

MAHILA SAMAKHYA

**INDO-DUTCH JOINT REVIEW MISSION
December 2001**

MAIN REPORT

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CONTENTS

A. INTRODUCTION

The Mahila Samakhya Programme
The Task Of The Indo Dutch Joint Review Mission
The Review Process
Reports

B. MAHILA SAMAKHYA AND THE CURRENT POLICY CONTEXT

C. PROGRESS AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

Scope and Outreach
Expanding Horizons
Outreach of MS as a demonstration and resource agency

1. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- 1.1 Impact on women's personal and family lives, autonomy and socio-cultural environment
- 1.2 Creating a foundation for a grass-root level women's movement
- 1.3 Women's political participation
- 1.4 Women's legal rights
- 1.5 Cutting across caste and class
- 1.6 Growth, pace and emerging trends

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 2.1 Women's Education
- 2.2 Girls Education
- 2.3 Contribution to Reduction of Child Labour

3. LINKAGES WITH GOVERNMENT, NGOs, WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND RNE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 Linkages with government departments and agencies
- 3.2 Linkages with NGOs and Women's Movement
- 3.3 Added Value and Linkages with RNE Sectoral Approach Priorities

4. REPORTING AND MONITORING

5. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

6. ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

7. HUMAN RESOURCES

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Funds Flow

- 8.2 Accounting
- 8.3 Purchase Procedure
- 8.4 Disclosures
- 8.5 Payroll System
- 8.6 5.6 Internal Controls
- 8.7 5.7 Utilization of Funds

D.NEXT PHASE

1. Rationale For A New Phase
2. Recommended Strategy for Mahila Samakhya In Next Phase
3. Organization Structure And Programme Initiatives
4. State Specific Strategies Recommended
5. Future Budget

Annexures, Mission Itinerary, Abbreviations, Glossary

Indo Dutch Joint Final Review of Mahila Samakhya

December 2001

MAIN REPORT

A. INTRODUCTION

The Mahila Samakhya Programme

The National Programme of Mahila Samakhya (Education for Women's Equality) was launched in 1988 in pursuance of the goals of the New Education Policy (1986) as a pilot project in 10 districts of Karnataka, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh with assistance from the Government of The Netherlands. The unique programme is a novel programme, sponsored by Dutch Development Cooperation under a bilateral agreement whereby it has been conceptualized as a process rather than mere fulfillment of targets. The programme was extended to Andhra Pradesh at the end of 1992 and to Kerala in 1998. It was later decided that Dutch Development Cooperation would have a greater impact if concentrated in 3 States only instead of five. Therefore, RNE areas of concentration have been demarcated to Andhra Pradesh Gujarat and Kerala, whilst UP and Karnataka were dropped and programmes were not extended.

The National Policy on Education 1986 of the Government of India brought a conceptual shift from equal educational opportunities for women to "education for women's equality"; the introduction of 'education as an agent of change' in the status of women. Following this, the Mahila Samakhya Programme was conceived as a programme for the education and empowerment of socially and economically marginalized women in 1989. Mahila Samakhya was nurtured as a women's empowerment programme, conceptualized by committed feminists and progressive bureaucrats, and nested in the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India at the national level. It represents a unique experiment that charges the State with the responsibility of creating enabling spaces, institutions and structures to promote the empowerment of women, conceptually stepping leaps ahead of the Government's own rhetoric of development and advancement. The creation of autonomous Societies at the state level gives the necessary space to operate on the basis of emerging needs and trends.

Since its inception, the programme came to be viewed as a "Pilot" to a number of initiatives that followed in the pursuance of similar goals of empowerment, but with its own distinct character. It was grounded in the education sector and

continues to focus on the educational processes essential for the empowerment of women. Mahila Samakhya thus emphasizes the centrality of education in empowering women and now includes adolescent girls. Education is understood to include, but not limited to, literacy and numeracy as “**a process of learning to question, critically analyze and seek solutions;**” It includes creation of means to address the lack of self confidence, oppressive social customs. Paulo Friere had distinguished between the ability to read the ‘word’ and the ‘world’: MS too understands education to subsume both the word and the world.

The programme marks a departure from the earlier sectoral and instrumental approaches to education and views education as a process that is lifelong and enables women to organize and take charge of their lives, moving towards empowerment.

The Task Of The Indo Dutch Joint Review Mission

The task of the Review Mission as laid down in the Terms of Reference was to:

- Review the progress of the programme since January 1998, and assess its impact in terms of empowerment of women.
- Recommend a strategy for the next phase (2003-2007) in the three concentration states, i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Kerala, consistent with the policy of Government of India (GOI) and the policy of Government of the Netherlands (GON)
- Provide an estimate of the total budget for the next phase.

In addition the Review Mission was also asked to assess the added value of MS in areas of health, water supply and sanitation, agriculture and Education in the concentration States of Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. This assessment was sought in the in the context of the sectoral priorities identified for programme initiatives by the RNE in its collaboration with the Government in the three states.

The Review Process

The Indo-Dutch Joint Review Mission Team consisted of ten members, including 3 GOI representatives. Most of the team members were gender experts, while three members brought expertise in educational issues and three were financial experts, looking into the financial and organizational aspects of the programme.

¹ Apart from the context of concentration for added value introduced within Dutch Development Cooperation, the areas of attention were Poverty, Women and Environment (acronyms AVM in Dutch and these were extended to include Institutional Development (I) and Good Governance (G); in short GAVIM. Good governance would also include the presence of the Women's Movement and an active Women in Development (WID) policy in the State as well as women participating in the Governance, like Panchayati Raj, VECs, and as members of health services and local legal bodies.

The team prepared itself for the task ahead by formulating a list of key questions and issues pertaining to the areas of the Review TORs.

Following the briefing by the RNE and the GOI, the Mission members worked in two teams to cover the 5 states for review:

Soma Kishore Parthasarathy (Mission Leader), Hilde Janssen, Varun Anand visited Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Nishi Mehrotra and Vanita Mukherjee (GOI representatives) joined the team in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala respectively. Charu Sehgal also joined at Kerala for two days. The team spent almost a week in each state in discussions with the MS programme staff at various levels, State government and district authorities, representatives of NGOs and in interactions with the women at the level of the Sangha and the Mahasangha

Fatima Alikhan, Riet Turksma, and Virat Diviyakirti visited Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh. Sushmita Dutt (GOI representative) joined this team after three days. Intensive discussions and field visits were conducted to 6 districts of Gujarat apart from meetings with state level and other departmental officials. In Lucknow - MS UP, and Bangalore - MS Karnataka, only state level meetings were held, without field visits. (Itinerary of the mission teams is attached as Annexure 1)

The following report is based on

- the findings of the field visits in three states and discussions held at state level in two non-concentration states
- information available in the 5 year Annual Reports the numerous reports which have been produced in the states on different topics collected on site
- Meetings held with only three members of the National Resource Group (NRG), despite the Mission Leader's repeated request for a larger meeting with the NRG as a whole).
- A few documents made available to the Mission by the National Programme Director (NPD) on the Mission Leader's request, including :
 - Recommendations of the Working Group on Adult and Elementary Education relating to Girls Education for the 10th Five Year Plan, and
 - A concept note on girls' education for a scheme that is on the anvil.

The report focuses on the commonalities and specifics to assess the impact of the programme and to identify strategies for the way ahead in the next phase.

Following the visit to the field an Aide Memoire was presented containing the key findings and conclusions and pointers to the way forward in the next phase. Discussions were held with some of the State Programme Directors (SPDs) and there was a final debriefing with the Department of Education, Government of India on the 20th of December 2001. This was presided over by the Secretary Department of Education and attended by the Joint Secretary Deptt of Education

(Elementary Education), the NPD, NRG members, Head of Development Aid and senior RNE representatives.

Following the meeting at the DOE the members of the mission dispersed to their respective destinations, while a few worked to finalize the Aide Memoire and COCA document based on the discussions held at the DOE. These documents were submitted to the RNE on 29th of December 2001.

The mission members have since been working on the respective state level reports based on a common framework. The formulation of state level reports has required an unprecedented amount of energy and time to present the essence of the programme and to draw conclusions for the future direction of the programme.

The Report

The main findings and joint conclusions for the programme are contained in this Main report, along with details of a recommended strategy for the next phase, including the financial implications of the measures recommended.

This Main Report consists of

- A. An **introduction** to the programme and the review process
- B. **Current status** and **policy context** of the programme
- C. **Progress and impact of the programme** in areas identified by the TORs, specifically:
 - women's empowerment
 - education
 - linkages with government and NGO programmes and value added interface with RNE sectoral priorities
 - financial and organizational issues
- D. **The next phase** the possible steps and programmes for are highlighted, with an emphasis on the three concentration states of RNE collaboration and the emerging national scenario for women's education

The five state level reports: a) Andhra Pradesh b) Kerala c) Gujarat d) Karnataka e) Uttar Pradesh vary in length and depth based on the time available to the mission to examine the programme and the priority given to each within the RNE policy. All five are supplementary to the Main Report. and contain the specific details of the state level programme. While each state report may have its own style and represent a specific perspective, having been compiled from contributions of different team members, they document the status of the programme and highlight issues, dilemmas and successes which are specific to that state. These aspects may be found individually in each state but have been highlighted to provide learning for other states and to provide direction for that state in its future course of action.

The main report draws together the conclusions from these state reports to present the programme in its current state in the RNE assisted states. It seeks to the aspirations of the women, to point to the critical concerns and issues in the programme as well as to present a realistic assessment of the challenges ahead.

Circumstances and Constraints

It would be necessary to point out the circumstances and constraints that the team has dealt with in the process of field work and in the preparation of the reports.

We had not envisaged the scope of the task before us in undertaking a review across five states. Despite being a 10 member mission, we were constrained by the availability of two persons for only 2 and 5 days of the entire mission respectively, and the postponement of the travel itinerary by 2 days. We also had an exposure to the reality of the circumstances that workers have to contend with –bandhs (strikes) and Naxal bombings.

Further, the mission itinerary and design did not provide the space or time for a participatory process. This is contradiction of the very process and conditions for learning that the programme considers non-negotiable. This factor, that was earlier indicated in the evaluation report of the mission fielded in 1997, needs to be kept in mind for future assessments of the programme.

The team did not have enough time together to adequately discuss our approach or develop a common understanding of the task ahead. Nor did it help to have everyone disperse immediately after the presentation, to work on the state level reports in sections through the virtual world over the next three months. However, if the team had been retained for an additional week to complete the task at hand, hold internal consultations and chalk out the details of the future of the programme as a collective consultative process this process could have been more efficiently organized.. Scheduling the Mission just before the Christmas and the festive season did not allow for any flexibility in this respect either.

The unrealistic time frame of contractual arrangements has meant that most team members have devoted extra time in the preparation of state level reports after the mission travel period. Each one has had to reschedule their activities to meet the requirements of the process, in the interest of finally presenting a comprehensive set of documents.

The Mission is constrained in its assessment of the future policy linkages of Mahila Samakhya with other education sector programme initiatives. Neither the entire Working Group report, containing proposed programme priorities for the next five years, nor the relevant documents of the proposed National Resource Centre for Women, were made available. The report of the landmark

“Sanghamitra” Workshop was also not shared and therefore the value of the events can only be gauged from the views expressed by the women in the field.

Unfortunately, no general reports were commissioned by the NRG/NPD as in the previous evaluation, to supplement the reports available that could facilitate the work of the Mission, although state level presentation documents on the status and concerns were shared with the Mission team by some states.

Despite the constraints mentioned above, we hope that we have been able to adequately represent the reality of the programme, to capture its impact and to highlight its potential for the future. **The mission team members were stricken by the level of commitment of the staff especially at the field level. We wish to place on record the urgency of the need to enhance their compensation package in adequate measure in recognition of the enormous grit and dedication to their tasks and to the goals of the programme.**

We wish to express gratitude to the Government of India, Department of Education and to the Royal Netherlands Embassy for having given us the privilege of being on this Review Mission. For many of us who have followed the programme with eagerness and anticipation, this was indeed an opportunity to learn in greater depth about the programme, its energy, its travails and successes in all its diversity. We are indeed grateful to all those who have extended unstinting support to the mission in this task. The State Teams made our work easier and enjoyable by attending to every detail of support we needed, while sharing their experiences and concerns and providing us with opportunities for valuable insights and learning. To all those associated with the programme within its network and beyond who have shared their views, we express our thanks and appreciation.

B. PROGRESS AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

Scope and Outreach

In the years since its inception, the programme has evolved and grown in various dimensions, so that its physical outreach as well as its sectoral linkages has steadily expanded to encompass the articulated learning needs of poor rural women. In its initial phase the programme emphasizes the creation of the "space" for women's experiences to inform learning as well as to provide the basis for agenda setting and determination of priorities. The programme has found its moorings in the homes of women, in their life struggles for economic and social survival, in their quest for identity and status within the community, the village and public spaces/ forum of decision making and now in the establishment of their own networks and organizations.

The Sanghas have been generally successful in expanding horizontally but not as originally envisaged. They have taken on a greater number of activities thereby creating depth instead of a sheer critical mass as in numbers. The function, expansion and activities of the Sanghas moreover, vary between the states as well as between districts within them. The coverage within the States reviewed by the mission is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: coverage of the programme in the Dutch assisted states:

State	Districts	Blocks	Villages	Sanghas
Andhra Pradesh	7	32 Mandals*	1101	1101**
Gujarat	7	36	1422	1422
Kerala	2	13 Panchayats***	173 wards	775
Karnataka	7	33	1082	1082
Uttar Pradesh	16****		1470	

*The area of a Mandal is less than the block

**Including village level Sanghas which include multiple SHGs in 2 Districts

*** In the system of local Self-Governance, the Panchayat is the unit of admin in Kerala

****10 Dutch assisted of which 3 are now in the newly formed state of Uttaranchal)

The programme has also extended beyond the Dutch assisted programme in these States and presently covers a total of 9000 villages in 61 districts of 10 States. The outreach may seem small in numbers as compared to other government programmes that follow a linear target oriented agenda. Nevertheless, the scale of activity and outreach is larger than most NGOs and has increased substantially over the past five years.

