

MAHILA SAMAKHYA

Report of an Indo-Dutch Review Mission

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### I. OVERVIEW

1. The Mission finds that the basic concepts, principles and design of the Mahila Samakhya programme have been validated.
2. The Selection process for Mahila Samakhya functionaries has resulted in the recruitment of women of high quality, commitment and capacity, appropriate to their roles and functions at all levels.
3. The training resources mobilised, and the training processes followed, are appropriate to the intended implementation of the process, and effective in initiating and supporting that process. Notwithstanding the diversity of individuals and agencies involved, a coherent set of training inputs, and convergent training experience, is emerging.
4. At every level, there is evident capacity to perceive upcoming problems, analyse these, and develop appropriate strategies to deal with them.
5. The essential accountability of the programme to the collectivity of village women has been understood and internalised. Mechanisms are being developed to operationalise this understanding.
6. The soundness of the organisational design envisaged in the Mahila Samakhya is affirmed by experience. Although the sequence of implementation has been different in each State, the need for district level coordination, and a state level structure to handle financial and administrative arrangements, is perceived in all three States.
7. Financial provisions are adequate and responsibly administered. Financial management is proving flexible and responsive to needs.
8. Documentation of the programme is extensive, adequate maintained in various forms.

## II. SOCIAL RESPONSE

1. The Mission found evidence that :
  - poor village women are welcoming, responding to, and benefitting from the programme
  - demand for literacy, numeracy, skills training and schooling is emerging
  - there is individual and collective support from husbands and from village men in some cases
  - exploitation at the village level has been brought into sharper focus in some instances
  - block and district officials in general do not have full comprehension of the programme. This is also generally the case for state level functionaries
  - a number of voluntary agency and other partners are beginning to internalise Mahila Samakhya processes and concepts.

## III. REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS

1. Based on collective review of experience, the mission finds that certain revisions and additions are desirable.
2. District Resource Group : It was envisaged that the District Resource Group would be an empowered committee. In practice, the role and status of the District Resource Group has varied. A diverse pattern of partnership is emerging, with advisory rather than empowered status.
3. In Karnataka, effective DRGs have been constituted as advisory bodies, with partners' respecting each others' autonomy whilst developing convergent interests.
4. In Gujarat, there is more of a struggle to evolve DRGs. The partners' respective roles are not yet clearly defined to each other's satisfaction. Identification of shared interests is still being negotiated.
5. In Uttar Pradesh, the concept of a DRG and identification of its role has not been operationalised. None the less, voluntary agencies, potential government partners, and trainers, have experienced the need for coordination at district level, and for a structure at the state level to handle administrative and financial arrangements. The Mission believes that the basic structure (of a District Implementation Unit/District Coordinator, and a Mahila Samakhya Society/State Programme Coordinator), is right to actualise such a structure. The mission further judges that the process adopted in the other two states for setting up DIUs and selecting functionaries is appropriate in U.P.

6. Given the diversity within and between states, which has arisen from objective reality, to insist on an empowered District Resource Group as the only suitable model, does not seem appropriate.
7. The Mission also notes that the energy and time involved in drawing together the partners were underestimated in the 1988 Programme Appraisal. The effort involved, particularly in certain areas, should be taken into account in assessing the progress of the programme in each state.
8. SITARA : Experience of implementing the programme suggests that planning, decision-making and information should not be distanced by placing SITARA functions in an external agency. In fact, no SITARA agency as yet has been appointed in any of the three states.
9. The Mission proposes two options for consideration. The two options should not be seen as mutually exclusive :
  - incorporation of the SITARA budget and functions within the State Programme Office under the State Programme Coordinator
  - resource panel convened under the State Programme Coordinator, drawing on the expertise of one or more external agencies.
10. Information Flow : Mahila Samakhya functionaries are realising out of their own experience a need to strengthen information flows within the programme and with others. The Mission therefore recommends :
  - budgets be adjusted to include expenditures on documentation and related equipment (including video), at District and State levels
  - the existing provision for recruitment of a Resource person for documentation and research to the District Implementation Units, be implemented
  - State Programme Offices be permitted to increase the present provision for two Resource Persons/Consultants, to three (Karnataka and Gujarat) or four (Uttar Pradesh), funded out of the existing SITARA allocation.
11. The Mission finds that reporting provisions already agreed between the GoN and GoI are adequate and should be routinely maintained.
12. Support Network : The Mission perceives a need to strengthen the programme's network of support among block, district and state level officials and administrators. It recommends that workshops on the Mahila Samakhya programme be included within the regular training at Missoorie, State Staff Colleges and Institutes of Administration. It further recommends that orientation workshops be provided to block, district and state level official and administrators.
13. The Mission supports the need for the National Resource Group to operationalise its designated role.



#### IV. LESSONS LEARNED

Although the programme was inaugurated officially only in April 1989, the Mission tentatively identifies the following lessons of the Mahila Samakhya experience:

1. It is possible to bring diverse voluntary agencies into partnership, and to bring voluntary agencies into partnership with the Government.
2. It is possible to establish a flexible, responsive structure within a Government programme.
3. The process approach can be initiated on a scale which has significance.
4. The process approach has a phasing which must not be hurried or skimped. It cannot survive if driven by numbers and targets.
5. The potential has been created for bottom-up planning and for accountability to the collectivity of village women.
6. Early success has given rise to new pressures, which need to be resisted.

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## I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

"The daughter is like the husk of the rice which is thrown away, but the son is like the grain of the rice which is kept in the house"

Sahayogini Selection Meeting, Tehri Garhwal, Feb.14-16, 1989.

### 1.1. Policy Context and Objectives

1.1.1. The National Policy on Education (1986) of the Government of India (GOI) clearly sets out the situation of women, doubly oppressed by poverty and by the fact that they are women. The ideology of women's subordinate position and inferiority, "internalised by both men and women, ensures its own perpetuation, for nothing ever comes along to challenge it" (Dept. of Education, April 1989,4)

Part-IV  
of the  
National  
Policy on  
Education  
thus affirms:

"Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralise the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The New Education system will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women."

1.1.2. The Mahila Samakhya programme operationalises this policy objective by providing a framework and an infrastructure to support a process of empowerment. The parameters of empowerment are:

- building a positive self-image and self-confidence
- developing ability to think critically
- building up group cohesion, fostering decision-making and action
- Ensuring equal participation in the process of bringing about social change.
- providing the wherewithal for women's self-reliance
- creating an environment of learning.

### 1.2. The Process Approach

1.2.1. The principles, components and organisational structure of the process approach of the Mahila Samakhya (MS) programme have been set out by the Department of Education (April 1989). The details of these, and their

evolution in the dynamic of living social systems, are elaborated in the body of this Report.

1.2.2. The design of a process approach is not a blueprint for action but a guide for a series of interventions to enable desired events to occur. The logic of the approach is that interventions are responsive to diversity, local circumstance, and acquired experience over time. The diversity in form and in the pattern of activities which emerge over time does not imply anarchy or distortion, as long as diversity is guided by a clear set of principles. The guiding principles of the MS programme are:

- creation of the time and space for women to meet, be together, and begin the process of thinking and reflecting on their situation, its meaning, and where they wish to go - this phase must not be hurried or skimped
- determination of the form, nature, content and timing of activities in a village by the women who are the participants
- acceptance that the role of programme functionaries officials and other agencies is facilitative and not directive
- acceptance that women themselves invariably will seek literacy, numberacy and schooling at the point at which their meaning and value becomes evident to them
- development of an educational process which creates an environment of learning, using training methodologies based on respect for women's existing knowledge and skills
- development of planning, decision-making and evaluation processes, at all levels, which are accountable to the collectivity of village women.

### 1.3. Design for a Support Structure

1.3.1. The logic and principles summarised above mean that structures must be responsive to context and flexible over time. The MS programme proposes a basic structural framework comprising an autonomous state level society (Mahila Samakhya Society - MSS), a district level coordinating body (District implementation Unit - DIU) supported by a District Resource Group (DRG), and women's groups (sanghas) at the village level. The process approach has led to variation in the sequence in which these structures are developing, and adaptation over time.

1.3.2. Whatever the emerging organisational pattern, in order to support a sustained and sustainable process, the new structures must forge links with existing structures and resources. The MS programme explicitly seeks to stimulate

the formation of links, with village and local government bodies, with development services and government officials, with district, state and national level administrations, and with voluntary agencies (Volags). The process approach is leading to variation in the strength, pattern and nature of the emerging links in each of the 10 districts covered by the programme.

1.3.3. The formation of links is being brought about essentially by providing new occasions, settings, and incentives, in order that hitherto divergent, antagonistic or competitive actors may define and create for themselves convergent, complementary roles and relationships. That is, the MS programme seeks to develop shared understanding between people rather than enforcing contractual obligation between organisations.

1.3.4. New roles and relationships can only be developed and sustained as individuals begin to internalise the guiding principles, process approach, and leitmotif of the MS programme. The leitmotif of the MS programme is sensitivity to gender issues and understanding of women's situation and concerns, spearheaded by the mobilisation of women's power and energy at every level and reinforced by the MS training and orientation effort. The women-centred focus and training are essential to the development of wider platforms of understanding, commitment and support among those with whom the programme seeks links.

#### 1.4. Development of the Programme

1.4.1. The preparation and development of the MS programme has been a long process of debate, initiated in 1987, adaptation, reformulation, and reflection, building on the lessons of multiple experiments and diverse experiences. It is in itself experimental only in terms of its scale and new only in terms of the political and administrative backing for its execution. Phase I, March-October 1988, saw the preparation of a draft proposal by two Indian consultants to the department of education. The draft was discussed with voluntary agencies, educationists, government officials, women activists, and teachers in all ten prospective districts, and at State and Union levels. The draft was amended in September 1988, and April 1989, embodying the concepts, structures and process which emerged through involving potential implementers in analysis and formulation.

1.4.2. Phase II, October 1988-March 1989. The programme was approved in principle by the GOI on September 19, 1988, allowing the necessary administrative and financial

formalities to be arranged. The Memorandum of Association of the Mahila Samakhya Societies was drafted and sent to the States for comments. After revision, MSS were registered in Karnataka and Gujarat (and in January 1990, in Uttar Pradesh (see Appendix I for Memorandum of Association). The Gujarat State Programme Coordinator (SPC) was appointed in November 1988 and all activities relating to planning and preparation thereafter were initiated by her. In Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), the initial tasks of identifying nodal agencies for training, training resources, and other related activities, were initiated by the Department of Education, JAGORI, a premier Delhi-based training organisation with substantive experience and presence in U.P., agreed to coordinate the various meetings on the MS programme, training processed and training resources for U.P. SEARCH, a premier training organisation in Bangalore, undertook a similar role in Karnataka. The programme was formally launched in all three States on April 1, 1989.

1.4.3. The MS programme will be taken by the GOI into the 8th. Five-year Plan period. In line with its intention to spread experience with the MS approach, it is already providing assistance to additional voluntary agencies, in districts not covered by the programme (see Appendix III), to help them incorporate the MS approach into their existing activities.

#### 1.5. The Context: Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka

1.5.1. The details and analysis of progress are given in subsequent chapters. This section draws attention to contextual characteristics which have shaped the programme in each state.

1.5.2. A list of the states/districts/blocks in which the programme is operating is given in Chart I. Appendix II provides district profiles for six of the ten districts, statistical data on population and literacy in all three States, and a close-up view of female literacy and education in one district, Varanasi. Female literacy in all areas/populations under the MS programme is absolutely low. (under 10 per cent) and significantly lower than for male rates. The socio-economic profiles reveal conditions of marginal agriculture, acute water stress, caste and class oppression, indebtedness and poor infrastructure and service provision. But the texture of poverty and oppression varies considerably. For example, women in Bijapur, Karnataka, are subject to the practice of devadasi, the offering of poor girls to the goddess Yelamma, and a life of prostitution, whereas in Manikpur block of Banda District, U.P., women and their families are oppressed by dacoit-related terror, often

formed by the large landlords. Thus both women's perception of the nature of their exploitation, and the kind of struggle that is needed and possible to change their lives, varies according to local circumstance and the objective room for manoeuvre.

