha
9. Ms Mita Pandit
Resource Person
Sabarkantha
10. Ms Bela Vaghela
Consultant
Sabarkantha
11. Ms Mira Desai
Resource Person
Ahmedabad
12. Ms Manisha Thaker
Resource Person
Ahmedabad
13. Shri M.S. Parmar
Accounts Officer
Ahmedabad
14. Shri R. J. Rathod
Accountant
Ahmedabad
15. Shri A.P. Zala
Accountant
Rajkot
16. Shri V.G. Patel
Accountant
Sabarkantha
17. Ms Trupti Shah
Accountant
Baroda
18. Ms Daksha Sharma
Assistant
Baroda
19. Shri K.K. Thakore
Assistant
Ahmedabad
20. Shri A.T. Rathod
Assistant
Sabarkantha
21. Shri C.B. Gondaliya
Stenographer
Baroda
22. Shri D.T. Chotaliya
Stenographer
Ahmedabad
23. Ms Kirtida Vohra
Stenographer
Rajkot
24. Shri S.K. Prajapati
Stenographer
Sabarkantha
25. Shri L.R. Timani
Stenographer
Stenographer
Ahmedabad
26. Shri L. P. Parmar
L.D.C.
Ahmedabad