Mahila Samakhya is a process-oriented programme, which does not pursue targets per se. Its achievements lie in the quality of outputs, generated through a systematic follow-through of processes. Processes are facilitated in a manner, which provide learning as well as the attainment of results conducive to the change in the lives of women at their pace. Activities are analyzed in the context of their potential to impact on the lives of women and their environment, thereby providing space for options to be explored, and likely outcomes to be assessed. **These steps are essential to the process of learning and cannot be circumvented for the achievement of goals of social transformation.**

Traditional models of development programmes may present large coverage through the enumeration of numbers of beneficiaries, and therefore their outreach would be to those directly benefited by the programmes. MS on the other hand seeks to promote processes of change through forums such as the Sanghas. For each Sangha woman it is estimated that at least 20 other women are impacted². The Sangha provides a forum and space to support not only those women directly active as members of the Sanghas, but other women in the village and beyond, to enable them to aspire and question the attitudes and practices that impact upon their lives. This fact can be gauged from the reported impact of the efforts of Sangha women in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka to stop the practice of dedication of girls to local dieties in the practice of the tradition of Jogini and Devadasis. The impact of these efforts is felt not only by the Sangha women as they report cases and stop dedication rituals, take out "yatras" and motivate women in the community and the region. Other women and girls also benefit in the block and vicinity, as the discriminatory practice is curbed and even wiped out from the area. While Sangha women continue to maintain a vigil against such instances, the women and girls experience a change in practices and attitudes towards them. Instances are reported from all the states of cases of violence being referred to the Sanghas and the Nari Adalats, where these have been instituted, creating an environment of greater optimism. These ripples of the actions of Sanghas manifest themselves in changes in environment for women and practices in a wider area. These cannot be just enumerated but experienced and felt through perceptions and sustaining processes.

Mahila Samakhya has broadened its base by bringing existing groups under a common umbrella to address social issues related to women's status in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. As the programme outreach and intensification strategy is evolving, MS is increasingly recognized as a programme for the mobilization of women across class and caste groups, as a forum for women's social and political empowerment especially in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. With the shift in strategy necessitated by the proliferation of SHGs in the country, especially in Andhra Pradesh, under various governmental initiatives for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment, the MS programme is also exploring a shift in its strategy. In new districts the programme is reaching out to these SHGs through an umbrella approach, indicating an enhanced outreach potential to groups that are already in existence. While providing them with support on issues of social empowerment, the programme seeks to enhance their identity as women's organizations and to draw them into the network to address strategic changes in the lives of women. While this approach is still in its infancy, it presents a feasible alternative, which is of greater relevance in the context of large - scale programmes such as DPIIP being promoted in these states.

The MS Programme has been able to **redefine education**, informed by the women's perspective emerging from the grassroots. Processes of empowerment have been strengthened from the Sangha level upwards. With the dissolution of the Sakhi's position Sangha women's leadership is more visible and widespread. **The programme agenda has included adolescent girls in significant measure in the period under review, with specific programme initiatives designed to cater to their emerging needs.** This enhanced scope is reflective of the understanding that educational processes for girls will enable them to gain confidence, and create opportunities for them to emerge

² Estimates shared by the Karnataka MS team, indicating the outreach of the Sanghas. This figure may vary across the states and districts, depending on the intensity of Sangha processes and the quality of facilitation.

empowered to question and determine their choices from an early age, giving them a head-start. These girls in turn represent the inter-generation (and spatial) continuity of the programme, as they progress into the formal educational process with higher levels of confidence or into the community as young adults. Their new role models are the leaders from the Sanghas and Federations emerging from the programme. This increased focus on girls' education gains greater significance in the context of the recent Lok Sabha decision to introduce education as a fundamental right for 6-14 year olds. Mahila Samakhya has the potential to exercise influence on the shape and content of initiatives for young and adolescent girls education based on its own experiences.

Expanding Horizons

As Sanghas have grown in number and strength, they have taken on new roles of mobilization and awareness raising in the old districts and providing learning to new districts. Sanghas have linked up to form clusters at local levels, motivating women to form new Sanghas in the neighbouring villages, and Mahasanghas or Federations as apex organizations that facilitate networking and work on collective agenda between groups in a taluk or district. Thus the outreach and coverage of the programme has also expanded in terms of its spheres of influence, so that in the older districts the Sanghas in many instances are able to negotiate with the State and other agencies on issues of concern for women. Mahasanghas now deliberate upon their priorities and facilitate access to government programmes, or raise women's concerns on the systems of governance. Women in larger numbers have engaged with the electoral process in this phase of PR elections either by standing as candidates, or by negotiating with candidates. They have forged links with the women Representatives and MS inputs have enhanced the sensitivity of WRPs to women's concerns for instance in Kerala and Karnataka. MS has also promoted the formation of All Women's Panchayats in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The expansion of horizons of women's spaces to negotiate and engage in action has given them increasing agency to influence mainstream processes.

While the programme's growth seems to have been modest in its apparent numerical strengths, but acquires significance in its depth. It is to be hoped that the level of empowerment so achieved by women in the older districts will propel the groups to expand in their vicinity and in the neighbouring areas to create a visible critical mass capable of asserting a strong presence for women. This calls for a strategy towards greater densification in the present districts, to impact on the macro structures.

Significant shifts may also be observed in the roles that the organization functionaries are expected to perform as a consequence. With enhanced capabilities and confidence, the Sangha and Mahasangha leaders undertake the more routine tasks of group formation and management, while their aspirations create demands for issue specific and perspective related inputs from the programme. With the changing nature of Sanghas and the demand for more issue-based inputs, **the role of the Sahayogini has also changed. They have become specialists and facilitators**, from being mobilizers providing issue based knowledge inputs, informed by a class and gender perspective. Training of Sahayoginis has been intensive and systematized in some states while others have followed an ad-hoc approach. Quality training of Sahayoginis is essential as it has a direct impact on the developments at the Sangha level on the processes of collective action and Federation formation.

The programme's successes are embedded in the relationships of friendship that have developed between the Sangha women at various levels and with the programme staff. These and the shared visions are really the energy that propel the programme forward. This cannot however be expected to sustain without recognition of such efforts especially of the grassroots field staff in financial terms. The present remuneration of the programme staff is dismal on a relative scale as well as in absolute terms and has compelled many to move (The state reports provide comparisons with other programmes in the States). The very survival of workers is at stake³, and they might well be compelled to move, taking with them the energy, the learning and the richness so essential to strengthen the programme at this stage of critical threshold. On the one hand is the picture of these abysmal salaries and compensations to workers who are the backbone of the programme, and on the other is the savings reported from the programme which have enabled it to be extended by more than a year without financial implication. These contradictions obviously call for revisions in the compensation of workers.

Outreach of MS as a Demonstration and Resource Agency

Mahila Samakhya has gained recognition as a resource agency at the district and state level. The taluk/district authorities seek its support in raising awareness on discriminatory practices and social issues. Health programme staff recognize MS as a programme with grassroots credibility and seek their assistance in implementing the immunization programme and would like to involve the MS in its family planning agenda. The state authorities accept and laud MS strategies to create a safe and conducive environment for girls in their MSKs, and view them as potential demonstrations for effective implementation of the Adult and Non-formal education programme. Participation of MS in the Village Education Committees at the village level to state programme committees for different educational initiatives, and in the preparation of learning materials and manuals for education and literacy bear testimony to the fact that MS is recognized as an agency with specialist skills and expertise that adds value to educational initiatives. This is also reflected in the responses of various departments in wanting to collaborate with the MS in the implementation of numerous programmes. While MS has hitherto been selective in the selection of its partnerships in most instances, and has negotiated terms to strengthen its focus on the non-negotiable, this has not always been the case. In Gujarat, the programme has become the implementing agency for the Swa Shakti Programme and the Chetna AIDs programme, without informing these initiatives with its own perspectives, and without clearly articulating the terms and limits of its engagement.

MS has been a resource and training agency to numerous programmes in all the states. It has undertaken policy initiatives such as the formulation of the Policy for Women in Uttar Pradesh and has been assigned the task of preparing the Gender Profile for the state in Andhra Pradesh. The state government in Kerala views MS as a state resource agency for Gender and MS has been involved in the training of Functionaries of Local Self Government as well as WPRs. It has undertaken a significant role in the gender budgeting process in Kamataka.

³ Workers in Andhra and Kerala for instance shared that they are living in poor conditions due to low affordability and are unable to visit their families due to inadequate incomes. The expenditure incurred by them on travel to the field is also not fully compensated in the present package, due to which they absorb these costs from their already meagre incomes.

MS collaborates with NGOs as a resource team for gender training', and participates in the formulation of training and learning materials in collaboration with state agencies as well as provides expertise to conduct campaigns against practices such as Devadasi, Jogini, child labour etc.

Although perceiving itself as a women's movement its links with the larger women's movement and with autonomous women's agencies have been fairly weak in the past 5 years. This may be attributed to the current focus on consolidating its own strengths based on the capacities already built in the previous phase with the help of such agencies. Another reason may be that those who were primarily involved in maintaining these links have moved out of the programme. In Kerala however, the links are fairly strong as the programme strives for a foothold and builds its alliances with like-minded agencies, which share similar goals. Affiliation with the women's movement therefore follows a growth pattern, being more intensive in the initial phases, for capacity and perspective building. These links need to be maintained on an ongoing basis, so that the MS is strengthened by emerging knowledge and debates and in turn informs the concerns of the movement with its own experiences as was attempted through its participation in the Women's Studies Conference in 1999. The focus now needs to be transferred from linking up for capacity development needs to forging alliances between women's organizations to enhance the horizontal flows of knowledge and solidarity networks. This could be facilitated through a systematic process of exposure through "Sammelians" and exchanges, which have been found to be the most enriching forms of learning for grassroots women. Events such as the Sanghamitra Workshop need to be organized more regularly not only for sharing within the MS but to forge broader alliances for learning and solidarity with other forums of women committed to similar goals

The role of the National Office in this context is critical. Three major initiatives that have been taken to facilitate learning of processes and issues were facilitated by the consultants at the national level- on management of accounts, on the issue of federation and the Sanghamitra Workshop. The absence of consultants at the National Level for more than a year to facilitate these processes and to provide support to state offices through trouble shooting, has caused a significant lag in the programme, most evident in the Gujarat programme. An active NRG and a more broad-based State Executive Committee with greater membership from NGOs and the Women's Movement will serve to strengthen the ties with the Women's Movement and facilitate lateral exchanges and learning.

The expanding scope of the programme has also led to the increased expectations from the MS programme. Its potential is considered significant as a state gender resource agency to promote the integration of gender interests in programmes of the development sector. The education sector specifically views MS as a potential demonstration base for good practice in Girls education and Continuing Education for women, as well as in the training of teachers and production of materials⁴. The level of skills to fulfill these roles however currently varies across the MS states apart from the paucity of staff. Future growth of the programme towards fulfilling these resource functions would need to be discreetly planned to

⁴ These future role for MS was emphasized by senior officials of the Dept of Education in AP, Kerala, UP, and Karnataka

- a. Facilitate the maximum flow of benefits and opportunities for Sangha Women.
- b. Spread of the MS approach to other programmes towards good governance in development and empowerment of women.

B. MAHILA SAMAKHYA AND THE CURRENT POLICY CONTEXT

India's commitment to the Universalization of Primary Education (UPE) was affirmed at the Jomtein Conference in 1990. The Delhi Declaration of 1993 recognized the importance of assuring education for the entire population. The Dakar Framework for Action 2000 emphasized all facets of education such as early childhood care and education, gender equality, quality improvement, elementary education, adolescent education and adult education. India is also committed to the goals of EFA, which were reiterated at the Beijing Ministerial Review 2001. The CEDAW declaration also identifies gender issues requiring action to eliminate discrimination in the education sector among others and recognizes the need for "lifelong learning" opportunities..

The 93rd amendment was introduced in Parliament earlier in 2000 and seeks to make education a fundamental right. The *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* is a new holistic and integrated approach for universalizing elementary education and is the Government of India's response to the commitments of Education for All (EFA) goals and commitments. It aims at bringing all children between 6-14 into school/ back to school/ Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) by 2003. It follows a time bound approach and aims to ensure that all children complete five years of schooling by 2007, eight years by 2010. Mainstreaming of gender in all proposed interventions through District Elementary Education Plan is postulated as a core to the proposed SSA. While other schemes and programmes have all been dovetailed under this umbrella programme, the Mahila Samakhya programme has been retained as an autonomous programme, but is also expected to play a role in mobilization of communities towards meeting SSA goals.

Women's Education

The principle of equal educational opportunity for women has given way to the more proactive principle of providing education leading to women's equality. Since 1986, the emphasis has been gradually shifting to holistic education leading to capacity building as an instrument to empower women. The NPE 1986 and the subsequent Plan of Action (POA) 1992 provided for higher priority to girls, which is also a trend highlighted in the recommendations for the 10th Plan. The District Primary Education Programme was started in 1994 in districts with female literacy levels lower than the national average. While these have been significant steps in recognizing the need to focus on formal education for girls, the approaches of these programmes continue to view education in a supply side framework, and do not adequately address the structural factors that impede girls and women's education, or call for change in approaches to education that are more relevant to their lives. Further all these commitments focus on the primacy of the young for education. Initiatives for education for adults especially for the large numbers of women have not gained significance despite the evidence from MS and literacy campaigns, of impact of adult learning on the overall environment and on capacities of marginalised communities to address their problems. Programmes like Mahila Samakhya thus remain an experiment in isolation without adequate effort to integrate their learning into mainstream educational initiatives.

While girls and women's education has gained more recognition as specific issues for concern and programmes are targeting the participation of girls in more concerted ways, these efforts need to take cognizance of the issues highlighted by MS such as the environment for girls education and the relevance of teaching/learning materials and subject matter in formulating new programmes.

The World Bank World Development Report 2000 refers to empowerment, security and opportunity as basic instruments for poverty alleviation. Attention to the connection between human rights and human development has also grown. Amartya Sen defines poverty as a lack of choice. Understanding education from the rights perspective stresses the need to focus on issues of diversity and on reaching the most marginalized and deprived. This argument links the provision of education for all to the concepts of social justice and equity. There is a strong co-relation between education and human well being, life expectancy and infant mortality. Within the rights framework therefore the design of education programmes needs to address the specific experiences of the community or learner. **MS has established that the demand for education is directly correlated to the creation of space where information can be sought, processed and used to make qualitative changes in the life of the learner.** Piecemeal efforts to address education in a sectoral way without addressing the socio-cultural and political context of peoples lives in the context of gender, class and caste is not empowering and does not address their reality.