1.5.3. The MS programme is also influenced by the type of volag partners it has chosen, or been able to work with. The histories of the various volags present in each district, their nature, leadership, orientation, and pattern of activities, is varied. There are also discernible examples, those in U.P. are strongly coloured by Gandhian traditions, by Hindu idioms or by experience of class struggle centred on wage demands or on industrial trade unionism. Those in Karnataka, in contrast, appear to be more centrally development-oriented.

1.5.4. The progress of decentralisation of development effort and strengthening of local government in each State can also be contrasted. It appears to have progressed furthest in Karnataka and least in U.P. The nature of the linkages the MS programme, and sangha women, are able to make with development services, officials, elected representatives, and the administration is substantially affected by these patterns.

1.5.5. Finally, the Mission notes that the implementation of the MS Programme coincided with the national elections, held in November 1989, and by state elections. State elections were held in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh also in November 1989 and, in Gujarat, in February 1990.

C H A R T - I  
STATES, DISTRICTS & BLOCKS

<u>STATE</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>BLOCK</u>
UTTAR PRADESH	Banda	Manikpur
		Tindwari
	Saharanpur	Sadoli Kadim
		Sarsawa
	Tehri Garhwal	Bhilangana
		Jakholi
		Batap Nagar
		Jakhnidhar
		Chamba
	Varanasi	Seyapuri
Arajjiline		
GUJARAT	Rajkot	Jatpur
		Godal
		Parladhari
		Jasadan
		Rajkot
		Dodrika
		Kotda
		Wankaner
		Upeta
		Bhiloda
	Sabarkantha	Khedbrahma
		Vaghodia
	Baroda	Sunsheda
		Nawadi
		Chota Udaipur
		Padra
		Vadodra
KARNATAKA	Mysore	Yellundur
		Chamarajapet
		Nanjangud
		H.D.Kote
		Periyapatna
		Gundlapet
		Hunsur
	Bidar	Aurad
		Kumabad
		Basvakalyan
	Bijapur	Bidar
		Mudhol
		Muddebihal
		Basavana Bagewadi
		Bijapur

(National Programme Office, Feb.1990).

## 2. ORGANISATIONAL PATTERN

### 2.1. Sequence of Implementation

2.1.1. The sequence of implementation has been different in each State (summarised in Chart II). Progress has been smoothest in Karnataka, where negotiations with volag partners, establishment of district and state level structures, appointment of MS functionaries, and selection and training of Sahayoginis and Sakhis, have proceeded hand in hand. In Gujarat implementation was troubled in its early phases. Selection of some volags turned out to be inappropriate. There were also uncertainties relating to the political context and the duration of the MS programme. Finding suitable district level MS functionaries also posed a problem. The three were somewhat related and posed hard choices for the State Programme Coordinator who, in the first months, had no district functionaries to provide collegial support. The Coordinator had to search a new for like-minded colleagues in the voluntary sector and administration, and disengage in a diplomatic manner from some of the earlier relationships. The effort to forge among the interstices of entrenched interests strong commitments to the MS approach, is now paying off as the programme stabilises.

2.1.2. In Uttar Pradesh, the sequence of programme implementation took yet another turn under the influence of: the need to search for 'modern' volag partners which none-the-less had standing in the eyes of government and credibility in the eyes of older, Gandhian voluntary organisations; the more complex administrative structure which splits the secretariat of the Department of Education in Lucknow from the field directorates in Allahabad; the size of the State, which has four divisions, each as large as Gujarat or Karnataka. In addition, UP is the main arena in which nationwide shifts in political opinion are played out, reducing the administration's freedom to deal with change during the election period, as well as the fountain head for two strong currents of thought and tradition which tend to marginalise MS values, one centred in orthodox religious belief, based in Varanasi, and one centred in trade unionism for the organised employed classes, based in Kanpur. Furthermore, in a state as large as UP, the administration looked for assurance in a period of uncertainty that the small MS programme (4 districts only, out of 65, presently increasing to 80 through subdivision), would continue into the 8th Plan period.



## CHART II

### SEQUENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION

#### KARNATAKA

1. Introduction of concept to Volags, Admin.
2. Selection of Districts, April-Sept. '88
3. Initiation of pre-programme activities with help of SEARCH, Sept. '88 - March '89
4. Appointment of State Programme Coordinator
5. Registration of MSS, Feb. '89
6. Transfer of funds to MSS, April '89
7. Selection, appointment, orientation of DPCs, May '89
8. Selection, training of Sahayoginis March - Dec. '89
9. Selection of taluks/villages; initial contacts with village women
10. Familiarisation of Sahayoginis with development programmes and local government
11. Potential sahayakis, 2-3 per village, identified; sahayaki training workshops held
12. Sanghas begin to meet, start activities
13. Iterative short training for sahayoginis, beginning of routine monthly planning
14. All 3 DIUs functioning by Dec. '89
15. State level mobilisation of trainers, resource persons; macro planning workshops; liaison with State admin., GOI, NRG, NPC; participation in district workshops and training from June '89.

#### GUJARAT

1. GOI/Deptt. of Education introduced concept to Volags, Admin., Mid '88
2. Volags selected by NPC; selection workshops for sahayoginis etc.
3. State Programme Coordinator appointed, Nov. '88
4. Sahayoginis in Sabarhantha begin village work, Mar. '89 programme in Baroda, Rajkot started.
5. MSS registered in Jan., 1989, transfer of funds by April 1, 1989
6. Renewed discussions with Volags, all 3 Districts, Mar-July '89
7. Selection/orientation workshops for DPCs/RPs held: 2 appointed-June '89; 1 in Aug. '89; 2 more in Dec. '89
8. New Volag partners selected, Rajkot, Aug. '89
9. New Volag partners selected, Baroda, Sept. '89
10. Talukas/villages selected
11. Selection workshops for sahayoginis held, Rajkot, Sept. '89
12. Selection workshops for sahayoginis held. Sabarhantha, Baroda, Mid-Oct. '89
13. Core training team emerging, Sept.-Dec. '89
14. By Dec. '89 all 3 DIUs functioning iterative training for sakhis and sahayoginis held.

## 2.2. Affirmation of the Design

2.2.1. Despite these differences in sequencing, over the eighteen or so months of the pre-programme and programme period, there has been remarkable convergence in the process of implementation towards the structural design envisaged for the MS programme.

2.2.2. The present structures in each State are depicted in Chart III. It should be noted that the picture is not static. In UP, for example, the next six months are likely to see the establishment of DIUs in all 4 districts and a State Programme Office.

## 2.3. Modifications and adaptations

2.3.1. Notwithstanding overall conformity, the emergent structure and organisational pattern have proven responsive in their detail to local need and opportunity. The Mission noted seven modifications and adaptations:

- i. in no State has an external agency been appointed as a SITARA (see 6.4. for further comments).
- ii. in Bijapur, Karnataka, the programme has been introduced through the Zilla parishad, with the support of the Chief Secretary (IAS) to the parishad. He has given the programme the space required to establish itself against predatory interests whilst legitimating its presence in a difficult feudal setting. Subsequently, the MS has become a member of DONI, a consultative group of volags working in the district, which holds regular meetings with the parishad.
- iii. in UP, JAGORI has taken on increasing responsibilities of coordination and programme development, liaison between the NPC and Volag partners, as well as training, and has carried out well the difficult job of launching the programme in so doing. However, it is recognised by all those with whom the Mission met that (a) JAGORI, itself a volag, cannot forever play a role *prima inter pares*, without giving rise to potential frictions; (b) there is a need now for district coordination and support by DIUs and for consolidation of the informal meetings of trainers, volags, resource persons and administrators into DRGs; and (c) MS functionaries at state and district levels are needed to give focus to the MS approach, administer funding flows, and provide strategic support.
- iv. in Baroda, Gujarat, one of the partner volags, the Shroff Foundation, is trying out direct training and support for sakhis, without any *sahayoginis*.

## UTTAR PRADESH

1. Programme introduced in Varanasi by NPC and JAGORI, September, 88
2. Intensive District level discussions in 4 Districts. 16 Volag partners identified
3. Training teams formed from Hindi-speaking region of North India
4. Selection workshops held for sahayoginis between March - July 1989
5. Selection workshops held for Sakhis, April - August 1989
6. Iterative training for sahayoginis and sakhis.
7. Preliminary selection workshops held for DPCs/RPs
8. MSS registered Jan. '90
9. Ongoing support from JAGORI, NPC, Volags, NRG, to form DIUs and operationalise MSS, select SPC.

- v. in Bidar, Karnataka, a volag, AIKYA, initially took responsibility for programme development but, as the DIU became stronger, now provides mainly training support.
- vi. in all districts in Karnataka, the number of sakhis per sangha has been increased to 2 or 3, and most of the sahayoginis reside in one of the villages of their cluster.
- vii. in no district have District Resource Groups been constituted as empowered committee.

2.3.2. DRGs bring together volags, MS functionaries, local administration, education officials, trainers and resource persons. Their role is further examined in chapter 5. Here it is sufficient to note that a diverse pattern of partnership is emerging. In Karnataka, effective DRGs have been constituted as advisory bodies, with partners settling into a relationship which respects each others' autonomy but promotes convergence of interest. In Gujarat, there is more of a struggle to evolve effective DRGs. The partners' respective roles are not yet clearly defined to each others' satisfaction. Identification of shared interests is still being negotiated. In UP, the concept of a DRG and identification of its role has not been operationalised but the need for such a forum has been experienced and informal DRGs are beginning to emerge. These informal fora include representatives of the sanghas (sakhis).

2.3.3. The Mission regards these adaptations and modifications as appropriate to their context and a reflection of the responsiveness of the process approach. The Mission sees little reason to insist on the constitution of DRGs as empowered committees at present, and leaves upon the question of whether or not DRGs should, or will, evolve in this direction.

#### 2.4. Future Options

2.4.1. It might seem very early days to be considering expansion but the possibility is already being discussed within the programme. It is worth reflecting briefly on how expansion might be managed.

2.4.2. One lesson already firmly established is that expansion into new states will require an equally long pre-programme lead time for preparatory discussions, orientation and dialogue. Another is that, in any expansion, the initial training input simply cannot and must not be skimped or hurried.

2.4.3. Within existing districts, the Mission concurs with the view that the capacity to expand has been put in place

and that expansion in terms of villages and blocks could be considered toward the end of FY 90-91. Expansion to new districts within existing States could be considered in FY 91-92. The Mission recommends strongly that the decision to expand in existing programme areas, the timing, scale, and the choice of areas/partners, emerge from within the MS process and not be imposed.

2.4.4. The Mission notes that the MS approach and process is already diffusing within the programmes of some volag partners, and is being incorporated in Department of Education programmes in other states. It also notes that the Department is offering direct support to voluntary agencies throughout India which wish to take up the MS approach and process within their own programmes. The Mission recommends careful review of these initiatives and a workshop at an appropriate time to compare, contrast and learn from the different experiences.

2.4.5. MS functionaries also are beginning to consider how to manage the end of the MS programme as a distinct identity at some time in the future. One option discussed might be to convert the district level structures and assets into an organisation owned by sangha members, each organisation to be provided an initial lump sum capitalisation. Another option might be for the district structure to register as a voluntary organisation for receiving Department of Education grants, for onward allocation to sanghas and other volags. A precedent exists for such an arrangement in the area of environmental education. A further option might be for, say, the 4000 or so sanghas in a district to federate, on the model of a thrift cooperative. Any option has its own implications, in terms of the relationship between the MS programme and the sanghas, financial flows, organisational patterns and legal identity. These would have to be shared and discussed with village women and volag partners. There is no necessity yet to come to any conclusion, although a sense of the end point would help to guide development and choice of coherent strategies.