While girls and women's education has gained more recognition as specific issues for concern and programmes are targeting the participation of girls in more concerted ways, these efforts need to take cognizance of the issues highlighted by MS: the environment for girls education and the relevance of teaching/learning materials and subject matter in formulating new programmes.

Proposed actions and recommendations for the 10th plan period reflect greater recognition of the roles that women can play in the management of education in village education committees and in the parents' forums, as well as in the mobilization efforts for girls education. There is also heightened requirement for "Each programme to spell out in concrete terms its concern for girls education and gender equality."⁵ Translated into programme realities, these need to address the living and learning environment to create learning opportunities for women and girls. This is also viewed as a basis for integration of gender concerns in other programmes of the Department as well as a programme monitoring and planning device.

The 10th Plan recommendations also include the creation of national and State capacities for planning and implementing programmes for the education of girls for which purpose a National Resource Center (NRC) for the education of women and girls is proposed. While these proposed measures would serve to increasingly integrate gender into the education sector, the provision for women's education and means to ensure their empowerment through greater focus on strategies such as those gained from the experience of MS is missing in the proposals for the 10th plan.

Thus MS continues to be showcased in the 10th plan period, with little understanding of its key learnings and principles influencing the mainstream efforts towards literacy and

⁵ Working group recommendations on Girls Education presented to the Planning Commission, 2001

education. The Continuing Education (CE) programme for instance could benefit from the learnings and strategies of the MS programme. Focussed efforts are required to advocate its strategies and processes that have been empowering and provided learning opportunities for women to effectively change their lives, and strive for a just and equal society. Mainstreaming of gender concerns and appreciation for strategies and issues highlighted by the MS programmes should be advocated with greater rigor by the National Office and by the NRG.

In The Tenth Five Year Plan some specific programmes with a focus on women and girls besides Mahila Samakhya are proposed. These include the new scheme or "National Strategy for ensuring greater participation of Women in Educational Field" to be implemented in specific areas with low female literacy and focus on intensive implementation and monitoring. The *Kasturba Gandhi Swatantra Vidyalaya* scheme will enable the opening of special schools for the girl child of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes Other Backward Classes and minorities, in low female literacy districts.

It is planned to further upscale The Mahila Samakhya geographically, specially interventions such as the Mahila Shikshan Kendras. It is hoped that the learnings and approaches of MS will be used to inform the new programmes in terms of content and strategy.

The Education Focus of Royal Netherlands Embassy

Education has been a major focus in the overall Dutch Development Co-Operation Policy, specially since this sector is now being seen as crucial for social well being and economic progress, both of which are key inputs for poverty alleviation. Whilst in the last decade, the international donor community has focused primarily on basic education, the Netherlands has done this without reducing its budget for other education sub-sectors. Dutch Development Policy on education concentrates on basic education in order 'to meet people's learning needs and to enable them to acquire the basic knowledge and the essential skills and values they need for their personal and social development, and to play an useful role in society.' While many education sector programmes prioritize formal primary education in order to meet EFA goals formal education paradigms are not always able to reach the most marginalized. This is because the learning content and pedagogy are often not contextual or relevant to specific groups and a cultural and social gap exists between the school and the learner.

The Dutch Development Policy has been arguing for the need to move beyond traditional 'formal' paradigms towards Universal Primary Education and that the formal and the non-formal should start to complement each other. The holistic view requires to encompass the non-formal education as well as other inputs like early childhood education. Non-formal education should leave behind its low cost, small scale, local image and move on to possessing the same value, status and quality as the formal since both these paradigms have a role in meeting the needs of poor people in society. However, ultimately the real challenge remains to ensure that the public institutions perform and are accountable as these serve the largest majority. Strengthening capacities and opportunities for MS to share its holistic learning through people owned structures for learning and on gender and education need to be reinforced through support to the proposed NRC.

RNE has also been supporting the second phase of the centrally sponsored scheme, DPEP II in three districts of Gujarat viz., Banaskantha, Dangs and Panchmahal through a co-financing agreement with the World Bank. These are also MS districts. Strategies need to be creatively formulated to explore the potential of the MS programme and DPEP to work synergistically in this context, while ensuring compliance with the non-negotiable principles of the MS which are essential for good governance.

C. PROGRESS AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

Spiraling Outreach

In the years since its inception, the programme has grown in various dimensions, so that its physical outreach and sectoral linkages have steadily expanded to encompass the needs of women as they are articulated. In its initial phase the programme emphasized the creation of the "space" for women's experiences to inform the learning as well as to provide the basis for agenda setting and determination of priorities. Consequently the programme has found its moorings in the homes of women, in their life struggles for economic and social survival, in their quest for identity and status within the community, the village and public spaces/forums of decision making and now in the establishment of their own networks and organizations.

The Sanghas have been successful in expanding horizontally but not as originally envisaged. They have taken on a greater number of activities thereby creating depth instead of a critical mass. The function, expansion and activities of the Sanghas moreover, vary between the states as well as between districts within them. The coverage within the States reviewed by the mission is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: coverage of the programme in the Dutch assisted states:

State	Districts	Blocks	Villages	Sanghas
Andhra Pradesh	7	32 mandals.*	1101	1101**
Gujarat	7	36	1422	1422
Kerala	2	13 panchayats***	173 wards	775
Karnataka	7	33	1082	1082
Uttar Pradesh	16****		1470	

*the area of a mandal is less than the block

**including village level Sanghas which include multiple SHGs in 2 distts

*** In the system of local Self Governance, the panchayat is the unit of admin in Kerala

****10 Dutch assisted of which 3 are now in the newly formed state of Uttaranchal)

The programme has also extended beyond the Dutch assisted programme in these States and presently covers a total of 9000 villages in 61 districts of 10 States. The outreach is apparently small in numbers as compared to other government programmes that follow a linear target oriented growth curve. Nevertheless the scale of activity and outreach is larger than most NGOs and has increased substantially over the past five years. Mahila Samakhyia is a process-oriented programme, which does not pursue targets per se. Its achievements lie in the quality of outputs, generated through a systematic follow-through of processes. Processes are facilitated in a manner, which learning and results conducive to the change in the lives of women. Activities are analyzed in the context of their potential to impact on the lives of women and their

environment, thereby providing space for options to be explored, and likely outcomes to be assessed. These steps are essential to the process of learning and cannot be circumvented for the achievement of goals of social transformation across villages and in blocks and districts.

Traditional models of development programmes may present coverage through the enumeration of numbers of beneficiaries, and therefore their outreach would be to those directly benefited by the programmes. MS on the other hand promotes processes of change through forums such as the Sanghas. It is estimated that 20 other women are impacted by 1 Sangha woman⁶. The Sangha provides a forum and space to support not only those women directly active as members of the Sanghas, but other women in the village and beyond, to enable them to aspire and question the attitudes and practices that impact their lives. This fact can be gauged from the reported impact of the efforts of Sangha women in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka to stop the practice of dedication of girls to local deities in the practice of Jogini and Devadasi traditions. Sangha women report cases and stop dedication rituals, take out "yatras" and motivate women in the community and the region. Women and girls benefit in the block and vicinity benefit, as the discriminatory practice is curbed and even wiped out from the area. While Sangha women continue to maintain a vigil for such instances, the women and girls experience a change in practices and attitudes towards them. Instances are reported from all the states of cases of violence being referred to the Sanghas and the Nari Adalats, where these have been instituted, creating an environment of greater optimism. These ripples of the actions of Sanghas manifest themselves in changes in environment for women and practices in a wider area.

Mahila Samakhya has broadened its base by bringing existing groups under a common umbrella to address social issues related to women's status in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. As the programme outreach and intensification strategy is evolving, MS is increasingly recognized as a programme for the mobilization of women across class and caste groups as a forum for women's social and political empowerment especially in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. A proliferation of SHGs in the country, especially in Andhra Pradesh, under various governmental initiatives for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment, has necessitated a shift in the MS programme strategy. In new districts the programme is reaching out to the existing SHGs through an umbrella approach, indicating an enhanced outreach potential to groups that are already in existence. While providing them with support on issues of social empowerment, the programme seeks to enhance their identity as women's organizations and to draw them into the network to address strategic changes in the lives of women. While this approach is still in its infancy, it presents a feasible alternative which is of greater relevance in the context of large scale programmes, like DPEP, being promoted in these states.

The MS Programme in the States has been able to **redefine education**, informed by the women's perspective emerging from the grassroots. Processes of empowerment have been strengthened from the Sangha level upwards. With the dissolution of the Sakhi's position Sangha women's leadership is more visible and widespread. **The programme agenda has included adolescent girls in significant measure in the period under review, with specific programme initiatives designed to cater to their emerging**

⁶ Estimates shared by the Karnataka MS team, indicating the outreach of the Sanghas. This figure may vary across the states and districts, depending on the intensity of Sangha processes and the quality of facilitation

needs. This enhanced scope is reflective of the understanding that educational processes for girls will enable them to gain confidence, and create opportunities for them to emerge empowered to question and determine their choices from an early age, giving them a head-start. These girls in turn represent the inter-generation (and spatial) continuity of the programme, as they progress into the formal educational process with higher levels of confidence or into the community as young adults. Their new role models are the leaders from the Sanghas and Federations emerging from the programme. This increased focus on girls education gains greater significance in the context of the recent Lok Sabha decision to introduce education as a fundamental right for 6-14 year olds. On the strength of its experiences, Mahila Samakhya has the potential to exercise influence on the shape and content of initiatives for young and adolescent girls' education.

Expanding Horizons

As Sanghas have grown in number and strength, they have taken on new roles of mobilization and awareness raising in the old districts and providing learning to new districts. Sanghas have linked up to form clusters at local levels, motivating women to form new Sanghas in the neighboring villages, and Mahasanghas or Federations as apex organizations that facilitate networking and work on collective agenda between groups in a taluka or district. Thus **the outreach and coverage of the programme has also expanded in terms of its spheres of influence**, so that in the older districts the Sanghas in many instances are able to negotiate with the State and other agencies. Mahasanghas now deliberate upon their priorities and facilitate access to government programmes, or raise women's concerns on the systems of governance. Women in larger numbers have engaged with the electoral process in this phase of PR elections either by standing as candidates, or by negotiating with candidates. They have forged links with the women Representatives and MS inputs have enhanced the sensitivity of Women Elected Representatives (WERs) to women's concerns in Kerala and Karnataka. Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka MS have promoted the formation of all women's Panchayats. The expansion of horizons of women's spaces to negotiate and engage in action has **given them increasing agency to influence mainstream processes**. It is hoped that the level of empowerment so achieved by women in the older districts will propel the groups to expand in their vicinity and in the neighboring areas to create a visible critical mass, capable of asserting a strong presence for women. This calls for a strategy towards greater densification in the present districts, to impact on the macro structures.

Significant shifts may also be observed in the roles that the staff and field functionaries are expected to perform as a consequence. With enhanced capabilities and confidence, the Sangha and Mahasangha leaders undertake the more routine tasks of group formation and management, while their aspirations create demands for issue specific and perspective related inputs from the programme. With the changing nature of Sanghas and the demand for more education and learning on issues, **the role of the Sahayogini has also changed. They have become specialists and facilitators** from being mobilizers, providing issue based knowledge inputs, informed by a class/caste and gender perspective. Training of Sahayoginis has been intensive and systematized in some states while others have followed an ad-hoc approach. Quality training of Sahayoginis is essential as it has a direct impact on the developments at the Sangha level on the processes of collective action and Federation formation.

The programme's successes are embedded in the relationships of friendship that have developed between the Sangha women at various levels and among the programme functionaries. These and the shared visions are really the energy that propel the programme forward. This cannot however be expected to sustain without recognition of such efforts especially of the grassroots field staff in financial terms. The present remuneration of the programme staff is dismal on a relative scale as well as in absolute terms and has forced many to move on⁷. The very survival of workers is at stake⁸, and they might be compelled to move, taking with them the energy and the learning and the richness so essential to strengthen the programme at this critical stage. **On the one hand is the picture of abysmal salaries and compensation to workers who are the backbone of the programme, and on the other is the savings reported from the programme that has enabled it to be extended by more than a year without financial implication. These contradictions obviously call for revisions in the compensation of workers.**

Outreach of MS as a Demonstration and Resource Agency

Mahila Samakhya has gained recognition as a resource agency at district and state levels for raising awareness on discriminatory practices and social issues. Taluka/District health programme staff recognize MS as a programme with grassroots credibility and seek their assistance in implementing the immunization programme and would like to involve the MS in its family planning agenda. The state authorities accept and laud MS strategies to create a safe and conducive environment for girls in their Mahila Shiksha Kendras (MSKs), and view them as potential demonstrations for effective implementation of the Adult and Non-formal education programmes. MS participates in the education sector - in the Village/School Education Committees and state programme committees - for different educational initiatives, and in preparation of learning materials and manuals for education and literacy. This bears testimony to the fact that MS is recognized as an agency with specialized skills in participatory development and expertise for value addition to educational initiatives. This is also reflected in the responses of various departments in wanting to collaborate with the MS in the implementation of numerous programmes. . In most instances MS has been selective in its choice of partners and has negotiated terms to strengthen its focus on the non-negotiable. However, this has not always been the case. In Gujarat, the programme has become the implementing agency for the Swa Shakti Programme and the Chetna AIDs programme, without informing these initiatives with its own perspectives, and without clearly articulating the terms and limits of its engagement.

MS has been a resource and training agency to numerous programmes in all the states. It has undertaken policy initiatives : the formulation of the Policy for Women in Uttar Pradesh; it has been assigned the task of preparing the Gender Profile for the state in Andhra Pradesh; the Kerala government views MS as a state resource agency for Gender and MS has been involved in the training of Functionaries of Local Self Government as well as WERs. It has undertaken a significant role in the gender budgeting process in Karnataka.