2.4.6. The role of the National Programme Coordinator as the programme grows, consolidates, and expands will also change. Her initially intensive input in the field in the existing three programme States is no longer required. Although UP will need considerable attention in the coming months, in all three states her role is defining itself more or less as:

- providing facility for aggregating progress reports, translating these where necessary, disseminating and promoting these to the wider circle of concerned persons
- liaising with the Dutch Embassy

- receiving and collating routine accounts, budgets, plans, handling financial arrangements and reporting at the centre
- assisting within the programme States when called to deal with specific problems, and responding to specific requests for information or other support
- attending MSS executive committee meetings
- keeping in touch with MS functionaries as persons, interacting with them, and with volag partners, trainers and government, on districts visits;
- providing opportunities for exposure to events and persons at the centre and keeping an open door.

2.4.7. Expansion into new states would impose new demands on her time and energy, and that of her office and colleagues. Consideration should be given to the allocation of her time, and whether or not additional resource persons would be required, as the MS programme expands.

### 3. HUMAN RESOURCES

#### 3.1. Selection Process

3.1.1. The selection process adopted in each State for recruiting MS functionaries and sahayoginis has been broadly similar though varying in small particulars. In general, the process is as follows (based on discussions with programme functionaries and details given in MS Progress Reports). The criteria for selection are drawn up by volags, NPC (in the first phases), resource persons and trainers, discussed and refined. A wide range of resource persons, universities and colleges, volaga and trainers are then consulted and asked to nominate individuals who meet the criteria. These are called for group interviews and discussions : their willingness to travel away from home for a residential selection workshop is taken as an important sign of potential suitability. The workshops introduce participants to the programme and taken them through the kind of experiential, participative training experience they should in turn later share with village women (see chapter 4). A consensus emerges among the trainers about who the most suitable trainees are, and these are introduced to the work of the programme. They are finally appointed after further on-the-job experience and training.

3.1.2. Sakhi selection is following comparable processes, with village women participating in the development of selection criteria (e.g. in Varanasi) and in the identification of those who should undergo sakhi training. A common mistake at first was to include a literacy qualification for sakhis and basic education for sahayoginis, which introduced an upper caste or upper class bias. The literacy/educational qualification is no longer viewed as essential for sakhis and sahayoginis as it became clear that literacy could be gained in a comparatively short time within the programme and did not pose unsurmountable barriers to otherwise suitable choices (see chapters 4 and 8).

3.1.3. Preference has been given to familiarity with the area in which an individual will work, character and orientation, and response to the training workshops, rather than to age, or social religious, marital and caste status. Previous work experience, and life experience, are valued in so far as they demonstrate the individual's orientation to the goals of the MS programme. A number have joined from

other volag programmes, government development or educational services; many have had no previous employment or volunteer experience.

3.1.4. The Mission considers human resource development (selection and training of functionaries, sahyoginis, and sangha members) as basic to the success of the MS programme. The Mission has been impressed by the essential ordinariness of sakhis, sahayoginis, and MS functionaries : they are not the few individuals in a million who cannot be replicated as a programme expands. What is exceptional is the care with which selection processes have been designed to identify, bring out and develop innate qualities and capacities. (See also 8.9. Dangers of Success).

3.1.5. Drop out rates have been low (see Appendix IV). Only a few individuals among the sahayoginis have proven unsuitable after some time. Termination has been handled in various ways. In Mysore, the matter was referred to the District Resource Group so that the decision to terminate became a collective responsibility and provided opportunity for reinforcing commitment to the selection criteria and the goals of the MS programme.

### 3.2. Categories/Numbers

3.2.1. The human resources mobilised so far are impressive. Gujarat and Karnataka each have their full complement of State Programme Coordinator, 1 Resource Person, 3 District Programme Coordinators, and District Resource Persons (except Rajkot, which has only a DPC at present). Other details are given in Chart IV.

3.2.2. Given the context in each State and the history of implementation, the Mission is satisfied with the progress made. The Mission notes that the Chart underestimates the number of sakhis and sanghas because sakhis still in training or awaiting training have not been included, nor have village groups which are on the brink of identifying themselves as sanghas and carrying out activities in the name of their sangha.

### 3.3. Quality

3.3.1. Quality can be difficult to pin down but the Mission judges from its own observations that the people in the MS programme are of high quality, from top to bottom. The Mission listed the following as positive signs of appropriate and effective human resource development in all three States :



## C H A R T I V

### COVERAGE

Item	Gujarat	U.P.	Karnataka	Total to Jan. 1 1990	Ist year budget to March.31 1990
No. Districts Covered	3	4	3	10	10
No. Blocks Covered	19	11	15	45	-
No. Villages Covered	221	400	309	930	1000
Approx. Average No. Villages/Blocks	12	36	21	-	-
No. Active Sanghas <sup>1</sup>	166	-	67	233	-
No. Village women participating in Active sanghas (approx)	6640	-	-	2680	-
No. Sahayoginis <sup>2</sup>	36	43	48	127	100
No. Sakhis <sup>3</sup>	70	270	293	635	2000
No. Partner Volags	24	16	11	51	-

(Review Mission/MSS progress reports,  
Jan.-Feb., 1990)

- Notes :
1. Active sanghas defined as those already holding weekly meetings as sanghas
  2. Defined as those who have already completed all phases of training and initial field experience
  3. Defined as those who have already completed sakhi selection and training workshops.

- i. social background/previous experience: highly diverse but the diversity did not create barriers and hierarchical distinctions
- ii. self confidence: often attributed by individuals themselves to the kind of training and support they received from the MS programme
- iii. sense of belonging: seen as essential to empowerment and accountability, explicitly valued as creating a space and time for women
- iv. ability to meet exceptional challenges: there are challenges of various kinds, ranging from threats of rape and physical violence, to assumption of new roles and skills (e.g. sahayoginis in turn becoming trainers of sakhis, saharanpur)
- v. articulateness: the programme is giving women a voice: for example, a sakhi in Bidar challenged the Mission to explain why it had come to her village; a young District Resource Person from Gujarat attended a meeting in the Department of Education, Delhi, and spoke out well concerning her work.
- vi. release of creativity and sense of joy: the MS programme is unusual in giving encouragement to women's knowledge, innate creativity, and enjoyment of life, which so many women are unable to express in their homes or in public life, having stepped from a childhood of hard work straight into adulthood and subordination.
- vii. making linkages, mobilising support: the Mission was impressed by the determination with which sahayoginis and MS functionaries are seeking out support from like-minded individuals within existing structures, overcoming initial hostility and suspicion; even more, the Mission was impressed by the skill with which MS functionaries in particular are building strategic alliances with men and women in the bureaucracy, universities, and in other women's development programmes.
- viii. internalisation of MS approach: the MS approach seems to be readily internalised because it meets a need, accords with women's reality, matches their latent perceptions, suits women's preferred style of relating to other people, and creates a genuine feeling of empowerment.

### 3.4. Capacity

3.4.1. The Mission viewed the question of capacity in relation to the challenges of launching the programme; no doubt other capacity concerns will arise as the programme grows. The first point noted by the Mission is the enormous range of work each individual, often meeting a challenge for the first time, is called upon to perform. The range would be unmanageable were it not for three things: (a) the reliance on innate knowledge, not merely formally acquired

knowledge as the basis for action; (b) the internalisation of the MS approach which encourages and supports open, frank, collective review of experience, both failure and success; and (c), the creation of a learning environment in which every individual grows as the process unfolds. In brief, the collective process of capacity development and the self-correcting mechanisms are very strong. None the less, the Mission is concerned that 'burn out' will occur if the demands remain as high as they have been initially and recommends a period of consolidation - and celebration.

3.4.2. Related to this, the specification of actual tasks and roles has been hazy and broad rather than defined and limited. District Resource Persons and Coordinators, for example, are still working out the most effective division of tasks between themselves. The programme as a whole should have a better idea of role and task specification by the end of the calendar year. The Mission recommends that inter-state workshops be held towards the end of the year to review the launching phase and to draw out commonalities concerning the range of work, tasks and roles, as guidelines (not blueprints) for planning expansion.

3.4.3. The Mission was impressed by the way in which MS functionaries, sahayoginis (and, in a number of cases, sanghas) were keeping written track of the process of implementation, tasks and work accomplished (see also chapter 6: Monitoring and Evaluation). As one example of the way in which this is being done, the Mission noted that a number of DIUs are summarising their work on wall charts, copied to State Programme Offices. Chart V documents activities in Bidar from April 1989 to January 1990. Chapter 7 records progress in building capacity to keep track of and report financial data.

3.4.4. While the Mission judges that the programme has created a solid core of human resources for expansion within the states and districts at an appropriate time in the future, the Mission found it hard to grasp the sheer size of the areas in which those resources are deployed. Table I and II show illustrative areas and distances. The Mission found the scale daunting: for example, Bijapur is three and a half times the size of Bidar, Saharanpur is 570 Km. from Lucknow, Bidar is 830 Km. from Bangalore, DIUs can be more than 50 Km. from the office of a volag, which is in turn up to 20 Km. from the MS villages. Each DIU and State Programme Office has a vehicle (an Ambassador or landrover) but many of the villages are accessible only on foot (In Tehsi, for example, 60% of the villages are not accessible by motorable road or track). Trains journey, where trains exist, can take up to 24 hours between districts or between districts and

State Programme Offices. Sahayoginis, even those who live in a village in their cluster, can spend up to 6 hours a day waking or travelling by bus and rickshaw. It is all the more creditable that the programme has created a network of human energy and interaction which holds together across these areas.

3.4.5. The Mission concludes there can be no simple and universal resolution of the difficulties posed by scale, area, distance. The Mission recommends, somewhat tentatively, that bicycles or even motorbikes be considered, on a case by case basis as the programme expands, as long as ways can be found to prevent bikes becoming an attraction, a reason for joining the programmes, and to sustain their cost and maintenance. Secondly, it recommends that in districts such as Tehri, consideration be given in the future to appointing two District Programme Coordinators as the sanghas increase and spread geographically.

C H A R T V

ACTIVITIES APRIL-89 - Jan.90: BIDAR DIU

Month	Administration	Trainings	Sangha	Literacy	Sup- port	Voca- tional
April	7 Sahayoginis, DC, Messenger Joined	-5days sangha leaders-sadlappar	Sangha Formation 25 villages			
May		-Sakhis meeting Chitgappa -5day sangha leaders Itga	*Regular mee- tings familim- sation etc.			
June		-Sakhi meeting Madridaga	Extended to 35 villages	Begin Weekly Classes for pot- ential AE teachers	Youth Work- Shop	
July	-	-Sakhi meeting Allapu - 2day sangha leaders Bidar		Daily classes Itga, Nagampalli		
Aug	Office established	-Sakhi meeting Sundhal	Extended to 67villages			
Sept.	Typist joins	-Sakhi meeting Bagdal A Thanda	*	5 day literacy Workshop Boral		Lidkar training started
Oct.	DRP, 1 Sahayogini Joins	-Sakhi meeting Beldal	*	Daily classes (AE)in 10 more villages NFE centres started	Hut cons- truc- tion Bāgun Bapur	
Nov	1 sahayogini joins	-Sakhi meeting Belkora, Founda- tion Training Phase-I EDP Workshop	*	2 more NFE centres	2 day children's Festival Jenganda	
Dec	4 Sahayoginis join DIU/Sah literacyestd 1st DRG mee- ting	-5day sahyoginis training -Foundation Trg. Phase-II	Exploring 20 addi- tional village Begin acquiring land for huts in 25 villages			
Jan	2nd DRG meeting	-Sakhis meeting Kattoli	*	5 day literacy workshop	Hut compli- ted Bapur	Astraole training visit to Khadi spinning unit.

(Bidar DIU, Feb 1990)

TABLE I : ILLUSTRATIVE AREA/POPULATION DENSITIES

State/District	Area (Sq Km)	Population	Population Density
<u>Gujarat</u>			
- Baroda	4901	1607565	328
- Rajkot	6570	1228772	187
- Sabarkantha	6668	1353574	203
<u>U.P.</u>			
- Saharanpur	5526	2673561	484
<u>Karnataka</u>			
- Bijapur	17000	3000000	176

Source : Population Census, 1981  
Mahila Samakhya Progress Reports, April 1989 - January 90

TABLE II : ILLUSTRATIVE DISTANCES

State	District	Distance (Km) MS villages from Volag Office	Mode of transport for Sahayoginis	Distance (km) of Volag office from District H.Q.	Distance (Km) of District from State H.Q.
U.P.	Saharanpur (Disha)	(1) 20 (2) 2-10	Bus Walking	15	570
	Banda	15-20	Train Walking	90	
	Varanasi	15-20	Rickshaw Walking	25	285
Gujarat	Sabar-kantha	10-15	Bus Walking	40	120
Karnataka		From MS Office		From MS Office	
	Bidar	40	Bus Walking	In District HQ	830
	Bijapur	80	Walking	"	600

(Review Mission, Jan-Feb, 1990)

#### 4. TRAINING

"I was extremely worried how the others would treat us (Adivasis). We are different. But by the end of the first day's sharing I felt one with the group. It really does not matter if the women are from cities, villages, rich, poor, educated, illiterate for we have common life experiences"

"We are about to begin work with rural women and we learnt about their lives, but most importantly we also realised that we would also have a struggle in our own lives to bring about a slow change in us."

"I had been through Anganwadi teachers' training and expected that in this training too there would be a teacher with a blackboard and a chalk. But here there was nothing of the sort. The questions came from us and so did the answers."

Sahayogini Training, Vadodara, 12.10.89 - 23.10.89

##### 4.1. Training Design

4.1.1. The Department of Education recognised from the beginning "the approach and methodology of the programme clearly place a critical burden on the training.....at all levels" (Deptt. of Education, April, 1989, 10). The key persons to be trained are:

- village sakhis (sahayakis in Karnataka); women selected by sangha (group) from among themselves
- Sahayoginis: facilitators and support network for clusters of ten villages, residing in one of the villages or at block level
- district and state level coordinators and resource persons/consultants.

4.1.2. The training approach of the programme was chosen to empower MS functionaries to be facilitators of village women's empowerment: "the training experience...must.....be a microcosm of the values and processes of the programme itself. It must stimulate the very attitudes, values, interactions and environment that the trainees must recreate and practice among people in the village" (Deptt. of Education, April, 1989).



4.1.3. The training design specifies an approach based on participants' own life experiences and knowledge, group sharing of living and learning tasks, and the insights of behavioural science, to create an atmosphere of learning and an internalised sense of group solidarity and individual strength. Techniques of dance, song, drama, and exploration through games are mentioned as natural forms of expression, explanation and analysis, which can draw out trainees creativity and release the sense of fun denied women from early childhood.

4.1.4. Since the programme aims to bring about an altered image of women in society, it was envisaged that there would be a need to develop a supportive ethos and behaviours among other administrative staff and development officials. Hence the initial training design also emphasises orientation training to create a broad platform of support at block, district and state levels. Orientation training thus has two components: presentation of the programme, its approach and methodology, and development of a climate in which the programme can operate and become self-sustaining.

#### 4.2. Sakhis' and Sahayoginis' Training: How, when and BY Whom

4.2.1. The details of training of sakhis and sahayoginis to date are summarised in Appendix IV. Training records have been well maintained in all three States. The Mission views the training as a highly commendable effort, based on the initial training design, appropriate to the programme, adequate in content, scale, duration and frequency, and effective.

4.2.2. The Mission particularly notes that 'training' has been widely defined. It encompasses residential sessions for specific purposes such as selection workshops, as well as the kinds of training support given during the routine sahayogini and sakhi meetings by district level MS functionaries, and training by resource persons invited to help functionaries reflect on a particular problem they have encountered.

4.2.3. The number of volags and trainers involved has been large and diverse. The sequence followed and patterns emerging in each State are also diverse:

-In Uttar Pradesh, a women's training organisation, JAGORI has been the main coordinator, with emphasis given to gender sensitivitiy. Training of sakhis and sahayoginis has preceded the development of the formal MS structures at district and state levels. JAGORI has involved trainers with national reputations, such as Aruna Roy, Datta Sevla, and

the theatre group, Alarippu, trainers from other development programmes (such as the sathins and prachetas from the Women's Development Programme in Rajasthan), as well as trainers based in U.P. and the staff of volags involved in implementation.

- In Karnataka, the initial training was coordinated by SEARCH and later by the State and District Programme Coordinators, assisted by AIKYA, which is strongly based in South India as a support and training volag for self-managed community groups. Sakhi and sahayogini training has been initiated together with the establishment of strong district and state MS structures.

- In Gujarat, the State and District Programme Coordinators mobilised a wide range of training resources at district and state level from volags, training and research centres including the university at Baroda, and rural development projects, partly prior to the establishment of district and state MS structures which are still developing their strength. The core team of trainers which has emerged are based in the behavioural sciences, giving emphasis to the development of individual and collective identities, or in rural development work, with the exception of CHETNA, which is essentially a women's organisation focussing on training for health and nutrition.

4.2.4. In sum, the sequence, timing, duration, frequency, and content of training has reflected the specific combination of trainers and training resources mobilised in each district, in the context of the overall phasing of activities in each State.

4.2.5. Notwithstanding these differences, the core teams in each State have achieved impressive syntheses within the MS programme of their training styles and experiences. (Compare experiences described in documents nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, Appendix V). Trainers met by the Mission drew attention to the benefits they were deriving from working together - often for the first time - and sharing their training skills. The benefits are not just professional or technical: trainers too, are becoming empowered by their participation in the MS programme:

"We sense a kind of bonding in the way they huddled together when singing, in small inexplicable ways of relating to each other. This feeling of intimacy gets transferred to us. We give up all hopes of privacy and individual space, strongly compensated by a sense of security, warmth and acceptance."

Sakhi Training, Saharanpur (Vikalp's side), U.P., run by Action India and Community Health Project.

4.2.6. By bringing together like-minded men and women trainers from diverse backgrounds and organisations, the MS programme has stimulated the growth of gender sensitivity within the voluntary sector and assisted volags to reconsider the needs of female functionaries and village women within their existing activities. The MS programme has already begun to strengthen training resources within the broader development environment.

4.2.7. In each State, trainers are beginning to reach toward formalising their collective effort by holding regular district and state level meetings of the core trainers, and, in Karnataka and Gujarat, by actualising the envisaged District Resource Units. In U.P., the formation of DRUs waits upon the establishment of the DIUs.

4.2.8. Diversity has not created anarchy: strong commonalities are discernible throughout the training of sakhis and sahayoginis. (See Appendix, documents nos., for extended descriptions of training techniques, experiences and programmes). The common features are:

- based on experiential processes
- learning as fun and joy
- both trainers and trainees form the learning group
- discovery of collective strength and creativity through shared knowledge and decision-making
- group evaluation integral to the process
- demystification of training skills, knowledge, teacher-student relationships
- shared learning between men and women
- ongoing, iterative training support, interspersed with implementation
- development of links with, and network of training resources and materials development
- skills and literacy training offered only as it is demanded.

4.2.9. The training approach in fact has stimulated the demand among MS functionaries for specific training of various kinds, faster than the programme envisaged. The demands are being met by mobilising and developing the training resource network, including volunteer support from, for example, retired women obstetricians and gynaecologists, accountants, literate women at block and village levels.

An example is provided by the need which arose in Allapur village (Aurad Block, Bidar District, Darnataka), to deal with an outbreak of spirit possession, which upper caste families had induced to undermine the sangha. The sakhis and sahayoginis sought help from the DIU, which contacted psychologists

and anthropologists for advice. Training sessions were arranged with the sahayoginis and sakhis, to share information and experience and to work out strategies. (In the meantime, the sangha woman dealt with the problem, first by initiating a boycott of the tasks, such as collecting fuelwood, which they were supposed to perform for the upper caste families, and then by threatening to inform the marriage parties coming to seek in marriage the sons and daughters of the upper caste families that those families trafficked with spirits. The upper caste families cast out the spirits and the hysteria subsided).

4.2.10 Overall, the programme's training horizons are widening to encompass MS functionary training of the following kinds :

- programme skills e.g. documentation
- administrative skills e.g. running an office (DIUs, Gujarat, Karnataka)
- dealing with the village environment e.g. sexual violence (Rajkot, Saharanpur, Banda)
- women's issues e.g. reproductive tract infection and menstrual disorders (Bidar)
- literacy training e.g. so sakhis can maintain their own brief record of sangha decisions (Bidar)

#### 4.3. Training and Orientation of State and District Functionaries, Voluntary Agencies and Others

4.3.1. The MS programme was initially communicated to administrators, elected representatives, development cadres and volags by the National programme Coordinator in 1988. State level meetings were held with the Secretaries of Education, and concerned officials in Adult and Non-Formal Education, the Department of Women and Child Development, and women leaders in other departments.

4.3.2. A series of workshops were then held in all three States by the National Coordinator with all interested volags working in the blocks designated for the MS programme. The workshops in effect began the selection process by which volags took up active partnership with the MS programme. Subsequently, the State Coordinator, Gujarat, and District Coordinator (Rajkot, later State Resource Person, Gujarat), who were appointed toward the end of 1988, and the State Coordinator, Karnataka, who was appointed early in 1989, held numerous meetings with government functionaries at state, district and block levels, in order to present the programme. Presentation of the programme in U.P. has fallen to the National Coordinator and JAGORI, with subsequent support from volag partners.

4.3.3. However, no systematic programme of orientation has been developed for government functionaries in Education or Women and Child Development, of Block Development Officers, Collectors, (Magistrates), Police and other law and order functionaries, or elected block and district councillors. Nor has systematic effort been made to sensitise project directors of male-dominated volags, who, despite their commitment to the rural poor and their participation in the MS programme, are not so familiar with gender issues and women's perspectives and who are still struggling with the idea of collective management demanded by the MS approach. (See Appendix IV for record of orientation meetings held).

4.3.4. These two needs are now emerging as a priority for programme implementation and consolidation in the coming months, and is seen as such by MS functionaries and trainers. A number of meetings have been held within each State to discuss how, by whom, for whom and where such orientation training should occur. Two suggestions have been made, both of which the Mission recommends:

- the MS concept and approach should be part of the regular training programme of IAS and other officers, at Mussoorie, State staff Colleges and Institutes of Administration. Given frequent transfers, it is appropriate that training be incorporated in regular induction and in-service training programmes.
- special workshops be designed for volags, and for elected representatives at district and block levels; as required, taking into account their own experience and concerns. This is a comparatively more complex task requiring sensitivity and experience in handling such a challenge. The Mission finds that the training resource mobilised by the MS programme are capable of meeting the challenge.

#### 4.4. Questions Arising

4.4.1. The actual pattern of training, training approach and learning processes are those envisaged in the MS design, despite the involvement of many agencies. The MS process approach has encouraged consensus to emerge about what is most effective, the precise combination of resources needed and so on, without directive control or contractual obligation, immeasurably strengthening commitment to the programme and the internalisation of MS goals and approach.

4.4.2. The early successes of the training component is generating reflection with the programme on a number of questions for the future:

- should outside training resources continue to provide major training input or should MS functionaries and sakhis gradually play the larger role?
- if trainers are an outside resource, what should be their link, ethically and practically, with implementation in the field and follow-up support?
- when should outside trainers withdraw? or does the timing depend on the specific circumstances in which sahayoginis and others can cope alone?
- what is the appropriate balance between the focus on gender issues and sensitivity and others' idioms and values? What more needs to be done to raise gender issues within idioms which are not apparently gender sensitive?

4.4.3. The Mission notes the maturity with which MS functionaries and trainers are raising these issues within the discipline of collective management, and a process approach which allows the programme to grow and respond to experience. It accepts that there will be no single answer appropriate to all districts, to questions such as these. It finds that the DIU structure, and emerging DRGs and DRUs, are well-designed fora for the resolution of such questions.