⁷The state reports provide comparisons with other programmes in that State

⁸ Functionaries in Andhra and Kerala for instance shared that they are living in poor conditions due to low affordability and are unable to visit their families due to inadequate incomes. The expenditure incurred by them on travel to the field is also not fully compensated in the present package, due to which they absorb these costs from their already meagre incomes.

MS collaborates with NGOs as a resource team for gender training', and participates in the formulation of training and learning materials in collaboration with state agencies as well as provides expertise to conduct campaigns against discriminatory social practices such as devadasi, jogini, child labour.

Although perceiving itself as a part of the Women's Movement, its links with the larger women's movement and with autonomous women's agencies have been fairly weak in the past 5 years. This may be attributed to the current focus on consolidating its own strengths based on capacities already built in the previous phase with the help of such agencies. Moreover, those who were primarily involved in maintaining these links have moved out of the programme. In Kerala however, the links are fairly strong as the programme strives for a foothold and builds its alliances with like-minded agencies that share similar goals. Affiliation with the Women's Movement therefore follows a growth pattern, being more intensive in the initial phases, for capacity and perspective building. **These links need to be maintained on an ongoing basis, so that the MS is strengthened by emerging knowledge and debates and in turn informs the concerns of the movement with its own experiences** as was attempted through its participation in the Women's Studies Conference in 1999. The focus now needs to be transferred from linking up for capacity development needs to forging alliances between women's organizations to enhancing the horizontal flows of knowledge and solidarity networks. This could be facilitated through a systematic process of exposure through exchanges and "Sammelans" which have been found to be the most enriching forms of learning for grassroots women. Events such as the Sanghamitra need to be organized more regularly not only for sharing within the MS but to forge broader alliances for learning and solidarity with other forums of women committed to similar goals

The role of the National Office in this context is critical. Three major initiatives that have been undertaken to facilitate learning of processes and issues were facilitated by the consultants at the national level - on management of accounts, on the issue of federation and the Sanghamitra Conference. The absence of consultants, to facilitate these processes and to provide support to state offices through trouble shooting, at the National Level for more than a year, has caused a significant lag in the programme, most evident in the Gujarat programme. An active NRG and a more broad-based State Executive Committee with greater membership from NGOs and the women's movement will serve to strengthen these the ties with the Women's Movement and facilitate lateral exchanges and learning.

The expanding scope of the programme has also led to increased expectations from the MS programme. Its potential is considered significant as a state gender resource agency to promote the integration of gender interests in programmes of the development sector. The education sector specifically views MS as a potential demonstration base for innovations and good practice in Girls education and Continuing Education for women, as well as in the training of teachers and production of materials⁹. The level of skills to fulfill these roles however currently varies across the MS states apart from the paucity of staff. Future growth of the programme towards fulfilling these resource functions would need to be discreetly planned to:

- a. Facilitate the maximum flow of benefits and opportunities for Sangha Women .

⁹ These future role for MS was emphasised by senior officials of the Dept of Education in AP, Kerala, UP, and Karnataka

b. Spread of the MS approach to other programmes towards good governance in development and empowerment of women.

1. IMPACT OF MAHILA SAMAKHYA ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

1.1 Impact on Women's Personal and Family Lives, Autonomy and Socio-Cultural Environment

Sharing experiences among themselves, women are analyzing their current situation, and establishing a foundation for solidarity and greater autonomy. A unified response from Sahayoginis/Sevinis/Karyakartas, Sangha women and elected women representatives across the programme is the space and legitimacy that MS has provided for them to come together, out of their homes and forge new bonds of friendship and work on unifying concerns. The dynamics of belonging to women's collective has brought knowledge, and has increased the sense of self worth among women and raised their status in their households and communities. This of course, has not translated automatically into 'autonomy' for women. However, there is 'negotiated autonomy' that women are exercising in varying measure in the states and across groups. Women are now **negotiating for more space in family and society**, beyond limited traditional roles. They express a greater say in family affairs, from addressing their own health needs and taking time off for meetings, to sending their daughters to school, challenging child marriages and violent relationships. Increasingly, their opinions are sought in decision-making within their households. **Both Sahayoginis and Sangha women spoke with pride about their increased courage, confidence and self-esteem, which has enabled them to strengthen their position, individually and collectively, within the family and in the community. Sanghas demonstrate their increased autonomy by being far less dependent on Sahayoginis. Their actions of promoting new Sanghas, taking local initiatives on issues that arise independently, and forming federations highlight this process. They are new local role models for young girls and other women in the community.**

Women use the agency of Sanghas to question their own social location and demand greater access to resources and structures of governance. ***Women have become articulate with information and validation of their knowledge and skills, and are now able to express themselves in all types of forums and situations.*** They are able to participate as a group and as individuals in meetings, discuss and negotiate with government and other functionaries and are able to look critically at development programmes and examine schemes for the Sangha members and for village development at village, Mandal and district levels. Sanghas have successfully raised awareness and initiated programmes on literacy, health, economic empowerment and environment. They are now beginning to understand their economic reality in the context of larger global trends. *In Kerala women analyse the impact of globalization on their lives as "depressed wage rates, lower income and consequently lower nutrition levels; higher indebtedness, incidence of suicides; on top of this the reduction in government services makes us even more vulnerable to these economic trends."* Sanghas seek to work together on common solutions through institutional means: through **collective farming**

*“by ploughing, weeding, planting in rotation so that each one can survive”*¹⁰; through the **Nari Adalats** in Gujarat and UP to secure their legal rights. More recently, in Karnataka, value added services of a helpline are planned. Through Panchayati Raj Institutions Sanghas articulate and gain agency to address their political interests and secure rights as citizens. **Sanghas have emerged as credible local organizations providing space for greater autonomy for women as valuable sources of information. Issues have been taken up and activities negotiated with reasonable success with state and other agencies based on emerging needs.** However MS Kerala is a fresh starter and is still learning to negotiate the narrow bridge of autonomy. MS Gujarat needs to be more focussed on the guiding principles and non-negotiables of MS.

Women have become more visible, due to their increased physical and social mobility. **Sangha women have taken up positions as Sahayogini, teacher and elected representatives at the village and block level.** Local leaders are now participating in cluster networks and setting up Federations. These new roles and expanded networking create a need for literacy and further education. It remains difficult however, to motivate older women to progress beyond very basic literacy skills.

Strong Sanghas show an accelerated pace of learning and transference to action especially in the older districts. They have enhanced their capacities to move to new organizational, managerial and decision-making roles, apart from developing greater linkages with Panchayati Raj and village development initiatives. Sanghas are affiliating at cluster level and providing support to weaker groups and to women outside their Sanghas. The weaker Sanghas on the other hand rely on the stronger Sanghas and Sahayoginis to provide guidance and leadership. The conceptual clarity and capacity of the Sahayogini, to facilitate the empowerment process in the Sanghas, directly impinges upon the quality of the Sangha and its capacity to emerge as an empowerment forum for women at the grassroots level.

In the older districts of AP, Gujarat, UP and Karnataka the Sanghas have created alternative systems to address specific women's needs, i.e. Women's Courts, collective farming to ensure food security and girls residential Centres (Mahila Shikshan Kendras) for a safe learning environment. *The struggles for wage increase in villages across Mandals in Andhra Pradesh have given more confidence to the women. They have negotiated with the landlords for minimum wages with the support of women who are members of their Sanghas and are also from the land owning class.* In Kerala exposure trips and workshops beyond their villages are new experiences for women. Contact with the world outside their homes and their collective economic activity has encouraged women to analyze their own position as women and start sharing experiences.

Forays into the economic spheres vary across the states. MS Karnataka initiated savings groups only after the Sanghas had matured and developed a deeper understanding of social issues from a gender perspective. Women themselves determined the guidelines for lending or borrowing and the kind of economic activities they felt were most feasible. In Kerala savings have been an entry point activity which is sustained by the group itself, allowing MS to work with the Sanghas on social awareness and action. The challenge has been to strike a balance between social and economic issues. In Gujarat SHGs have been promoted under the aegis of MS in collaboration

¹⁰ Surya Sangha, Idduki block, Adimali district, Kerala

with the Swa-Shakti programme, with little consideration to the target orientation and contradiction with MS principles. With various government schemes, NGOs and financial institutions vying with each other to set up self-help groups, MS reports increased problems in adhering to its own process oriented approach.

Women have negotiated land titles in joint names with their husbands to secure future ownership and control over land, and collective grain storage for lean periods to ensure food security. are measures that women have initiated to mitigate the adverse economic environment in UP and AP. Sanghas have instituted norms and rules that enable the Sangha women handle all financial transactions of the Sangha in AP, Kerala and Karnataka: expenditures, investments and financial assistance from banks. Enterprise training creates supplementary income opportunities for women and their families in UP and Kerala.

Knowledge of health and gender issues has brought about a new strength in women across Sanghas: they are aware of health services that exist and know how to access them. They are also questioning and resisting discriminatory social and traditional practices e.g female infanticide, child labour etc

In all the states under review, a WHO project has been instrumental in training Sahayoginis and community women on reproductive health issues. Functioning as voluntary health leaders, they spread health messages in the community and also seek men's participation to promote women's health. Sanghas intervene not only to facilitate health service access for women, but also to initiate discussions in women's groups on health issues and have thereby disseminated this information to wider audiences. Women in AP, Karnataka and UP grow and promote herbal medicines thus developing a resource base of traditional health culture.

The formation of Kishori Sanghas in UP and Kerala and organization of Yuvati Shibirs in Gujarat are significant initiatives. Apart from the training imparted on issues including family dynamics, health, cleanliness and sanitation, and information on social issues and government facilities and schemes and other social issues. This enables girls to find space to assert their rights, to meet with their peers and to develop negotiation skills and self-confidence. Talking about menstruation and learning to know their bodies, they no longer feel helpless and ignorant and are less diffident. They recognize the restrictions placed on them by society and discuss how to tackle social discrimination and harassment/discrimination with a new confidence germinating from feelings of self worth. More opportunities like this will enable girls to challenge discrimination in their lives and create a different social order. Earning opportunities leading to economic self-reliance too will increase as girls are given training to learn new ones and upgrade existing skills.

For tribal women in Adilabad district of AP, MS interventions and activities enabled women to seek solutions to the struggles for economic survival through alternative forms of economic organization. The creation of the All Women's Panchayat here is an act of faith, and tribal women seek the support of MS in coping with the challenges of these new roles. In Idukki district of Kerala, literacy training, initiated by MS, makes tribal women feel more confident and independent: they are able to read bus-signs, prices and access product information related to their livelihoods. The various vocational training

inputs have enabled Sangha women to develop new skills and earn extra income, which strengthens their position in a society where unemployment rates are very high.

Tribal women in both areas report a high level of trust in MS workers, as against their previous experiences of development functionaries. MS has also established links with tribal activists and sought involvement of community leaders in their efforts to work with the women - an approach appreciated both by women and the community. The state governments too recognize MS's initial successes in reaching out to tribal communities. However in Gujarat MS has yet to establish field presence in Dangs district and can learn from the experiences and strategies of MS Kerala and AP.

1.2 Creating a Foundation for a Grass-Root Level Women's Movement

Sanghas have emerged as collectives of women with a strong identity and a common goal to fight for social and gender injustice and make organized efforts to establish an equitable society with a place for themselves and their daughters. The abolition of the post of the Sakhi as a paid worker of the programme in UP, Karnataka and Gujarat has enabled women to take on leadership roles. Sanghas are classified as strong, intermediary and weak. The weaker Sanghas seek support from the stronger Sanghas. As strong Sanghas take initiatives on a range of issues - discriminatory practices and other needs of women - Sahayoginis are required to fulfill information needs and facilitate processes. This compels them to work in an intensive way, thereby limiting the horizontal expansion of the programme. It is paradoxical that while more villages are covered in Gujarat and UP, there are indications of the foundation of a movement in AP, Karnataka and in some districts of UP as evinced by the depth of analytical processes and well articulated actions.

Women are no longer silent. They now dare to speak out, among themselves, within the family, to village elders, landowners and government officials. All women cherish their own little and big 'victories'. Sanghas have increased their networking - women come together beyond Sanghas at village or block levels - on issues like alcoholism in Nainital and Tehri and on land rights in Allahabad in UP. . Sangha women in AP and hill districts of the erstwhile UP¹¹ have organized rallies against alcohol consumption and the local sale of arrack. Sanghas in AP, UP and Karnataka have successfully taken action against child marriages, gudiya patakka, *jogini* and *devadasi* systems, and maltreatment of widows and single women. On their own women have successfully tackled the issues of alcoholism, violence against women and debt relief through public action in Panchmahal district, Gujarat. In practical terms therefore there is a shift in focus of the programme from Sahyoginis to women's autonomous initiatives and action

They have progressed from Sanghas to coming together as federations that provide the collective platform to challenge discriminatory practices.. This was neither an easy nor a quick process. But step by step Sangha women have gained more space, more influence and have become more visible. It is very encouraging to see that once women discover their own strengths, the process of empowerment is irreversible and inclusive for other women around them. Sanghas operate as a strong pressure group at village

¹¹ The hill districts of UP are now part of the new state of Uttaranchal

and block levels, making use of and reviving traditional communication media. In older districts in UP, AP and Kamataka advocacy has been identified as the main objective for the formation of federations thus creating new forums for women.

Sanghas across AP, as in other states, have started addressing the issue of violence against women, in private and public domains. Two cases of rape in 1999 and 2000, one resulting in the death of an 18-year old, led to much publicised rallies participated by 800 women including other women's organizations in AP. Similar campaigns against jogini system, child labour and arrack have enabled Federations in older districts of Mahaboobnagar and Medak gain the identity of forums that challenge social injustice and fight for women's empowerment. A broad-based women's network has yet to materialise, although the recently established federations are a step in that direction, creating new forums for women. The Sanghas see themselves as part of the women's movement. " *We hold the keys for development' say women from the Federation in Mahboobnagar district. They can open doors to government services and resources like pensions, houses, bore wells and roads. The Sanghas have thus emerged as credible local organisations recognized as gold mines of information within the village.*

In Kamataka as collectives grow from an individual unit at the village level into Federations at the village cluster/taluk, and district level, they take on larger responsibilities and play more strategic roles in working for a just social order. Sangha women are taking over processes at the village level and MS interventions are more at the cluster, taluk and district level. Sanghas have networked with the various village institutions and with other Sanghas. Issue based federations are functioning at the taluk level in all the seven districts. The formatkõn of Sangha Federations reflects the change of MS Kamataka 's role to that of supporting and strengthening of Federations. Women are very conscious that for a strong Federation the member Sanghas have to be strong and have a clear perspective on gender issues. In turn the federation processes help to strengthen the Sanghas and identify the cnes where more work is required or different approaches need to be tried out.