## 5 - MANAGEMENT OF THE PROCESS

### 5.1. Making contact with village women

5.1.1. The MS programme is almost unique in entering the village with no inputs or services in the hand, no priorities for action, no requirement to 'recruit' women within a set period of time. A good deal of the sahayoginis' initial training is devoted to helping them understand, then, how they might enter a village and begin to make contact with poor women. The training stresses that there is, in fact, no set procedure which will work miracles in every case. It emphasises the need to be responsive, initially low key, and creative.

5.1.2. Sahayoginis have really proven their mettle in devising ways to deal with the situations they have encountered. Villages, or areas of villages, of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes people are selected in consultation with MS functionaries and voluntary agencies. Sahayoginis decide, where physical threats have been raised against them, to move around in pairs or small teams, in rotation through their designated areas. Others travel with male escorts provided by the supporting voluntary agency. They move simply, by rickshaw, bus or on foot, as village women do themselves. They begin to talk to whoever they meet on the way, just normal everyday conversation. They introduce themselves and the name of the programme. They say they just want to meet other women. In the face of indifference, the sahayoginis might form a circle under a tree, and sing and dance, continuing every few days or even daily until village women become attracted and want to join in.

5.1.3. Of course, they are always asked: what have you come to bring us? They are asked to do things for the village women. Here they respond by replicating the training process they themselves have been through, helping the women to talk about how they feel as women, what oppresses them. They introduce techniques such as role plays. They suggest developing songs or dances to express what the village women are feeling. They keep their promise to be at a certain place on a certain day. They talk with the village headman. Issues arise and collectively, the women decide what to do. Simple issues are taken up at first. For example, one woman drops out of the meeting because her mother-in-law or husband objects. The women might decide that a few of them,

usually respected older women, should go to her house, talk with her family about their meetings, and obtain their permission for her to return to the group. The group, in brief, begins to form as a group as the women's sense of personal empowerment emerges.

5.1.4. The Mission noted a difference in some cases between those groups initiated and supported by the MS programme and those which 'belonged' to ongoing voluntary agency programmes. The former had a liveliness, self confidence and air of control over their meeting which the latter lacked. In the Mission's view, the way in which sahayoginis are entering the village and making contact with village women is distinctive, empowering, and offers an important demonstration of a developmentally effective process.

## 5.2. Partnership

5.2.1. The idea of partnership was originally conceptualised as a process of bringing together government and voluntary agencies in a new relationship, in order to provide an enduring support structure for sahayoginis in the first instance and, in the longer term, sanghas, and to create a means for spreading the MS approach through existing development activities and programmes.

5.2.2. Operationalisation of the concept has proven more costly in time and energy than envisaged. In all three States, to greater or lesser degree, there have been a set of common factors which initially impeded the process of engaging potential partners in constructive and complementary relationships. Among these, the following appear to have been significant; the direct relationship between the Department of Education, Delhi, and volags in the pre-programme phase gave rise in some instances to unrealistic expectations of volag roles within the programme; a number of partners came to be selected, under pressures of various kinds, only partly on MS criteria; historical tensions in centre-state relations played a role in the development of frictions.

5.2.3. The range of volags with presence and credibility within districts in most cases is large and can be broadly characterised as religious, political, welfarist or developmental in orientation. The majority are male-dominated, often by a single charismatic leader, and whatever their ideology - hierarchically organised and managed. Many do not have any, or only a few, female functionaries in the field or in management, nor have specific women's programmes. A large number initially expressed interest, only to drop out as they realised that



The programme was aiming for something other than the accustomed grant-in-aid relationship which leaves the volag more or less free of government direction as long as the contracted work is carried out. They wanted use of government money but not to be used by what they interpreted as a government programme. Others did not believe that it would be possible to work within a government programme without compromising essential ideals, whilst yet others in turn were not acceptable to local administrators because of the volag's record of class struggle or other factors.

5.2.4. The heterogeneity of the voluntary sector thus led to major difficulties of choice and coordination. Moreover, apparently suitable and interested volag partners typically were not only mistrustful of the programme, as a government programme, but also of each other. None-the-less, a good number did share or accept the Mahila Samakhya's vision of women's empowerment and looked to the programme to initiate or vitalise their own work with women. A number also saw their participation as a necessary and timely step in the process of developing mature relationships within the voluntary sector as a whole and optimising their strength through sharing resources and experience. The pattern of participation which has emerged is set out in Chart IV.

5.2.5. The experience of the MS programme to date suggests that the following questions have been especially difficult to handle:

- who 'owns' the sahayoginis, the volag which is providing field support or the MS programme?
- who does the sahayogini turn to if the designated partner in fact has no field support in or near the village where she is working, or if the support turns out to be an unsympathetic male or an inexperienced youngster?
- what is the responsibility of the volag for sahayoginis who have been trained by MS trainers, and who return to the field with ideas that the volag does not share or properly understand?
- what is the effort that the MS programme should give to helping male-dominated volags to comprehend women's empowerment and the MS approach?

5.2.6. It appears to the Mission that MS functionaries are fully apprised of these difficulties and are dealing with them in sensible ways. Essentially, they are on the one hand engaging those concerned in collective analysis, learning, and development of solutions, and on the other hand, where necessary, facing up to hard decisions of disengagement from unprofitable relationships.

5.2.7. A review of the original assumptions in the light of the MS experience suggests the following general lessons:

- the attempt to engage volag partners has been fruitful, for the programme and for the volags themselves (see also chapter 8).
- the programme can work through multiple volags in a district, or two, one or - if there are alternative local government or other structures - none.
- the programme must guard against diverting too much of its energy to 'converting' male-dominated volags, and be prepared to disengage from those who prove in practice resistant to MS goals and processes.
- volag participation does offer the potential of scale expansion but is neither sufficient nor necessary for this.
- the programme has opened opportunities for government and the voluntary sector to work together in new ways, constructively and supportively.

5.2.8. In Gujarat and Karnataka, the relationship is being shaped and consolidated through the emergent District Resource Groups, with the MS functionaries playing a facilitative role. The DRGs aggregate the strengths and experience of disparate units which remain accountable to their own constituencies and goals. As such, the programme - rightly, in the Mission's view - has held back from constituting the DRGs as empowered committees, and is developing the DRGs as cohesive advisory bodies to which disputes and problems can be referred for collective review. The strategic goal is to build consensus and a shared sense of direction, not to enforce this through formal powers.

5.2.9. The Executive Committees of the MSS in Gujarat and Karnataka are also instrumental in building partnership between the State government, the programme and voluntary agencies. The State Coordinators are beginning to learn what it takes to run the Committees to strategic advantage, as supporters - and not controllers - of the programme. In Karnataka, for example, the Secretary of Education, as Chairman of the Committee, has been invaluable in advising the Committee what bureaucratic hazards to avoid as the programme develops its work practices and regulations. The Committee has resolved in the coming financial year to meet from time to time in the programme districts. In both cases, the presence of the NPC ensures continuity, liaison with the Department of Education in Delhi, and she is able to provide an overview of programme development as a whole. Local resource persons and members of the National Resource Group are also proving invaluable, if necessary acting as a counterweight to other members to ensure the programme keeps on course as a women's programme run for and by women.

C H A R T VI

PATTERN OF VOLAG PARTICIPATION

State	No. of Volag	1 Volag	2 Volags	Multiple Volags	Total
Uttar Pradesh	-	Varanasi	Saharanpur Banda	Tehri	16
Gujarat	-	-	-	Sabarkantha Rajkot Baroda	3 24
Karnataka:					
	Bidar 1	-	-	Mysore 4	11
	Bijapur 2	-	-		

- Notes: 1. intensive initial support from AIKYA, phasing to training support only
2. initial introduction through Zilla Parishad, phasing to closer links with multiple volags through membership of volag consultative group-DONI
3. interests and support not yet fully convergent
4. covering interests and mutuality

(Review Mission, Delhi, Feb. 1990)

### 5.3. Autonomy

5.3.1. The programme and its partners have struggled somewhat with the operationalisation of the concept of autonomy. Although the programme designers knew that women had to develop within the programme their own identity, as women had as a collectivity, expressed in terms of women "having their own space", no one was sure what concretely this might mean. The Mission has been struck by the various ways in which 'women's space' is being actualised. At the sangha level, the very fact of women meeting together, taking time out from their chores for themselves, clearly is a liberating and empowering event in itself.

5.3.2. The idea of village women symbolising their right to space and time by building their own Huts was always seen as an important component of the programme but the Mission has been impressed by the way in which village women, and their menfolk, are making this idea their own. Many more applications for land registration have been made than appears on Chart 10, Chapter 8. In Allapur (Aurad Taluk, Bidar District), the Mission was proudly shown a small plot of land donated by a poor village family to the sangha, and a scrap of paper, with a rough biro drawing of the site, stamped "approved" by the local land registry. The women were busy discussing the design of the hut and how to construct it.

5.3.3. Equally intriguing but perhaps more unusual, is the development in Karnataka (and partially also in Gujarat) of District and State offices as multi-purpose units, with small kitchens, sleeping space, and a large meeting/training space, as well as office room. Sahayoginis and sakhis are using these 'offices' as a safe shelter in time of (domestic or programme) trouble, and as a place where they can come together to reaffirm and celebrate their sense of belonging. Volags based outside district headquarters are finding the offices convenient places to meet others when they are in the district town, and for holding training sessions. Administrators find them suitable places to meet MS functionaries outside the formality of their own offices. The Mission regards the initiative as an important contribution to understanding of what 'women's space' means and recommends the development of such offices to the other two States.

5.3.4. The holding of melas - large scale festivals - organised and run by village women, with sahayoginis, DIUs and menfolk in supporting roles, are another way in which the programme is helping women to define and assert their dignity and identity. A recent mela in Mysore District

greatly impressed volag partners by bringing together around 1000 women: their own previous efforts to bring women together had never attracted more than a few hundreds.

5.3.5. The large residential training event held at Rishikesh in UP provides further examples. It brought together the entire UP training team, members of partner volags, and sahayoginis from all four districts. The NPC and the Secretary of State for Education, UP, spent a few days with them, too.

5.3.6. Another dimension of autonomy, however, has to do more directly with the concept and exercise of power. Learning not to be afraid of power whilst seeking to define and use it in a non-hierarchical, participative and collective way within the programme has taxed MS functionaries and sahayoginis, and been much discussed with resource persons, trainers, and members of the NRC. The Mission observed the way individuals treated each other and judges that so far the programme is managing to use and share power as the programme intended.

5.3.7. In its relations with other individuals and agencies, however, the programme is entering a power dynamic largely determined by others and here some differences are apparent between the States. The Mission observed that in Karnataka the MS has claimed its own autonomy as a distinctive programme and that this is respected. In the absence of MS structures in UP, the question of programme autonomy has been skilfully mediated by JAGORI and has yet to be confronted. The effort of dealing with volags in the particular context of Gujarat has left the MS programme there less energy for defining and asserting its autonomy as such, although its autonomy appears to be growing as the District functionaries find their feet and the State Programme Coordinator is able to turn her attention from the problems of the initial phase.

5.3.8. Finding the balance between partnership and autonomy has been important to the practise of collective management. In all three States, the Mission participated in meetings which brought MS functionaries and sahayoginis together with trainers, volags, members of state and local government, education officers and resource persons. The meetings were substantive and effective. An example from Ahmedabad is described in Appendix VI.

#### 5.4. Networking

5.4.1. In essence, what has been outlined above encapsulates networking, a concept that has been effectively operationalised by the MS programme. The importance of networking can be summarised as follows :

- the multiple, often overlapping networks created by the programme are a necessary part of the structural framework which will permit expansion.
- they have already proven their utility, both as a means for handling problems within the programme (for example, the Gujarat programme has benefitted in Sabarkantha from the NRG's support), and as a means of linking women's concerns within the programme to wider struggles of empowerment (for example, MS village women joined a large scale, and partially successful, labour wages demonstration in Saharanpur, UP).
- they are the route through which the programme searches for resource persons/resource agencies which might assist with particular social, technical or commercial problems and information needs raised by village women (for example, Aruna Roy from Rajasthan has been asked to assist the Gujarat programme in developing a strategy for addressing problems of sexual violence).
- they are a non-bureaucratic channel for identifying and supporting like-minded individuals within local administrations and development bureaucracies. In effect, the MS programme can invert the normal intervention model of bringing together supply side (government) and demand side (villagers). As some development officials are beginning to realise, the MS programme network can deliver 'beneficiaries' to meet bureaucrats' demand that development resources are used effectively and efficiently.

### 5.5. Accountability

5.5.1. In one sense, the MS programme entertains an internal contradiction. Money and resources flow from the centre, while programme content is developed from below. The tension is mediated by the MS process which continuously affirms those who control the financial and policy powers responsible to the collectivity of village women.

5.5.2. The programme is beginning to clarify for itself sets of appropriate indicators to check that accountability to village women is being maintained. Three appropriate indicators are :

- are the issues taken up those of the sangha women?
- do sangha women feel they own the programme ?
- does the hierarchy publicly affirm their accountability to the sangha women?

5.5.3. The Mission judges that in general the answer to all three questions is positive. Details of issues and activities are given and analysed in chapter 8. The Mission

heard sangha women many times referring to "hamara Mahila Samakhya" (Hindi - our MS). They, and the sahayoginis, were eager to know how the programme was doing in other blocks, districts and states ; they felt part of a growing movement. Within the programme itself, all those met by the Mission, including men at the centre, certainly feel strongly their responsibility to village women.

5.5.4. The sense of accountability is weakest among district and state administrators and development officials. Many examples were provided of insensitive or ineffective effort which took no account of villagers' own knowledge, views and preferences. For example, in Mañikpur, Banda, low cost houses had been provided but villagers were not informed about, nor participated in, design, siting, and construction. The Mission recommends that more effort now be made to orientate such persons.

5.5.5. Another way of viewing accountability is in terms of three levels :

- the intrinsic accountability of the sangha to its own members and to the village
- the accountability of the programme to the demand generated by the sangha
- the accountability of the government to the needs of village women.

5.5.6. Appropriate indicators to check accountability at these three levels would be :

- ultimately, when the programme in its present form is no longer needed. There are early signs that the programme is moving in the right direction. For example, some sakhis are saying that they no longer need the sahayoginis to be present at all sangha meetings; menfolk contributing food, and doing the cooking and serving, when women are busy with a training session or a mela; a village assigning land for a Hut; sangha women taking up direct contact with ration card officials or pension authorities.

- indicators here would include, for example : requests for training satisfied; linkage to other services and inputs accomplished; resource flow sustained; volag activities and programme re-oriented; development officials and other authorities re-oriented. Examples of programme responsiveness are given in chapter 8.

- two types of indicator are important here : whether the MS approach and goals are reflected in policy and, the influence of the MS programme on other government programmes. Evidence of both these effects is given in chapter 8.

## 6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### 6.1. Nature of Monitoring and Evaluation in the Mahila Samakhya Programme

6.1.1. The MS programme has had to re-examine conventional monitoring and evaluation (M&E) norms in order to avoid becoming driven by targets and numbers. It has defined M&E information as that which is worth knowing and communicating primarily as a support to action, and secondly, for sharing a comprehensive perspective of progress and thirdly, for pinpointing information needed to achieve the former two M&E goals. Information process has to use modes of codification (creating symbols) and of communication (decoding) which capture both quantitative and qualitative aspects in a manageable form. It must flow laterally and vertically, in such a way that information from any one part may diffuse throughout the programme.

6.1.2. M&E thus in intention is a continuous activity built into the operational strategy of the programme, participative in nature, and integrated into planning and decision-making at all levels. The Mission itself observed the degree to which open and constructive M&E has become integral to the functioning of the programme: trainees and trainers evaluation training at midpoint and endpoint of training sessions; sangha women monitored their own decisions and follow-up action, and evaluated the support provided by the sahayoginis; village women, the sahayoginis and District MS functionaries evaluated the work of the Review Mission... (In Sabarkantha, Banda and Bidar, village women challenged the Mission to explain who they were why they had come to the village).

6.1.3. The importance of M&E has been recognised by the MS programme as a learning and management tool for programme staff and as providing "on-the-job" training for the Mahila Sangha women themselves. After all, the Mahila Sanghas should be able to carry on with their work as support by the Programme is gradually reduced and/or phased out.

### 6.2. Written and Operational Information Flows within the Programme

6.2.1. Two flows of information within the programme can be identified: vertical flows (both up and down the system) of routine, periodical written reports, and lateral flows facilitated by overlapping participation in meetings.

6.2.2. Written reports flowing down the system consist largely of financial information and aggregated reports from all three States, sent by the National Programme Coordinator to the State



Coordinators and MSS, with occasional ad hoc reports on specific topics of interest shared by the National Resource Group with whoever they think would benefit from these. At the village level, sahayoginis bring written information materials, such as newspapers, to share with sangha members.

6.2.3. Written reports flowing up the system include:

- in an increasing number of cases, sangha diaries recording decisions taken and follow up action, shared with sahayoginis
- sahayoginis' monthly reports, often written in the form of a letter to the District Coordinator, recording the highlights of the previous month (problems, activities, needs).
- District Coordinators' quarterly reports to the State Programme Office, recording activities (under the following types of heading: administration, training, sangha, literacy, support, vocational - see Chart: Activities, Bidar DIU)
- State Programme Coordinators' half-yearly reports to the MSS Executive Committee, and progress reports to the National Resource Group and National Programme Coordinator. (In the case of UP, reporting has been coordinated at district and state level by JAGORI).

6.2.4. The reports at each level are richly detailed and of a good level of analysis. However, the lack of standard formats or checklists for recording routine numerical data was noted by the Mission, which recommends that State programme Coordinators jointly review their experience to date to determine the minimum quantitative information required for planning and decision - record physical progress.

6.2.5. The second flow is a more horizontally-oriented exchange of information, mainly of an operational nature, among overlapping memberships of MS meetings at different levels (see Chart VII). The redundancy is a vital component of the MS's approach to M&E. It is founded on the judgement that there should be the shortest practicable distance between access to information, M&E, planning and decision-making. Overlapping membership creates information flows which can be characterised as: face to face, allowing discussion of interpretation and meaning; interactive among people of different status, organisational affiliation and background; iterative; and timely.

6.2.6. Among the most important of such meetings are:

- block level, monthly meetings of sahayoginis. These serve the additional purpose of building team strength and solidarity, removing feelings of isolation, providing peer group guidance about problems encountered in village work
- meetings of District Resource Group (Gujarat and Karnataka) meetings (see Chart VIII, Information Flows, Mysore), becoming formalised in District Resource Units
- meetings of MSS Executive Committees (Gujarat and Karnataka)
- meetings of NRG (informal until January 1990)

6.2.7. There are a number of additional meetings, as members of existing action councils (e.g. DONI-Bijapur, Tribal Joint Action Council, Mysore), which incorporate the MS programme into existing development networks and information flows among volags and local administrations (see also chapter 4.3. for elaboration of information-sharing with agencies external to the MS programme).

6.2.8. Finally, District MS functionaries within and across States, and State Programme Coordinators/JAGORI across States, are experiencing the need to interact as the programme grows and there is accumulating experience to share, monitor and evaluate. The first collective review meeting among District and State MS functionaries, national resource persons and trainers, took place in Delhi on 2.2.90, attended by the Mission.

### 6.3. Modes

6.3.1. There is a wealth of different communication modes being used within the MS programme. At the village level, sangha women are expressing and analysing their situation through dance, role play and song. The Mission witnessed moving role plays in Sabarkantha and Bidar, about wife-beating, exploitation by traders, and alcoholism. In Banda, the sahayogini had helped women in Sahrampur, Manikpur Block, to paint on the whitewashed walls of their houses the slogans they had developed during their sangha meetings and sakhi training: e.g. "When patha women rise, they shall chase the problems away". "Boys and girls are equal: they deserve the same education". At a sakhi meeting in Manikpur (8.2.90) the women demanded in song: "you should hear the story of the Patha, the voice of Kol women, For centuries we have been made fools of.. a 100 tales of exploitation have been used as news material... but we remain hungry, naked, bonded.. we work more than men but we are paid less... we are branded by violence... who is going to deliver justice.... hear the story of the Patha in the voice of Kols: we are not going to take this foolishness any more.... go and tell the world: the dignity of women shall increase, their power shall be created, organisations will arise in every village, now it is our turn, we speak, the voice of Kol women."

6.3.2. Sahayoginis are proving inventive in bringing information from and about the outside world into the village, stimulating enthusiasm to become literate among sangha women. In Sabarkantha and Banda, sangha women are talking of learning how to write down their own songs, especially the ones they have created to express the new joy and strength they have developed through the programme. Newspapers, booklets, application forms, minutes of mandal and zilla parishad meetings, posters, and songsheets were noted by the Mission. The materials are often tied to action. For example, in Bijapur, the mandal parishad would not tell the sangha what the development budget allocation was but the sahayogini was able to find this information in the local

C H A R T VIII  
INFORMATION FLOWS

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF SAHAYOGINI TRAINING, MYSORE

1. Plan and Prepare
  - Information Required: What sahayoginis need, how they are feeling, what the situation is in their village(s)
  - Gathered by: field visits by trainer and continuous personal interaction; liaison with District Coordinator/ Resource Persons
  - Mobilising Resources: accessing key informants/documents for specific information on village problems (e.g. land registration for sangha Huts); identifying additional training resource persons; organising dates, duration, venue.
2. SET OBJECTIVES
  - Developed within training session
3. REPORT, MONITOR, EVALUATE
  - Within training session, each participant takes daily turns to record what happens, for group evaluation the following day
  - Trainees consolidate a final report at end of the session
  - Report is sent to all sahayoginis and District Coordinator
4. SHARE AND REVIEW TRAINING EXPERIENCE
  - State level workshop to prepare how to facilitate training MELA
  - MELA(festival) held 2-7 March, 1990 for sahayoginis and trainers from all 3 districts in Karnataka

(interview with Trainer, Review Mission, State Programme Office, Bangalore, 15.2.90)

newspaper. In Bidar, the sahayoginis are beginning to collect, abstract, cyclostyle, and carry back in the form of a newsletter, (trs.: Your Talk, My Talk), information and news from the sanghas.

6.3.3. At the block level, MS functionaries are slowly learning how to tap into news reporting, contacting journalists who regularly report on the actions/non-actions of mandal and zilla parishads, and district magistrates (Collectors). Where decentralisation permits, they are reaching out to the nominated women members of mandal and zilla parishads, to share information. At the individual level, trainers/volags, and MS functionaries are contacting specialist sources of information, for example about dairying, women's health, handpump maintenance, either bringing the specialists directly into contact with sakhis/sanghas, or bringing back to the sanghas information on training.

#### 6.4. Question Arising

6.4.1. The evolving M&E process appears to the Mission to be appropriate and effective but a number of questions arise for the future:

- link to accountability. There is an emerging need to define explicit indicators, and to ensure that these are reflected in written and operational information flows, which monitor continuing accountability of the programme to sangha women. For example, sanghas could begin to record, with a tick against a simple checklist, the things which their sahayogini had promised to do, to affirm that the sahayogini is responsible to the sangha. (see also 5.5.5. - 5.5.6.)
- revisability. Indicators and phasing of physical progress need to be periodically revised in line with decisions made and programme developments in each district/state.
- SITARA. No State has given priority to identifying and using a SITARA and no State in fact has appointed one. The Mission has reviewed with MS functionaries at every level the original assumptions concerning the value of a SITARA. These were: it would provide a distanced perspective, facilitate ongoing evaluation, act as a nodal agency for documentation, provide research input, present data in order to share programme experience nationally and internationally, provide a link between the broader women's movement and the knowledge acquired by the programme.

6.4.2. The experience gained in operationalising the MS programme strongly suggests, however, that in a process approach, knowledge and decision-making has to come as close as is practicable: information has to be readily available and accessible to where the action is. The effective locus of planning and decision-making is encompassed by the sangha and the district, not the state. Formal links with yet another agency would be additionally burdensome, given the multiple relations already developing. State-level agencies outside the control of the programme are

potentially wasteful and resource-consuming.