In Gujarat, UP and Kamataka Women's Courts (Nari Adalats) address cases of domestic violence and public harassment. The Nari Adalats represent a forum owned and managed by the women and energized by the commitment of Sangha women. They are an alternative and informal justice delivery system, and simultaneously, an outcry from these women against the patriachal biases and structures of justice delivery in the country. Yet these have gained credibility: even the state machinery considers them desirable forums to attend to the needs of the women and primarily of the poor. Informed by the perspectives of the women's movement, these are a manifestation of the emerging institutional responses of the women, owned and managed by them and sustained at their own costs, although the initial investments and ongoing support have come from the programme.

In terms of a horizontal spread, MS Kerala is limited by its geographic coverage and sporadic collective action. However, in contrast to other SHGs in the region, MS Sanghas clearly emphasize social empowerment along with economic empowerment. When Sangha women take initiatives to facilitate the formation of other Sanghas, they talk about benefits not only in monetary terms but also in terms of 'women's empowerment' and are responsible for a snowballing of MS Sanghas.

Sanghas and Federations have evolved strategies to negotiate and work with the state in various ways. As members of the SEC and VEC Committees they ensure regular attendance of teachers and discuss the teacher absenteeism with the Sarpanch even complain to the Mandal officials if need be. Women have reported some success in sending girls to school and postponing the age of marriage. For them too the Sangha is an arena to discuss issues of violence, faced by single women and sexuality. As strong advocates of girls' education, Sangha women participate in enrolment campaigns and fight against child labour. Low and discriminative wages have been addressed through rallies and lengthy negotiations.

The state in turn recognizes the significant role that Federations and Sanghas have played in bringing about social change. Women leaders are sought on district and block level committees as well as invited to participate in state campaigns. In most cases however, women have articulated their interests and determined their involvement based on the issue and perspectives formulated, and are also willing to voice their dissent on state policies that are discriminatory.

It may be too early to speak of a women's movement, since there is presently a lack of critical mass, given the scattered pattern of growth of the programme within districts and states, and addressing too broad a range of issues. It is required that women are visible in larger numbers within an administrative or spatial unit to have the visibility or exert the necessary pressure on various institutions and forums of governance and power. Without that women's energies may only dissipate with little effect. Moreover consolidation of linkages with the regional, national and international Women's Movement, would enable the MS Sangha and federation women to inform its agenda and content.

Although most staff and Sanghas see themselves as part of the women's movement there is very limited opportunity for interface and exchange with other streams of the movement. Sangha women recall the nationwide Mahila Samakhya Sanghamitra Workshop as a profound expression of women's solidarity across state borders. However, the strategic alliances with like-minded organizations need to be improved, to strengthen the programme as an integral part of the Women's Movement. Alliances need to be forged much more at the lateral levels between the Sanghas and federations and other grassroots formations of women for the programme to truly evolve into a movement for women's empowerment and social change.

1.3 Women's Political Participation

The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India relates to the Panchayati Raj Act and seeks to redress under-representation of women in the political arena in India at the grassroots level. With provision of 33 percent reservation for women up to the district level, the Panchayat stands out as a local institutional framework for self-governance that can adopt women's agenda in village development. The Panchayati Raj system is fairly effectively implemented in Kamataka. It is the basis of local governance in Kerala since the People's Campaign in 1995. Kerala is also the only state where the devolution of financial powers has been made to Panchayat organizations. The Panchayati Raj pattern of governance prevails in other states also with varying levels of effectiveness and people's participation.

Agency And Influence

In the period under review, MS has successfully incorporated the Panchayati Raj agenda with demands from Sanghas as a vehicle for women's autonomy in local self-governance. Channeling information on the Panchayati Raj provided understanding and awareness, and has **strengthened women's presence in the process of self-governance**. Sanghas have played a **significant role as activator of village Panchayats and Gram Sabhas**. They have participated in the general meetings (*Gram Sabhas*) and placed their concerns (alcoholism and violence) on the agenda. Demands have also been made to set up the mandated Committee on Social Justice to tackle social issues especially in Karnataka. In UP MS women have been actively involved as Panchayat members. Utilizing the medium of newsletters and Mahila Pradhans, women disseminated information on Gram Sabha meetings. Sanghas have become more articulate and are able to influence decisions and the allocation of resources for village development.

Sangha women have taken significant initiatives in AP, UP and Karnataka to demand that Gram Sabhas be held regularly and in accordance with rules and procedures. Women attend Gram Sabha Meetings in larger numbers and attempt to raise issues of concern to women and poor, disadvantaged families in the villages. In Karnataka women report Panchayat agenda is influenced by Sangha women through the Sanghas and the Elected Women Representatives (EWRs). Sanghas have also insisted on the constitution of the Standing Committees (especially on Social Justice). They have also fought for co-optation of women from local Sanghas onto these Standing Committees, in accordance with the Panchayati Raj Act. *In Gujarat* it is difficult to draw any conclusion on women's participation in structures of local governance or on how women have used this forum to raise awareness or secure their rights.

In Kerala the programme has only started addressing this issue after the recent elections, given its recent inception and tentative beginnings. A conscious decision was taken by KMSS to distance itself from pre-election activities such as voter awareness training, to safeguard its political neutrality. However efforts now need to be made towards strengthening Sanghas for a greater consciousness of citizenship so that they can play a greater role in governance and influence political agenda to address women's needs in the future. An increasing participation of Sangha women in village meetings and greater interest in village affairs, with women keen to claim benefits are tangible outcomes of the MS processes. They realize that their voices are heard if they stand together as women. They also feel that they have a role in bridging the party divide, in a state sharply divided along political lines, and in promoting greater attention to women's concerns with both political groups. Building the power of women across party lines, and promoting alliances among women elected representatives across political barriers are challenges that the programme faces in that state. MS Kerala has also organized workshops on the Women Component Plan (WCP) at the block level in Kerala, and for separate Panchayats. The perspective of these exercises needs to be expanded to include gender analysis and budgeting.

The MS programme has built the capacity of Sanghas to act as community resource and pressure groups to monitor the functioning of the Gram Panchayat. The Sangha women have brought social justice issues to the fore, reinforcing the belief that poor women can change their status by influencing larger decision making processes.

Representation In Panchayats

Women were hitherto socially insignificant and marginalized, but today they belong to the Sangha and they have presence. Knowledge of PR processes, procedures and roles of representatives has clearly empowered Sangha women, encouraging them to stand for public posts, which were earlier seen as a male domain. A substantial number of Sangha women have stood for elections and a significant number have also been elected as ward members, Sarpanches, and representative at block and district levels. UP Sangha women have also actively participated in Panchayat administration as Pradhans and Panchayat members.

Armed with the knowledge provided through various awareness programmes, training and camps organized by the MS offices in the states, Sangha women are able to formulate their own needs, and challenge candidates and make demands during the election campaign. The primary initiative of all Sanghas in Karnataka was to activate the Gram Sabhas to involve women at village level as their allies to lobby and campaign for them.

The Sangha network now supports and informs the women who have won elections. Sangha women have come a long way from the diffidence and fear, ignorance and lack of information and resistance from men to emerge as representatives of the concerns of women. The situation however still poses challenges for women who have only just entered the portals of political power for these roles also imply a change in the relationships within groups and having to deal with the murky politics of the mainstream.

In Gujarat it has been difficult for women to get into Panchayats. While the number of women in Panchayats has increased, the stagnation of women's representation at Panchayat level in Rajkot and Vadodara is a disturbing trend.

Sanghas are aware of their growing influence, as they consciously choose to strengthen their advocacy capacity and establish a larger presence via federations. Elected members have been able to address and voice the issues that affect women – schools, education for girls, drinking water, housing, roads, bore wells for agriculture, health care, immunization and income generating programmes. While in Karnataka they set the agendas for meetings and demand accountability from other Panchayat members, government functionaries and Mandal Officers, in other states women are struggling for a voice. Their confidence is higher however, given the backing of the Sanghas. In AP also Sangha women are making efforts to solve women's problems and using Gram Sabha and Standing Committees to effectively address alcoholism, domestic violence and access to resources. The political arena and lobbying for good governance are viewed as interwoven issues and despite achievements still remain for women. Sanghas need to devise effective strategies to counter the trends of mainstream politics. MS has worked actively to facilitate and promote the establishment of all women Panchayats in Karnataka and in AP. While these are unique experiments, they need to be nurtured, as the women are first generation representatives with little exposure to the political mainstream and even less experience in community leadership. This poses a challenge and a great demand on the programme at the district and state level to provide the necessary support and know how for women to conduct their business effectively, given that the programme staff has hitherto had little experience of political processes.

Post elections, MS has been offering capacity building training for elected women representatives in all five states. This exercise has helped in bridging the lack of experience of women's public exposure, and at the same time creates a common platform for women's issues. In Kerala elected members perceived the training as a means to familiarize themselves with their new roles and responsibilities, daring to speak out and expose their ignorance among their peers. Sharing experiences and exchanging advice has developed a bond among the women representatives beyond party lines, which could be efficiently institutionalized by MS as a women's platform. Intensive training is also required in Adilabad District to support the All Women's Panchayat in its foray into local governance.

1.4 Women's Legal Rights

Overall, Sangha women have become far more aware of their legal rights and the concerned laws and regulations. Sangha members have addressed issues like domestic violence, harassment, rape, and murder and caste violence through negotiation and group pressure. Different strategies have been adopted by Sanghas across states to address instances of violence against women in the home and outside, and this remains the single common agenda that draws women into working as a support group for each other as a key area of action.

Women in Karnataka, UP, Kerala and AP report that conflicts, harassment and violence within the family have reduced, due to women's participation in meetings. By rotating the venue of meetings in member's houses, the Sanghas in AP have been able to ensure that family members are aware of the strength and agenda of the Sanghas, which reduces family resistance and harassment of women for fear of retribution. If a woman is harassed or beaten, the group will determine a course of action, which generally involves talking to her husband or family members, and pressurizing them to mend their ways. Efforts to identify ways to help husbands or other family members to deal with problems may be explored to resolve the issue as well. Women are aware of laws and if the need arises, threaten to take them to the Police or may call them to the Sangha meeting. In Karnataka, *Sangha Legal Committees* have been set up and have taken various concerted actions. Details of violence against women were collected and women visited the nearest Police Stations to get acquainted with Police officials. They have complained about violence against women and received assistance. **Women have made a significant transition as they now recognize and question violence against themselves.** The Sangha federations and clusters have made it possible for women to work in solidarity across talukas for resolution of problems, particularly those of harassment, bigamy and desertion faced by girls married into other villages. Sanghas are the first level where these problems can be raised by the women and possible solutions sought.

Strong Sanghas have demonstrated their ability to address discriminative social practices that are legally banned (child marriage, *jogini* and *devadasi* system, child labour and untouchability). **Backed by information on legal and basic rights women have ensured implementation of certain rights such as minimum wages and joint land titles through collective action, negotiating with landowners and officials.** The weak Sanghas ally with the strong ones for support to assert their rights. Some Sanghas continue to be hampered due to poor knowledge and information and gender bias in the legal system. Training has been a source of information and the clusters and

Federations offer opportunities for women to gain information on legal literacy and work together on issues of legal rights. Constant inputs and discussion on these issues are however required to change attitudes and to sustain actions for securing women's legal status to bring about the reduction in incidence of violence and discrimination. This is an area where Sanghas will require support and input from MS even while plans are envisaged for groups and federations to work autonomously.

Several rallies have been organized by Sanghas for mobilizing women from surrounding villages on social issues. Women work as pressure groups on the police and administration with a fair degree of success in Karnataka and parts of AP and UP as they are now aware of the prevailing procedures and steps that have to be taken. **Their rallies against cases of rape, murder and caste violence have ensured timely and effective investigations, although not all culprits have been caught.**

The formation of clusters and federations have galvanized these efforts as women are quickly able to rally around in large numbers around instances of violence and harassment and armed with their knowledge are able to pressurize communities and the police for solutions. These also serve as watchdog bodies against the spread or practice of socially discriminatory practices, and have gained recognition in the area with their strong and active roles. Through the Social Justice Committees and through the WERs, Sanghas have also been able to raise this as an issue in Panchayats in some instances.

Kerala MS views violence and harassment in public places as a key concern of its activities. Women report a heightened level of awareness on legal rights through the legal literacy inputs. They are gradually acknowledging the incidence of violence in their lives and seeking support from Sangha members to address their problems. MS Sevani¹² are seen as the information providers and have motivated Sanghas with information and support to take up issues as they arise. Groups have gradually started negotiating with families and seeking redressal from community forums in instances of harassment and violence. MS is also making efforts to sensitize the WERs to these issues and WERs are eager to work with MS and Sanghas to establish ways to address problems of violence. There is however a tremendous resistance from the local representatives to acknowledge the issue and concerted effort will be required to strengthen Sanghas and WERs and support them to take up issues of violence.

Nari Adalats are emerging as a vibrant alternative system of justice for women, with wide acceptability in the community. They have been established in Gujarat, followed by UP and Karnataka as Women's Courts and offer a credible alternative justice system. Nari Adalats are comprised of a wide cross-section of women. Apart from the Sangha women and one or two Sahayoginis they include women whose cases have been solved earlier, some single and elder women, women from lower castes and women members from Gram Panchayats. Nari Adalats cut across caste, class and religious divides and are filling the gap created by a legal system that is perceived as patriarchal and unreachable, slow and expensive. An infrastructure has been created where women can obtain social justice that is accessible, affordable and gender sensitive.