6.4.3. The Mission recommends three, complementary, options for accomplishing SITARA functions without handing over the task to an external agency:

- i. appointing a resource person for research/documentation to the DIUs, as provided in the original design of the programme
- ii. increasing the number of resource persons/consultants in the State programme office, to 3 in Karnataka and Gujarat, and 4 in UP (see also chapter 3.4.)
- iii. mobilising a floating panel of external resource persons at state and district levels to undertake periodic reviews, under the direction of District and State Programme Coordinators.

#### 6.5. Role of Review Missions

6.5.1. A review of a process means that those undertaking the review become part of the process (see Appendix VII). As such an external review can be supportive or disruptive. Inspectorial attitudes, and an exclusive reservation of the right to judge success or failure are bound to be disruptive and thus to contribute to failure. An open attitude and participation in collective reflection and analysis, on the other hand, are experienced as supportive contributions to the process.

6.5.2. In process reviews, assessment of a programme's capacity over time iteratively to identify, analyse, decide and implement within a dynamic context, in ways which consistently favour programme goals, is of exceptional importance. Noting how achievements have been made is as significant as recording what has been achieved, i.e. success is to be measured as much in terms of whether decisions and activities promote programme goals as in terms of physical progress. Adaptation, diversity, flexibility, responsiveness, rather than a drive to achieve present targets, are the hallmark of management competence and programme effectiveness.

6.5.3. The above points imply that the choice of individuals to conduct periodic Indo-Dutch reviews, the missions's programme, and the specification of the terms of reference, are critical to the success of the review. The present Mission judges that all aspects were adequately supportive of the process in the present case but considers that, as the programme expands and becomes more complex, special effort must go into the planning and preparation of the joint reviews. It recommends that as far as possible, there be some continuity in the composition of the Mission team, Indian members be identified sufficiently ahead of time to participate in a short planning workshop with the Dutch Embassy and the Department of Education, and that State and District MS functionaries consider carefully how most usefully they can incorporate the Mission's review and support' mandate into their activities.

## 7. FINANCE

### 7.1. Disbursements and Flow of Funds

7.1.1. The disbursement procedures followed are those set out in the programme document. They have proven adequate, flexible and responsive.

7.1.2. The Department of Education releases funds to the autonomous Mahila Samakhya Societies (MSS) in Gujarat and Karnataka. The MSS releases funds to the programme accounts in the districts. Disbursements to voluntary agencies have been made as required. Expenditures at the national level are paid directly by the Department of Education.

7.1.3. After some delay, 60% of the approved annual budget has been released for FY 1989-90 to the MSS. The remaining amount will be released on utilisation of 75% of the first instalment. The MSS in Gujarat and Karnataka have released funds to the DIUs as required, in a flexible way, in response to the emerging pattern, timing and volume of need. In UP, disbursement has been made directly by the National Coordinator/Deptt. of Education to volags under the approval of the UP Secretary of Education, and to JAGORI directly (see Appendix VIII for disbursement details).

### 7.2. Expenditures

7.2.1. The original 5 year programme budget apportioned expenditure equally across the years, in the absence of guidelines for the actual rate of expenditure which could be anticipated. Experience suggests that initiation of the process and establishment of structures taken longer than expected but thereafter, activities pick up rather fast.

7.2.2. The careful selection of MS functionaries and the participation of volags in the establishment of the organizational structure, have required more time than expected, village level activities and the establishment of DRUs, Mahila Shiksha Kendras, NFE Centres (or Shiksha Karmi schools), creches, and SITARAs has barely commenced. Although the sequence of implementation has differed among the States, experience with the phasing of expenditures is converging. The experience suggests that, in all three States, the programme is on the brink of a rapid expansion in the rate and scale of expenditures on activities.

7.2.3. The table below shows that, owing to the slow pace of implementation, only one third of the original first year budget has been expended.

TABLE III: EXPENDITURE

	1 Budgeted Disbursement (Rs. in lakhs)	2 Expected Expenditures*
Karnataka	110.65	35
Gujarat	110.65	35
UP	51.49	50
Outside projects	8.00	8
National office	12.00	12
Total	292.79	140
2 as percentage of 1	-	47.8%
percentage of Budget	62%	30.0%

\*Final expenditure data not yet available: FY ends at 31.3.90.

7.2.4. The Mission was not in a position to analyse in detail actual management and activity expenditures overall, mainly because of delays in presenting the Gujarat data. It notes that the need to adopt phased budgeting has been recognised and will be applied in the next FY year budget projections. Training support will be given to the State and District offices to develop their budgeting skills.

7.2.5. The Mission notes that the rate, value and pattern of expenditure in the coming months is likely to deviate from the original budget without, however, changing the overall total for the year. In particular, the following changes seem likely:

- expenditures on libraries, documentation, equipment like videos, and secretarial support at district and state levels are likely to increase over budget
- expenditures on creches (100% coverage requested in some districts e.g. Tehri Garwal), NFE/Shiksha Karmi centres, Mahila Shiksha Kendra, DRUs, sangha huts and SITARA functions are likely to pick up speed
- in some states, block-wise or district-wise expansion might begin toward the end of the next financial year.

### 7.3. Accounting

7.3.1. The MS offices at State and district levels in Karnataka have adopted a system of commercial accounting and not the cash flow system used by the government. The main difference and advantage of the commercial system is that the real costs (including capital costs) of the programme can be calculated and thus better decisions can be made. However, it should be noted that one consequence of adopting a different accounting system is that the cost-effectiveness of the programme cannot be compared easily with other government programmes.

7.3.2. Rules and regulations have been laid down in accounting manuals, and accounting staff at district and state offices have been trained in their use. All queries are referred to the State Programme Coordinator. The delegation of financial powers like (re)appropriation of funds, fungibility, carry-over, has been further spelt out in procedures which give ample flexibility and enable the programme to remain responsive to emerging needs despite the top down flow of funds to the MSS.

7.3.3. The District offices report receipts and payments monthly, for reconciliation by the State office. The State offices report quarterly to the National office according to approved budgets: budget overruns have to be sanctioned in advance. The National Office reports quarterly to the Ministry of Finance and every 6 months to the Dutch Embassy.

7.3.4. This flow of Statements of Accounts has become a routine in Karnataka but not yet in Gujarat, where delays have occurred, partly due to the timing of State elections, and has not yet commenced in UP. UP accounts are presented directly to the National Office. The Mission understands that accumulated Statements of Account are in preparation and will be presented by the start of the new financial year to the Ministry of Finance and the Dutch Embassy.

### 7.4. Claims

7.4.1. The financial agreement between GOI and GON provided for two main components:

1. Pre-financing arrangement of DFI. 2m as a revolving fund accounted for at the end of the programme, and
2. Six monthly remittances of funds based on claims presented to the Ministry of Finance (Department of Economic Affairs) and to the GON by the Department of Education.

Claims are defined as the amounts remitted to voluntary organisations and Mahila Samakhya Societies according to approved budgets.

7.4.2. The initial claim from the Department of Education has been delayed because of procedural delay in the exchange of the side letters as well as misunderstanding about claim procedures



and routing. The Mission understands that claims will be brought forward now by the Department of Education to the Ministry of Finance, accompanied by quarterly Statements of Account, including agreed expenditures which pre-dated the delayed exchange of side letters. The GON will, on receipt of the claims and statements of Accounts, reimburse the claims on a 6 monthly basis.

### 7.5. Budgeting

7.5.1. Financial planning is considered to be part and parcel of MS operations, carried out at each level as an integral part of continuous planning-evaluation-revision-planning cycle. Each level plans according to its own responsibilities, time horizon, monitoring, and sequencing of activities. The translation of these various planning exercises into budgetary terms (budgeting) forms the annual collective planning cycle, starting from village level up to District and State levels; the process is developing well but the timing is not yet perfected.

7.5.2. Bottom-up financial planning becomes reality as the sanghas gather strength; initial programme planning could be tentative only (see 7.2.). For the second year budget, some preliminary consultations have been held at each level, incorporating emerging sangha plans, as well as between the different levels, but the timing is still late. In order to start the new FY with approved MSS budgets, the Mission recommends that in future, the planning cycle be initiated at least three months before the end of the FY year. The Mission also recommends short training workshops for State and District staff in the field of (financial) planning techniques and procedures within a bottom-up planning approach.

### 7.6. Projections FY 1990-1991

7.6.1. Notwithstanding the fact that only approx. 30% of the budget has been spent in the first year, the physical progress has been commendable:

TABLE:IV : PHYSICAL PROGRESS

	<u>Progress to Jan. '90</u>	<u>Plan Year 1</u>
Villages covered	930	1000
Sahayoginis trained	127	100
Sakhis trained	635	2000

7.6.2. In Appendix VIII, projections have been made for 1990-91 taking into account the adjusted phasing, and planned expansion into 10 clusters of 100 villages. The projections exclude expansion through volags who take up projects along the lines of the Mahila Samakhya in Districts not covered by the Indo-Dutch agreement. The projections (see summary below) indicate that the

expected expenditure for the FY 1990-1991 will not exceed the budget for the second year forecast in the Appraisal Report.

TABLE V: PROJECTION

	Projection Review Mission (Rs. in lakhs)	Forecast Appraisal Mission
Management Costs	89.40	87.70
Activity Costs	665.30	755.20
Total	754.70	842.90

7.6.3. The GOI plans to take the programme into the 8th Five Year Plan. The Department of Education is considering an expanded scale of operations within the 8th Plan period. A recommendation from the NRG to expand the MS programme into additional States during FY 1990-91 would increase management costs through FY 1990-91 but, given the time lags in initiating activities, would not affect activity costs significantly.

## 8. SOCIAL RESPONSE

### 8.1. The Heart of the Matter

8.1.1. The key to the programme's success lies in the inner response of village women and *sahayoginis*. The Mission has seen documented evidence and in person that the women themselves perceive a change, a change in themselves that is profound, welcome and empowering.

- *Sakhis* are saying:

"A change has come into our life. Formerly we used to cry at each small thing, but now we feel relaxed" (UP progress Report, 25)".

"People used to pity me. I am trying to change all that. If anyone refers to me as poor Maya, I immediately protest. I am not associated with this work under any compulsion. I enjoy working with my village sisters" (*ibid.*, 25).

- *Sahayoginis* are saying:

"After the training, I really felt the change in myself. My caste fear has disappeared, I feel very close to everyone here" (*Sahayogini* working in Saharanpur, at meeting, Literacy House, Lucknow, 10.2.90)

"Even if *Samakhya* programme is discontinued we, the *Mahila sangha*, have decided to go ahead with it! How can we allow this entire awareness and confidence, after so much effort, go to waste? Village women will never pardon me if I left them half way" (*Rajkot District Progress Report*, 83).

8.1.2. The Mission observed many instances of women taking what, in their context, are bold personal steps, witness to their growing sense of dignity, self-confidence and self-worth. In *Sabarkantha*, the *sangha* women stood up, pushed back their head covering, and spoke out their husbands' names in public. In *Banda*, *Kol* tribal women spoke directly to the Assistant Divisional Magistrate. *Sahayoginis* have confronted husbands and mothers-in-law who wished to prevent them from working for the programme. They have persuaded their immediate circle that going, for example, into a settlement of another caste or tribe brings no shame, no disastrous consequences.

## 8.2. Types of Activities Undertaken by the Sangha

8.2.1. Chart IX outlines the main categories of activity undertaken by sangha women. Out of many examples, the following details convey a flavour of what is happening: Rajkot: two-day shibirs (trainings) requested by village women for January and February included: women's rights and legal awareness (provided by volunteer women lawyers and puppeteers); nursery raising and the environment (provided by Centre for Environment Education); women's health (provided by CHETNA). Those already conducted include: sanitation, construction of smokeless stoves, tree planting; water conservation.

Baroda: contact taken with Baroda dairy cooperative; visit made to the milk processing factory; numeracy training begun so village women forming new milk coops can keep their own accounts accurately.