¹² The grassroots worker of the MS programme in Kerala is known as the Sevani

Cases brought before the Adalats pertain mainly to domestic violence, physical and mental harassment, fraudulent marriages and bigamy, divorce and maintenance, alcoholism, child marriage, child abuse and the harassment of women not able to have children, specially sons. Cases related to economic issues like property are taken up if women are affected. **By bringing the women's perspective to the solution of women's problems, Nari Adalats have challenged the patriarchal structures and increased the participation of women in the process of obtaining justice.** Nari Adalats provide space for women to articulate problems of violence and harassment and have imbued them with the confidence that justice can be sought and obtained.

Nari Adalats have had an impact not only on the women whose cases were addressed but also on their families and on adolescent girls, village leaders and Panchayats, and on lawyers, police and MS personnel. They are creating a new identity for women in the family, village and community. They have also impacted the way people perceive the problem of violence against women and have brought the women's perspective to the concept of justice and punishment. The Nari Adalats have in turn, highlighted the social and political importance of the Sangha and there is a reported trend of increasing number of women and even men, seeking help from the Sangha in Karnataka and UP.

Nari Adalats are viewed as economically and socially viable alternatives, having the confidence of local people. **There are no lawyer's fees, nor intimidating visits to police stations and courts.** Support from the government in the form of free accommodation for meetings, and from the police in the form of cases referred establishes the larger credibility of the NAs. Sangha women play a lead role in the initiation and functioning of Nari Adalats and those who participate in the Adalat incur transport costs for traveling to and from the Tehsil headquarters and on case work and also suffer loss of wages. In Karnataka a small fee has been levied as a cost recovery measure while Gujarat proposes to introduce the same. Apart from the costs incurred by the women, NAs are also supported by the Sahayoginis and the programme. Sahayoginis continue to play a critical role in facilitating and documenting the process, which adds to their workload and affects the time available for other work.

There is also no budget line in MS for expenses related to the Nari Adalats as these emerged during the course of evolution of the programme in this phase. While NAs are indeed low cost and simpler alternatives for justice delivery with a gender perspective, are recognized as credible and have even been given space at the Tehsil HQs by the local administration in Gujarat, plans for sustainability of NAs would need to take into account their requirement of continuing support requirement particularly for documentation, training and exposure, participation of Sahayoginis in the Adalats and networking with the various institutions the Adalats interact with. MS itself should be equipped to provide this support through increased budget and personnel in the talukas/blocks/districts that have them

While Nari Adalats remain independent in decision making and working, they also support the formal law agencies - police and judiciary - indirectly. The 12 Nari Adalats in 3 districts of UP dealt with 347 cases in 2000-2001 of which 250 were resolved. In spite of their obvious success Nari Adalats are functioning in just three districts, Tehri (8), Saharanpur (3) and Sitapur(1) in UP. Nari Adalats have been successfully run in some districts. There have been 800 cases dealt with by the Nari Adalats in Rajkot district alone. Besides Rajkot and Vadodara districts however, very few Nari Adalats have been

conducted in other districts especially in Banaskantha. MS Gujarat should attempt to extend the concept and practice of Nari Adalats to other districts.

Nari Adalats are a relatively new initiative in Karnataka. While the Sanghas and the federations have been dealing quite efficiently with women's problems, the concept of Nari Adalats are viewed as more formalized and effective and are in the process of being set up in all the districts. They may also provide a more sustainable forum for such issues and would also facilitate a broader outreach. By bringing the women's perspective to the solution of women's issues, Nari Adalats have challenged the patriarchal structures and increased the participation of women in the process of obtaining justice.

In Andhra Pradesh while Sanghas and Federations have been dealing with legal issues and seeking justice for women, they express the need for an alternative justice system. Women leaders learnt about the experience of the NAs at the Sanghamitra Workshop held in Delhi in 2000 and are in the process of exploring the same, and its relationship with the Federations. Common people, police and officials have positively acknowledged the involvement of APMSS on legal rights issues. APMSS has also developed a booklet on women's legal rights and organised several workshops and village meetings on the behest of the Collector Medak district. Sangha women and Federation Leaders however express the need for a formal legitimate and sustainable institutional model to address these issues with greater efficacy. **Exposure visits and exchange forums facilitate learning across regions between grassroots women. These need to be encouraged and facilitated more rigorously across districts and states as a learning strategy. Issue based learning on NAs and other initiatives such as federation formation and functioning, work with tribal communities collective farming etc. could be facilitated through such processes. Apart from sharing practices, this would also enable women to analyse issues and evolve new perspectives.**

1.5 Cutting Across Caste and Class

The focus on the poorest households resulted in a dominant representation of women from Scheduled Caste, backward and disadvantaged groups in the Sanghas. Attempts to include other women has not always been easy, as basic needs such as water, housing or health facilities tend to vary, given the fact that caste/class groups are living in geographically separated and marginalized areas. However, overall Sanghas are consciously addressing the issue in some states. **More outspoken Sangha members stress the common concerns, talking about having the same blood, belonging to the same "gender caste".** Sanghas cross the caste boundaries by eating together, holding meetings in various caste houses, etc. The alternative justice system of the Nari Adalats demonstrates this with its broad outreach, also catering to the needs of Muslim women and upper caste women.

The formation of multi-caste Sanghas is an example of the systematic strategy adopted by MS Karnataka in the formation and strengthening of women's grassroots forums. Since problems such as bigamy, alcoholism, exploitation, migration and lack of industrialization were common across castes, MS Karnataka found that there was a need to address these issues at a wider level and to establish multi-caste Sanghas. At the same time, women from upper castes who saw Sangha women of lower castes

interfacing successfully with the domain outside the household, came of their own accord to join the Sanghas. Thus Sangha membership broadened to allow women from upper castes to become members while remaining vigilant against caste discrimination and giving primacy to concerns of women from vulnerable sections. Sanghas try to overcome the divides of caste and class to bring women together by stressing common concerns. They have written several songs to address the issue, singing that all people have the same blood. **Experience shows that issues of violence are the most 'unifying' common concerns, which bring women from all backgrounds together.**

Greater participation of women in local governance and networking among elected women representatives offers another opening to bridge the caste and class divide and work together to focus on gender concerns. Issues like water management and installation of hand pumps facilitate inter-caste interaction. Upper caste women complaining about broken water pumps, in lower caste areas and the women supporting higher caste women in crisis highlight the solidarity among women of different social background in Andhra Pradesh.

Through consolidated efforts, Mahila Samakhya has been able to establish a presence in tribal settlements that were earlier shying away from outsiders' interference in AP and more recently in Gujarat and Kerala. The literacy and health programmes and childcare centres become a space for various caste and religious groups to come together. Involvement of women from different communities in Sangha discussions and activities has mobilized women to take action against the exclusion of poor women from electoral rolls. The MS groups in Kerala are very heterogeneous with women from every possible caste and religion, although most belong to the poorer sections. Caste structures remain extremely complex and pervasive in Uttar Pradesh. While MS has successfully upheld and secured lower-caste women's rights despite the problems encountered in overcoming these, as testified in some of their case histories. Mahila Samakhya UP and Karnataka have ensured representation of secular and equality as values in the materials produced and in related activities.

MS Sanghas include women across caste/class divides and bring women together across religious boundaries in Gujarat, as was visible in the Rajkot Nari Adalat, which was also attended by Muslim women. On occasions, women from other caste groups attend meetings without officially being part of the Sangha. However, the constraints or difficulties in overcoming caste/class/religious backgrounds are complex. This is an important issue, and needs greater attention in order to make Sanghas more representative. The pattern of staffing should be strengthened to be more broadly representatives of class/caste/ religious groups to demonstrate cooperation and sisterhood among women. **MS provides an opportunity to bring women together in a secular manner across religious groups, irrespective of these barriers, to work in solidarity for social transformation towards equality and justice.**

1.6 Growth, Pace And Emerging Trends

Meetings with older Sanghas have revealed a change in roles of Sahayoginis and Sanghas over time. Sahayoginis who used to be the implementers of the programme, have now become facilitators, and are more specialized in specific issues/areas. **Sangha women have become more autonomous** and demonstrate enhanced management skills by organizing their own activities, calling on the Sahayogini for

backstopping. **As Sanghas become stronger and self reliant, they adapt quicker to new roles and reach out to neighboring villages to help other women to establish their own Sanghas.** Women are entering into formal political spaces in greater numbers and with new vigour, influencing grassroots democratic processes as citizens and elected representatives at the village and Block level. Sanghas are gradually realizing their potential as political forums that represent the interests of women. Sangha leaders are recognized as members of the emerging District/Block Resource Centres. Women are creating alternative systems and institutional spaces to address their needs. In line with the process of acquiring greater autonomy Sanghas have started the formation of Federations. These networks of clusters of villages have evolved as forums with a larger voice and presence at the block level to articulate women's concerns on issues like violence, health, *Panchayat* interface, education, savings and credit. *Nari Adalats* have emerged as gender sensitive alternative justice systems that are supported by the community and considered credible by the state.

MS is gradually broadening its scope. Starting with older women it has created a space for participation of younger women and adolescent girls. *Cheli Sangha's*, *Kishori Sanghas* and *Yuvati Shibirs* focus on the needs of adolescent girls and address issues like health, sex education and harassment and vocational training opportunities. These girls are the potential expansion and sustainability potential and leaders as they carry these experiences and learning to new destinations.

The mobilizing potential of MS has been recognized by various government departments, which call on the Sangha women for implementation support. This offers the Sanghas an opportunity to tackle the shortcomings of government programmes from within. The district functionaries of MS supplement these efforts, given the increasing requests for gender inputs by various departments. However, **Mahila Samakhya should be consciously alert to the risk of becoming merely a service delivery machine for other programmes and should instead strive to influence their perspectives while maintaining its own autonomy and adherence to its principles.**

The programme has expanded in most states during the past five years, in a planned way as well as voluntarily through Sanghas' own initiative. Expansion of the programme is necessary to ensure a more visible presence as a process oriented, bottom up approach. Expansion must follow a course of densification in the existing districts for maximum impact. Expansion beyond is also necessary for greater visibility. The ground reality of multiplication of SHGs and schemes for economic empowerment calls for a new approach for expansion, where MS positions its value addition in the mobilization of SHGs and other groups around issues of social empowerment. In Andhra Pradesh the Sahayoginis are successfully uniting existing SHGs to address social issues, at the same time strengthening group dynamics through qualitative inputs on good practice. Kerala has more or less the same approach, although its entry-point is training for economic self-reliance.

Challenges ahead

The challenge to sustainability of the MS approach looms large from recent initiatives such as the DPIP poverty programme in AP, UP and Gujarat, and the Kudumbashree programme in Kerala. Given the economic nature of these programmes and the provision for matching resources for groups, these programmes are likely to subvert the

processes that MS has considered fundamental for long term sustainability of Sangha processes towards women's empowerment. These programmes have limited focus exclusively on SC/ST women, thereby threatening to split Sanghas and communities along caste lines instead of building solidarity among women of all denominations. These programmes are state-wide and would therefore impinge upon the space and processes that MS promotes.

This emphasises all the more the need to intensify processes of MS within the existing districts to demonstrate a viable model for the empowerment of women. MS would also need to negotiate with these programmes on their scope and approach, based on its own experiences, and seek to establish good practices that can provide learning for such programmes. Therefore, MS needs support towards intensifying its processes in current areas while providing perspective building and capacity development inputs as a resource agency to such programmes, to develop a holistic understanding among such programme personnel relating to women's empowerment.

New initiatives have been planned based on the experiences of the older districts and the needs that have arisen there. A constant vigil is required to ensure that the group processes are not being compromised with the provision of new inputs, and that the groups are at a level to absorb such inputs and manage them in the collective. The older districts may be able to absorb such inputs as the resources made available through the sustainable agriculture programme supported by UNDP and for Cluster Huts. Processes in the next phase districts need to be deepened and strengthened before groups will be ready to absorb such resources without thwarting their internal processes. Indicators need to be identified to assess group's preparedness for such inputs. The collective management of resources and funds is a complicated issue and Sanghas require strong internal processes to function as a collective. The policy to release the Sangha funds only once the group becomes strong is a sound one and should form the basic criteria for disbursement of other resources to them as well.

Sanghas and federations in the old districts prioritize the social empowerment agenda to address their social status; such articulation is however not explicit in the second phase districts. The processes in the second phase districts have not been as intensive and lack the rigour of the first phase districts, partly due to the fact that there is a perennial staff shortage especially in the new districts. Staff turnover implies a loss of people who have shared fundamental perspectives that are essential to the building, strengthening and expansion of the processes in the new districts. This lack of personnel is directly attributable to the low remuneration, at levels far below the market rate, and the demands of the programme. While the state office has sought to provide the support required for overcoming this problem, they themselves have been stretched due to a similar problem. The expansion of the programme on the scale and with the intensity envisaged has also not been possible for the same reasons. **Retention and appropriate compensation to the staff are a prerequisite for the quality of such a process-oriented programme.**

A programmatic linkage for economic development with a target-oriented Swa-Shakti project thwarts the MS objectives as it does not provide the space for issues or processes to evolve based on the needs of women and instead predetermines the agenda for groups. The use of trained Sahayoginis for this purpose is thus a deviation from the MS goals and use of MS funding for such an activity would be improper unless it operates on the basis of the norms and non violable principles of the programme. **MS Gujarat can learn from other state MS programmes like MS Karnataka and U.P.**

where negotiation and operational strategies are planned to ensure that these fundamental concerns of the MS philosophy are not compromised through collaborations and partnerships for target oriented economic/rural development programmes.

2. EDUCATION

The National Policy of Education (NPE) 1986 brought a conceptual shift from equal educational opportunities for women to **education for women's equality**. The potential of education as an agent of change in the status of women came to be recognized.

MS has engaged with rural women from socio-economically-disadvantaged communities in the most backward areas of districts with low women's literacy.

Educational processes provide poor women the space, confidence and ability to question and demand accountability from mainstream institutions and are integral to the aim of facilitating empowerment and social change in MS. Education in MS includes literacy and involves the process of questioning, analyzing and seeking solutions. Women's new roles in political participation, paralegal initiatives, federation processes and holistic health have created a demand for literacy.

2.1 Women's Education

" Our lives have changed, our girls are going to schools. My power is my education. Now I am learning to read and write." Said a Sangha member in AP.