Sabarkantha: visit made to Sarpanch to demand water facility; interested women enrolled for poultry training; attendance of anganwadi and primary school teacher monitored; picketing undertaken against drinking and wife beating; selected women attended animal husbandry training camp; poorest women accompanied to Gram Sevaka and enrolled for food ration. (See also Appendix IV for details of training of sangha members in each State).

## 8.3. Response of Village Men and Husbands

8.3.1. As might be expected, there has been both hostility and support. In some villages, landlords and other powerful interests have threatened sangha women and sahayoginis with rape and violence, spread rumours about their immodesty in moving around unaccompanied, accused them of being female dacoits. Husbands, too, have sometimes refused to let their wives attend meetings, or to work as a sahayogini.

8.3.2. So far, the MS functionaries and volag partners, sangha women and sahayoginis, have managed to overcome or moderate such threats and opposition. The MS network has been there when needed. Among their allies often have been supportive husbands and other village men who, once properly briefed, have become steadfast helpers, because they see the benefit for themselves and the family as a whole. They welcome the information, on health, on getting access to the ration, on where to go to get training on handpump maintenance, and so on, that the women are making accessible. They even see that the empowerment of their womenfolk helps to empower them, too, and have been glad to see sangha women joining in wage struggles, or confronting a corrupt or lazy official. In some cases, they have asked to attend sangha meetings, or sakhi and sahayogini training,

## C H A R T IX

### TYPES OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY SANGHAS

1. Creating space and time for personal growth and development of awareness, sense of self worth etc.
2. Developing access to officials and services
3. Becoming knowledgeable in order to make informed choices, including legal rights and entitlements.
4. Making officials and services accountable to Sanghas (e.g. ensuring Balwadi worker turns up, rations are correctly weighed)
5. Undertaking struggles (e.g. over wages)
6. Counteracting social evils (e.g. alcoholism, wife beating, spirit possession).

(Review Mission, Feb. 1990)

and have become convinced that the programme is honest and worthwhile.

#### 8.4. Literacy, Numeracy and Schooling

8.4.1. The speed and enthusiasm with which village women, and sahayoginis in some cases, have demanded literacy, numeracy and schooling, has taken the programme by surprise. Although the numbers of centres operating under the programme are much less than budgeted (see Chart X), these numbers alone do not capture the many informal educational activities already taking place nor the plans afoot for more formal classes.

8.4.2. For example, in Sabarkantha and Bidar the Mission encountered cases where sahayoginis had helped sanghas to identify partly educated (e.g. 10th grade fail) women volunteers to provide literacy training and many cases where sanghas were organising to ensure that AE teachers turned up and held classes as promised. Sahayoginis in Tehri Garhwal have received literacy training so that they themselves can teach sakhis. In Bidar, illiterate sahayoginis have been trained over six months in literacy/numeracy to enable them to function effectively. Also in Bidar, a series of literacy shibirs for 30 village women have been held, empowering sangha members to impart their training to other village women in the intervening periods. The 30 women are now attending weekly literacy classes and, in one village, an NFE centre for girls has been opened. In 62 villages in Bidar, women organised classes by volunteer literates, supported by sahayoginis and resource material supplied by the State resource centre for education in Mysore.

8.4.3. One interesting result of sahayogini literacy training in Bidar was the identification of '1000 key words' needed for documentation and reporting. Other innovative learning/teaching techniques are emerging in the MS programme. In Gujarat, for example, the Mission heard of literacy training based on identification by sangha women of a key concept, familiarisation with the concept in writing, splitting of the word into its component syllables and letters, then playing with these to assemble new words. In U.P., the demand for NFE classes has come up strongly and the programme is considering supporting 100% coverage (rather than the 25% presently indicated). Other instances abound in all three States of sahayoginis using functional approaches, based on felt needs to write applications (e.g. for ration cards, pensions, enrolment in skills training) or to register land for sangha huts. Or, building on the enthusiasm for creating new songs about the changes in their

C H A R T X

PROGRESS: ACTIVITIES

	Actual to Jan.1,1990	1st year budget to Mar.31,1990
No. Huts	1	1000
No.NFE Centres	3 (+25)	1000
No. AE Centres	30	600
No. Mahila Shiksha Kendras	0	100
No. Child care centres	3	250

(Review Mission/MSS Progress  
Reports, Jan-Feb.,1990)

lives, have used these to encourage village women to learn how to write these down, and share them with others.

8.4.4. In brief, the demand arises as and when, and in the form, that sangha women themselves identify. As such, they experience the opportunity as empowerment. And when men and other village women see women landless labourers or tribals signing their names, reading a form, they are amazed and impressed that such women can learn these skills. Social attitudes begin to change.

### 8.5. Input-Output Assessment

8.5.1. The Mission has attempted a rough input-output assessment at the village level (Chart XI). The Mission recommends further analyses along similar lines as a measure of the cost-effectiveness of the Programme. In the Mission's view, the results are impressive and concludes the investment is cost-effective.

### 8.6. Response of Block-level Administration and Development Services

8.6.1. The programme has secured the support of like-minded individuals but the support is not yet institutionalised. A number are beginning to value the programme for its potential to deliver 'beneficiaries'.

8.6.2. However, it is the Mission's impression that few are spontaneously responsive. MS functionaries are developing strategies for leveraging the response and ensuring that resources, services and inputs become more timely and appropriate. These include: involving the DRG in dialogue with Block Development Officers; contacting women nominees on mandal and zilla parishads; providing orientation for officials and police and including them in village visits; supporting sangha women in the development of monitoring strategies to check that correct rations are given, anganwadis and balwadis do their job, teachers turn up on time etc.

8.6.3. The Mission heard of no cases of an absolute, general lack of services or resource availability, frustrating sangha women's hopes and expectations. There are certainly situations in which the problems perceived as most limiting and urgent by sangha women cannot readily be addressed. None the less, village women are so eager to learn more, try out small steps, that the MS programme so far has met little permanent difficulty in identifying the resources to which the sangha women could turn for assistance.



CHART XI

DIRECT INPUT OUTPUT, NAGAMPALLI VILLAGE, AURAD TALUK  
BIDAR DISTRICT, KARNATAKA, 13.2.90

(over 12 months)  
to February 1990

INPUT BY MAHILA SAMAKHYA

Direct Financial Input

1 X Sahayogini X 12 X 1000 Rs/months : Total 12000 Rs.  
with active sanghas in 7 villages,  
and exploring contact in 3 : 12000/7 = 1714 Rs. per village

Training

3 X 5-day Sahayogini  
3 X 2-day Sahayakis

OUTPUT (1 village)

1 X Sangha X 40 women approx.

Who have organised:-

1 X Creche: each women pays Rs.2/child/month to  
compensate 2 women workers for labour wages  
foregone. Older daughters who formerly looked  
after younger children are released for NFE  
classes (from Oct. 89)

1 X Literacy classes: + 40 women, who meet daily.  
Sahayogini attended weekly classes with other Sahayoginis  
given by a volunteer literate women in a nearby village.  
She herself became literate this way, with support to  
Sahayogini's literacy by MS at monthly meetings, and  
now writes her monthly reports. The Sahayogini passes  
on what she knows at her weekly meeting with the  
Sangha (from Sept.89)

1X acquisition and registration of land for hut in  
the name of the Sangha.

Note 1. Payment of remuneration to Sahayakis of 400 day/month  
has not yet commenced. Sangha members decided the  
payment should be made to the group as a collective  
fund. They are still discussing how to organise this.

Note 2. the sahayogini is working with similar results in 7  
other villages, and has begun to make contacts in 3  
other villages. She herself lives in a village in the  
area.

Note 3. The Sangha is made up of landless women from S.C.,  
Muslim and Christian communities.

(Review Mission, Bidar, Feb.1990)

### 8.7. Response of District and State-level Officials and Administration

8.7.1. Here the Mission judges the programme needs to make more effort. District and State officials and administrators are further from field reality, more tightly bound by bureaucratic agendas, face a range of claims on their sympathy and time, and are often distanced by caste and class values from appreciation of programme goals. A few individuals are supportive, understanding, and committed; many others are uninformed, suspicious, or decisive, even within educational divisions.

### 8.8. Spill-over Effects and Linkages

8.8.1. Spill-over effects are already visible within the programmes of volags participating in the programme. AIKYA, for example, in Karnataka, brought its village workers to meet and learn from the sakhis and sahayoginis in Bidar. Partner volags in Mysore, one in Sabarkantha, and DISHA/SAHARANPUR told the Mission that their participation in the MS programme had strengthened their ability to work with village women. In Banda, the Ms programme has become a sizeable part of the Sansthan's programme.

8.2.2. It seems to be not merely a question of 'work with women' becoming a larger part of volag programmes. Involvement with the MS programme is perceived as changing attitudes and creating a greater readiness to take women's issues seriously.

8.8.3. Within the Department of Education, the programme has already prompted the adoption of the MS approach and process as a national guideline. Assistance is being offered to voluntary agencies, throughout India, which wish to take up activities based on the MS approach and process. Large scale new programmes being developed in Bihar (one sixth of the population of India) and Rajasthan incorporate many of the features of the MS programme.

8.8.4. The Mission met the Secretaries of Education in all three States and the Minister of Education in Uttar Pradesh. They were well-informed, supportive, and constructive in their comment. Some of the officials encountered by the Mission, however, had limited comprehension of the programme and had received none of the programme documents. There is a need for basic documents, or summaries, to be translated into the common languages of each State and for orientation effort among key Department of Education officials.

8.8.5. The Mission also met members of the Department of Women and Child Development and Department of Rural Development. Although familiarity with the programme appeared in some cases rather limited, the attitude was generally supportive, with evidence of a desire to become more closely acquainted with the programme on the ground. The Mission suggests the NRG devote attention to this point. At the field level, relationships were being forged as and when sangha women identified a need for the services provided through these two departments.

8.8.6. The Mission also contacted Jatin De, head of the Socio-Economic Unit of the Indo-Dutch Rural Water Supply and Sanitation programme. In terms of districts, the programme overlaps potentially with the MS programme in Banda and Varanasi, and from mid 1990, also in Bidar. However, there is at present little contiguity between the two programmes areas within these (large) districts (see Maps: Dutch Assisted Programme on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation in Uttar Pradesh; Rural Water Supply Projects in Varanasi District) and, on the socio-economic side, little capacity to provide support outside the small experimental areas already chosen. All three areas pose problems of providing the social and organisational infrastructure needed to support any technical input and, for their part, the engineering teams are unused to dealing with socio-economic factors. However, if a demand arises within the MS programme areas, the MS should bring forward a proposal for consideration

8.8.7. More immediately, there appears to be stronger potential for linkage between the Indo-Dutch programme for Training Women in Agriculture in Gujarat. The programme is beginning FY 1990 in six districts: Bhavagan, and Junagadh, Deas, Sojitra, Dahod and Vyara. All six are accessible from the MS programme districts. Residential facilities will be provided for short course training, mainly in agriculture, with attention to horticulture, livestock and poultry, and some exposure to health, nutrition and family planning. The Mission recommends that the State Programme Coordinator, Gujarat, contact the Dutch Embassy for further information and development of linkage.

### 8.9. The Dangers of Success

8.9.1. Early success is giving rise to unwelcome pressure at a moment when the programme needs time and space for consolidation. The pressures are of three kinds:

- others are beginning to see employment in the programme, or partnership, as opportunities for worthwhile jobs and

power. The Mission recommends that MS selection criteria and training processes be assiduously maintained.

- some other development programmes are beginning to see the MS programme as a peg for their own activities and are asking MS functionaries to stimulate demand for their services or, worse, to get sahayoginis carry out their own functions. The Mission recommends collegiality and linkage but resistance to any tendency toward merging functions, or the imposition of services on village women.

- expansionary pressure on criteria determined by others (e.g. political criteria or the drive for 'numbers'). With respect to the existing programme States, the Mission recommends that MS expansion criteria be made explicit and that decisions and choices regarding expansion arise within the programme itself.