Educational activities were initiated in different ways based on the level of literacy and needs of the women. In AP the demand came for an understanding of government interventions. The Sanghas have demanded literacy and education for themselves and their daughters as they attempt to address social problems like child marriage, child labour, marital and social violence, Jogini system. In Kerala the programme addresses the educational needs of women and adolescent girls through "awareness classes", vocational training and capacity building. Irrespective of their educational levels, Sangha women, feel deprived of information due to the social-cultural restrictions. MS offers them a safe learning space and gives new opportunities through information and new confidence to venture out into public domains.

Education has emerged as a need as Sanghas have evolved and women's visions about themselves have developed. They recognize the capacity building strength of education. Educational opportunities have been created through structured and informal learning inputs that enable women to address issues of unequal access to education and health, problems of bigamy and divorce, maintenance, violence in the family and employment opportunities. Inputs have focused on building knowledge and capacities as well as perspectives on women's lives and the larger socio-economic scenario. The approach to issues is holistic rather than sectoral in most cases, providing women with the means to analyze their context and identify strategies to bring about change.

Progress in literacy initiatives is varied and uneven across districts and states. While Karnataka and UP are systematizing efforts and employing multiple strategies, efforts in

Gujarat have been uneven and the number and frequency of literacy classes across all districts remains low.

Strategies employed to provide literacy and continuing educational opportunities include training in residential camps for women and adolescent girls in AP, UP and Karnataka. Literacy classes in the villages enable women to help village children as well as learn from them. Sahayoginis and BMK teachers teach women during meetings to read and write. Some Sanghas have arranged for a teacher in their village. Literacy camps are reported to have greater impact but need sustained follow up at the Sangha level for acquired literacy skills to be retained. Curricula for literacy at the Adult Literacy centres in AP and Gujarat need to be developed systematically based on women's expressed interests and to provide capacity development as well as perspective inputs. Currently, available primers are used and supplemented with other materials from the program in AP and Kerala, based on the teachers' own perceptions. In Karnataka Sangha Shikshan Committees take up tasks related to education, literacy and documentation and report success in raising literacy levels and skills of members and those of their children, particularly daughters. They also facilitate enrollment and monitor attendance in schools and interact with the school management and community. Literacy has enabled Sangha women to handle and organize Sangha documentation. A few Sangha women are also running learning centers. Literacy needs have clearly emerged from the Sangha women's involvement in other activities like the Nari Adalats and Federation promotion. In Kerala where literacy levels are higher, group members are encouraged to organize literacy classes to help non-literate Sangha members. In the tribal settlements of Idukki literacy classes play a prominent role, given the lower literacy rates, and provide the basis for mobilization of groups. **An objective review of the situation leads to the conclusion that literacy inputs need to be systematized and relevant, and need to combine with additional input for enhancing analytical thought processes to facilitate the route to empowerment through education. Literacy initiatives need to be focused on a combination of the "word" and the "world" to enable women to acquire learning to reach MS objectives.** However, tracking and follow up of learners and their assessments also needs to be organised. Post literacy materials require to be developed and disseminated on a sustained basis across all states.

Specialized curricula have been developed for groups for issue based learning in Karnataka and AP given their involvement in local/regional social issues such as violence against women, *Jogini/Devadasi cult*, alcoholism, child marriage, wage labour, Panchayati Raj, health and environment. Each state has developed modules/materials within the local context for enhancing women's education and the MS perspective. These were shared during in the National Sanghamitra Workshop in 2000. MS also makes use of existing learning material, developed by the State Literacy Missions and other agencies in the states. The material needs to be screened and if necessary modified, as the content is not always gender sensitive. MS also needs to engage with agencies involved in the developing curriculum and materials to provide engendering inputs as well as to inform these from the perspectives of rural poor women. This will also serve their need of making such materials relevant to the needs of their Sanghas. The high level of education in Kerala makes information dissemination through the printed word much easier. KMSS has printed a booklet on the process and steps of Sangha/SHG formation, its philosophy, its benefits and objectives and other formalities of applications, technicalities, bank formalities, bye-laws etc.

There has been a tremendous upsurge in the demand for education - for information and knowledge by the Sangha women for themselves and school education for their children, particularly girls. Sanghas have actively participated in school enrolment drives. Sangha women have strategically sought membership to the Village Education Committees (VECs), School Education Committees (SECs) and School Development and Management Committees (SDMCs) in UP, AP and Karnataka. To ensure the enrolment and retention of children in schools and monitor student and teacher attendance and Sanghas play an active role in holding the system accountable. MS gender training modules and some teaching learning materials have been extensively used by DPEP in UP and Karnataka. In UP a Government Order (1996) was issued to enable older women and adolescent girls (from MSKs) to appear for the fifth class examinations. Some Panchayats have provided free space for a KMSS resource centre to provide training opportunities for the women. KMSS in turn participates as a gender specialist in training and workshops that are organized by the Panchayats, such as the masonry training in Nellanadu. They are involved in the enrollment drives of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP).

They are active in enrollment drives and follow up non-enrolled children to persuade parents to allow the children to come to school. MS has shared its training modules with the DPEP and has been the nodal agency in preparing the State Gender Policy (Mahila Niti) in UP. Women have been involved in the development of appropriate syllabi for girls and women and their writings are disseminated to a wider audience and serve as important reading material for neo-literate women. MS UP also runs libraries and has reached out to more than 10,000 men and women and helps sustain their literacy skills.

In AP the impact of MS is visible in the high increase in literacy figures in the programme districts as compared to other districts, in major part attributable to the MS programme. There is also evidence of the programme's effectiveness in the successes in enrolment in its Mandals and villages.

MS has actively participated in the Total Literacy Campaign in identification and training of teachers. Women in MS Sanghas in Panchmahal district Gujarat have received training in basic reading and writing. MSG has collaborated with DPEP in expansion of its literacy programmes to districts that were not covered by it previously. MS needs to strengthen its linkage with DPEP as with the formal mainstream education sector to influence curriculum and material development. MS could also network more closely with the NLM initiatives of Post and Continuing Education Programmes in order to influence the development of reading material by the NLM.

MS Sanghas have taken part in enrolment drives and Sahayoginis have been associated with DPEP community mobilization activities at block/taluka level. Unfortunately, this association of Sangha women with enrolment drives has not resulted in a uniform reaffirmation and commitment to girls' education among Sangha members in Gujarat. Whereas women of Sanghas in UP, Karnataka and AP report an almost total enrollment of members' children either in schools, MSKs or BMKs, not all Sangha women were sending their daughters to primary schools in Gujarat. They did not express concern over the fact, reflecting a lack of perspective and engagement within the programme on the issue. The Mission is of the view that MSG needs to focus its efforts to address issues through greater articulation and analysis of perspectives. A closer association of the MSG with teacher training and curriculum development in DPEP would help to engender initiatives and be beneficial to both programmes.

Women highlight the relevance of education in their lives in a number of ways. In practical terms, literacy and issue-based learning enable them to sign instead of using their thumb impression, to seek information of government schemes and programmes such as for housing and pensions without constrain of literacy. Women view literacy as necessary for sound leadership in political processes. The demand for literacy has increased with greater participation of women in the political processes in recent Panchayati Raj elections. The requirements of women to take up leadership roles and manage the affairs of the Federation have also created a greater desire among women, especially at leadership positions to acquire literacy skills. Education is viewed as a means of enabling them to learn and develop new skills, and as a means to acquire and transfer knowledge. Nari Adalats and Sangha processes have also provoked women to demand literacy as a capacity that empowers women to influence and negotiate with men and improve the village. The processes of education have built in the Sangha women in AP, UP and Karnataka the capacity to challenge and remove social evils and prevent bad habits among family members and in their communities. . Women have developed an understanding about the practices in a feminist perspective, analyze the consequences and examine strategies to address the problem on their own initiative. Women now feel more capable of negotiating for their needs and aspirations, especially in the older districts of MS where Sangha processes have become deep rooted and have led to higher levels of engagement and negotiation.

Given the increasing demand and heightened understanding of the relevance of education, the programme needs to tackle these through a systematic response. A focussed planning exercise is required for the education component in each state to cater to the emerging needs for women's education more effectively, to generate curriculum and materials and share strategies between states and with other programmes engaged in literacy and Continuing Education interventions. This acquires greater significance given high expectations from the mainstream departments at state and national levels from MS to evolve and demonstrate innovative strategies for women's education. Besides this MS has to effectively manage expanding outreach and ensure that education does not get subsumed in the larger social empowerment agenda of women.

2.2 Girl's Education

"We never got a decent chance for education. We want our daughters' lives to be different" say Sangha women.

The impact of MS educational initiatives is most visible in the impact on children's enrolment as Sangha women ensure that their own children attend school in 755 villages in UP. The educational awareness campaigns have led to 100% literacy in 165 villages in UP and to total enrollment in 68 villages in AP of the MS blocks and taluks. Community level PRA and village mapping exercises, rallies and campaigns, Kala Jathas, mobilization of Gram Sabhas and the election of Sangha women as chairpersons and members of SECs in villages have contributed to this success.

MS resolved to work with young adolescent girls to influence the choices they make in adult life, based on the demands from Sangha women, who wanted their daughters have the choices that they did not have. Therefore, the educational needs of never enrolled

and drop out girls has become a focus issue. Short-term bridge courses, camps and initiatives through *Bal Kendras*, *Bal Mitra Kendras*, *Cheli sanghas* and *Kishori Kendras*, Yuvati Shibirs provide educational opportunities and facilitate mainstreaming of children.

The programme needs to strengthen ongoing learning opportunities beyond the classroom. The programme should ensure that girls' education is not at the cost of women's education. Materials for neo-literate persons such as newsletters, information bulletins need to be generated, accessed and disseminated more widely at the grassroots level. A stronger interface with the Continuing Education Programme would strengthen gender perspectives, while providing greater material and content for the MS programme.

BMKs in AP, Bal Shikshan Kendras in Gujarat and Non-Formal Education (NFE) classes for boys and girls are run in villages with high drop out or illiteracy among girls and serve to mainstream children into school. Mixed classes for boys and girls are a constraint for girls attendance and male teachers and inadequate material further impede their learning. While a number of children have been mainstreamed from these Centres, a number of issues need to be addressed to make these more effective as interim educational opportunities specifically for girls. Some of the practical aspects that are required to be taken care of include

- (a) Duration and structure of classes to deal with a group of children at different levels of learning,
- (b) the development of diverse competencies/skills among teachers to teach adult women, adolescent girls and children with assurance of quality and gender perspectives and
- (c) Systems of assessment of children and of teachers.

The linkage of these Centres needs to be forged with the MSKs and the mainstream schools in a more effective manner. Kishori Literacy Centers (Kishori Kendras) in Uttar Pradesh enable adolescent girls to rejoin mainstream schools and provide a range of life skills. Many graduates of the Kishori Kendras opt to join the MSKs, the residential girls' educational institution and then move to formal schools.

Mahila Shikshan Kendras (MSKs) that are residential learning centres for 14+ girls have been one of the most successful educational components of the programme. MSKs serve to create opportunities for adolescent girls to go back to school, and thus prevent the initiation of girls into labour, cults, postpone the age of marriage and develop a second generation of leadership. MSKs run in AP (4), Karnataka (4), Gujarat (2), and UP (7) offer adolescent girls a residential course and a chance to complete class ten education in a secure environment. The adolescent girls' group in Kerala expressed the need for remedial classes to enable them to complete tenth standard,

There are also a number of need based variations in the courses run at the MSKs such as

- 2 month residential initiative that qualifies girls to be admitted to mainstream formal schools. Many of these girls continue to use the MSK hostel facilities as this offers a safe environment.
- Additional courses in life skills and knowledge and income earning skills such as typing and tailoring.
- 8 month residential bridge course to help girls re-enter the mainstream education system.

MSKs provide residential teaching courses for adolescent girls and young women for up to 8 months in Karnataka, AP and UP. Besides academic content, the MSK curriculum includes life skills, creates awareness of socio-economic realities, and prepares the participants to analyze, question and understand. According to reports available, the MSK curriculum stresses teaching through the feminist perspective in the local context in Uttar Pradesh. MS also introduces girls to practical and useful skills like cycling, judo and sewing. MSK in Uttar Pradesh also holds short residential literacy training courses for women participating in programmes on health, economic activities and PRI formulated with the involvement of the Sangha women. These strengthen ownership and decision making among women. These centres have played a significant role in delaying the age of marriage of girls, who themselves oppose the idea and take a stand with their parents once they realize the value of education for them selves. The majority of pass outs from MSKs continue their education in the mainstream system.

MSKs have reached out to drop out girls with innovative curriculum models within a safe learning environment catering to their needs (family life skills as well as regular academic curricula and extra curricula activities). Some States have recognized the need to provide teacher training support for the teachers/wardens of the MSKs. More professional support for these teachers is required for better transaction of the curriculum.

The curriculum and classroom transactions require review in the context of messages given through songs and activities undertaken in the classroom through participatory methodologies. Core Curriculum focus needs to shift from more gender specific content to integration of gender class and caste. The curricula of the Kendras should also address the varying needs of the different age groups in the Kendras, consisting of some girls young enough to be mainstreamed after a short preparatory period and others who may be older and need inputs for enhancing their life-skills.

Sanghas and parents are now convinced that MSKs are a safe opportunity for adolescent girls to fulfill their learning needs to enable them to enter the mainstream. Girls enjoy the daily routine of the MSK away from the drudgery of invisible/paid work. The majority of them have moved to mainstream schools as hostlers or day scholars. Along with academic proficiency, they have acquired additional skills like sewing, raising nurseries and knowledge about nutrition and health, child rights and legal literacy, that are not part of the formal school curriculum. There are demands for MSKs at Mandal level in AP so that girls are closer to their homes. This reflects the increase in demand as well as the aspiration to send older and younger siblings to the centre. Girls themselves bring more girls to the centre based on their positive experiences. The curriculum needs to be oriented to differential learning needs of different age categories of learners since younger siblings also attend. More MSKs are needed and teachers need to divide time adequately based on requirements, perhaps with shorter courses.

MS UP and Karnataka have also introduced a small token payment from the parents for the MSK, with the aim of helping the families to value education. MSKs have worked through the harvest season UP, reinforcing the principle of equal opportunity and gender equity by not providing a break in girls education to enable them to attend to domestic demands.

It is unfortunate that the MSKs in Gujarat have become dysfunctional, even as in other states like Karnataka and U.P. the number of MSKs and number of students is steadily increasing. The discontinuation of Mahila and Bal Shikshan Kendras in Gujarat, apparently due to lack of appropriate accommodation and the cost ineffectiveness of too few students need to be addressed through greater motivation and creation of a safe environment and relevant inputs.

MSKs fill a niche need and should be up-scaled in all the states, and revitalized in Gujarat. MSKs should remain located within MS with future links to District Resource Centres in the new phase, influencing mainstream education and catering to continuing education needs of Sangha women. Simultaneously, the increasing demand for MSKs makes it imperative to engage with the official/formal education system to improve the quality of education and make it more meaningful for girls. The MSKs have reached out to drop out girls with innovative curriculum models within a safe learning environment catering to their needs (family life skills as well as regular academic curricula and extra curricula activities). Some States have recognized the need to provide teacher training support for the teachers/wardens of the MSKs. More professional support for these teachers is required for better transaction of the curriculum. MSKs have to develop strategies to plan for short-term intensive courses for many more women and girls to pass through its portals and experience learning differently. They have to evolve quickly as education resource centres at block level for fulfilling the education demands of federations and the move towards autonomy and self-reliance.

Kishori Sanghas provide a space for adolescent girls, for education and literacy as well as a forum for school going girls to discuss their problems. The Kishori Kendras, attempt to bring girls back to mainstream education and equip them with everyday knowledge and life skills. The Kishori Sanghas provide inputs on literacy, help girls reflect and gain a gender perspective in understanding social issues. The activities at the Kishori Sanghas revolve around regular meetings, refresher camps, study tours, documentation training, operating libraries, environmental conservation, theatre workshops and training. The attempt has been to break gender stereotypes

Kishori Sanghas and Kishori Melas give the girls an opportunity to interact with other girls their age and travel out of their village. Like the adult Sanghas, the Kishori Sanghas in Karnataka have also formed issue-based committees including education. Some Kishori Sanghas have started to demand education for themselves and have started savings groups and even lend to the Mahila Sanghas. Yuvati Shivirs in Gujarat have led to demands for literacy and a number of short duration literacy camps for girls and women. MSG initiatives in literacy need considerable improvement efforts to show tangible results in learners' perceptions and lives.

To cater to the evolving needs of women as they grow autonomous in their functioning, and as they demand greater information resource support from the MS, it is essential to strengthen the educational component of the programme. At the same time, streamlining and professionalizing the MSK and other educational interventions for girls, recognizing the unique role that MS can play as a bridge institution for girls towards mainstreaming as well as towards seeking new opportunities and roles in a changing socio-cultural environment. The differential learning needs of women and adolescent girls require different approaches and input, which the present system will need to gear itself for. The availability of women teachers to conduct the literacy classes and also facilitate continuing education providing learning inputs related to women's and girls information

needs— violence, health, etc. These would need to be addressed along with seeking ways to strengthen or modify the MSK approach to make it cost effective, replicable and sustainable to enhance its outreach to cater to a larger number of women, beyond Sangha members especially for the new districts. Strategies or combinations of strategies are required to enable the women to attain literacy skills and to sustain them. Preparation of literacy and post literacy material and provision of inputs to teachers needs to be based on a well-conceived strategy to strengthen the education programme components.

A related issue is that of monitoring the content and pedagogy of inputs. While the programme is significantly contributing to the creation of an environment for children's education and enrolment, recognizing and planning for the emerging need for women's education is equally important. *MS may like to discuss and analyze these issues among programme personnel and those from the Women's Movement with expertise and experience in developing education strategies, curriculum and pedagogy with a gender perspective.*

2.3 Contribution to Reduction of Child Labour

MS has no mandate to address issues of child labour. However Sangha women's concern about the education of their children has led to an intense involvement in enrolment campaigns, thus contributing to a reduction in child labour. MS supports Sangha women to access education for their daughters. As and when the need arises it facilitates Sanghas to take up the issue of child labour.

Sangha women promote children's schooling, thus indirectly discouraging child labour. In places where working children are a dominant feature, like in the cotton fields of Mahbubnagar, Sanghas have gone one step further and actually rallied against child labour in order to put an end to it. ***Some Sanghas tried to counter this by offering cheaper labour of older women. Elsewhere they decided to tackle the use of pesticide, demanding that spraying is done only when the children are not working, thus trying to reduce the health risk.*** APMSS celebrates Child Rights Convention week involving schoolteachers, children and local organisations. Last year, APMSS formally became a member of APARC, a state level network working towards the protection of Child Rights. In this context MS organised a series of district level workshops in Karimnagar, Adilabad and Nizamabad to bring all organisations working on children's issues to one platform. A Child Rights Protection Forum was also established in Karimnagar.

In Karnataka and AP young girls are prevented from being dedicated to the Devadasi system, which is a form of child prostitution. The Bal Mitra Kendras in AP and Karnataka address the issue of education of working children, while in Gujarat linkages are forged with NGOs to continue education for children of pastoral migratory communities. While MS has not undertaken specific campaigns or advocacy targeted at working children in Karnataka and UP, this problem has been addressed through its work with the Sanghas and Kishori Sanghas. They have thus created greater appreciation of the value of girls and the need to invest in their future. While poverty has been a key constraint to the education of girls, the recognition of their worth has enabled Sanghas to address girl child labour by ensuring their enrolment and retention. Additionally, in order to free girls from sibling-care for education, MS Karnataka runs child care centers where no ICDS

Anganwadis exist. These are all efforts to ensure an equitable life opportunity with education for girls.

3.LINKAGES

3.1 MS linkages with Government and Women's Movement as Resource Agency and seeking support from others.

The mainstreaming of gender in the National Development Policy constitutes an integral part of the Beijing Platform for Action. MS UP drafted the State Policy for Women through extensive consultation with government agencies, NGOs and grassroots women. It has developed a set of indicators for women's empowerment, which needs to be refined and shared with others. The state of AP has a Women's Development Policy, and MS has been involved in providing Gender training inputs to other programmes and organizations, thereby establishing a niche for itself in the development scenario in the state. MS representatives at district and taluk level are members of various NLM and DPEP selection, coordination and management committees. MS in Karnataka, UP and Gujarat should use this linkage with DPEP to influence curriculum and material development. MS in AP and Karnataka has also sought to mainstream gender issues through its participation in various committees of the Dept of Education in the state, as well as with other programmes such as ANTWA and DPIP. MS in Karnataka has been involved in various State, regional and international initiatives to strengthen gender perspectives in policy and programming in the state, and share its learning and experiences in the process. Members of MS Karnataka interfaced in the development of the Gender Development Index (GDI) of the Human Development Report, 1999. Gujarat is in the process of establishing a State Commission for Women, but MS engagement with policy initiatives and linkages to strengthen perspectives towards developing a policy for women for the state have been negligible. The representation of women from the women's movement has also been low on the Executive Committee especially in Gujarat and Kerala and inputs and support from the NRG needs enhancement to strengthen perspectives. The Kerala programme is relatively nascent, but has linked with women's organizations for training of its team at state and district levels, and is engaged in building gender perspectives with the state institutional framework for decentralized governance but is yet to impact interventions at Panchayat level.

The State governments and NGOs draw upon MS gender training inputs and capacities, and MS in turn has sporadically drawn on individuals of the women's movement and networked with grassroots organizations to build pressure groups for advocacy and lobbying. The tendency to look inwards for resources and rely on intra-programme capacities and perspectives may cause stagnation of ideas and strategies and may deter Sanghas from building sustainable networks with the outside world. While the dependence on NGOs and women's groups has reduced for capacity development, the MS programme needs to forge links and network with organizations and forums of women to continually enrich and challenge its perspectives and efforts. **MS needs to strengthen and extend these links and facilitate more coherent and effective collaboration with the women's movement in the States as well as the (inter) national Level.** The skills of women's movement representatives in the form of NRG members are drawn upon in smaller measure. They can contribute significantly in

energizing the programme in the states. While strong Sanghas see themselves as a grassroots women's movement, they are yet to build up a critical mass since they are dispersed and limited in their spatial spread. They need to network beyond the programme through lateral exchanges with other forums on gender and rights issues to enhance their capacities and in turn to inform these forums with their own experiences. Aware of their rights and equipped with the ability to operate as a pressure group Sanghas need to work in solidarity and network with other forums. Sanghas would be reinforced through greater alliance with women's organizations and interaction with the Women's Movement and peoples organizations around gender and other issues that emerge from time to time.

As A Resource Agency MS is evolving, sought after by state and NGOs alike for the enhancement of capacities and perspectives on a range of issues from gender to group processes, on health and violence issues, as well as on issues of governance and formation of federations. MS is already working with the NLM in material development for neo-literates in Karnataka and has also worked with the State Resource Center for Adult Literacy in production of material for neo-literate learners. The Gender Training Manual and materials has been extensively used by DPEP in Karnataka, UP and Gujarat.

Gender training inputs have been provided for programme functionaries of govt. departments of health and education, the police and administrators, BDOs and CDOs, as well as for schools and colleges. Capacity development inputs have been provided for social development program functionaries such as ANMs, schoolteachers, *Anganwadi* workers and PRI functionaries. In Kerala Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) see MS as a support institute for themselves as well as for the Panchayat in dealing with violence, participation in development initiatives and ensuring greater access of women to resources. They express a need for networking and formation of a platform to tackle issues that effect women's lives, like alcoholism, violence against women and counselling, thus acknowledging the potential of collective strength. By facilitating such a common platform MS can create a basis for advocacy and networking, enabling women to address issues together. A non party women's political platform at block level would enable MS to address more sensitive issues, and open venues for more consolidated linkages with the women's movement.

MS serves as a resource group to engender the process of decentralization in Kerala, and as trainer for various state and district agencies including Kudumbashree, Swa Shakti, DPIP here and elsewhere. In engaging with development initiatives MS should prioritize its primary task to empower women through education and should focus on generation of demand for these services rather than undertake implementation. Instead MS should seek to inform such programmes through its own experiences and build models for demonstration of demand driven and people owned development initiatives.

Through its linkages with national and international agencies such as WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, CIDA, MS enhances its own capacities as well as links to other experiences for empowerment, while influencing donor paradigms for development and partnership. Engagement with the ICRW to document and research the experiences of Nari Adalats in Gujarat and UP creates legitimacy and establishes best practice. It also adds to the body of knowledge on gender, women's empowerment and institution building, while enhancing MS skills for process documentation, research and analysis, which should then be shared across the programme and elsewhere. Engagement in research with the

NIAS in Karnataka and with Nirantar in UP and Karnataka opens new vistas for MS as a resource agency, towards generating strategic knowledge and methodology for action based research.

3.2 Added Value of the MS Programme in GOI-RNE's Sectoral Approach

RNE's sectoral approach to development assistance aims at integrating Dutch aid into sectoral policies of recipient countries. These efforts are guided by the Netherland's key policy aims of Good Governance, Poverty Reduction, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, institutional Development and Environment protection (GAVIM)¹³. Dutch policy seeks the adherence to GAVIM principles within the sectoral approach. Mahila Samakhya programme works with women from the most marginalized sections of the society often poorest of the poor, scheduled castes and tribes (SC/ST and OBC), illiterate and uneducated located in the interior villages of the most backward blocks of the districts. Recently greater priority is also apparent to tribal population, as tribal areas are added to the area of coverage in AP, Kerala and Gujarat. Experiences from these interventions may serve to demonstrate viable strategies to work with tribal groups with greater credibility.

MS seeks to enable women to participate in development and governance processes, and thereby to influence the mainstream processes to become responsive to gender and to the needs of the most vulnerable. It provides the opportunity for women to evolve institutional spaces that demonstrate good governance and adherence to principles of cohesion, transparency and democracy in its operations. Citizenship and participation in political processes have emerged as key areas of engagement of the Sangha women, bringing greater accountability in governance in their areas of influence. Sanghas and federations, which are growing through greater initiatives by women themselves, are evidence of a larger process of ownership. They are emerging as forums that challenge the basis of inequalities based on caste class and gender and working towards a just social order, as is evident in the case of AP and Karnataka.

Women understand poverty as rooted in the systems of management and distribution of resources including natural resources such as land and water. Their initiatives in the agriculture sector are focussed on concerns of sustainability and food security, as a rational approach to the utilization of these resources leading to the protection of the environment. These strategies are of specific significance and may have larger significance when shared with the ANTWA programme supported which is also under Dutch assistance. Through relief work for the victims of the Gujarat earthquake and active involvement in protecting and conserving the environment through "Van Panchayats" in Tehri women have expressed their concerns for a sustainable environment. Struggles for land rights in Allahabad collective land leases, and wages in Medak bear testimony to the efforts for greater access and control over resources. Conservation and regeneration of natural resources have direct implications on livelihood of women and emerge as a key agenda of the Sanghas. In AP, UP and Gujarat women's experiences on Watershed Committees can prove invaluable in the

¹³ For overall policy and effectiveness, the sectoral approach was adopted as the working method and the organizing principle of Dutch developmental programmes, with the key policy aims of good governance, poverty reduction, gender equality and women's empowerment, institutional development and environmental protection (GAVIM).

formulation of community- based initiatives with a gender perspective as currently under consideration for bilateral cooperation in AP.

At State level, in the three concentration states for Dutch Assistance, governments and other agencies increasingly recognize the training capabilities of the MS programme. The Governments of Kerala and AP envisage MS as a resource agency to provide gender inputs for future RNE assisted projects. Sangha women in UP, AP and Karnataka and more recently Kerala have sought to influence the modalities of development at grassroots level towards good governance and gender equality. The experience in Gujarat and demands on the programme in Kerala however point to the need to ensure that the programme does not become a mere delivery mechanism, but maintains its focus on empowerment and needs based initiatives. While Federations may choose to enter into implementers roles based on their emerging needs and may be facilitated in their negotiations for the same, MS programme should remain rooted in facilitating awareness, analysis and action.

Strategies for water and sanitation programmes planned in Kerala may be dovetailed in the areas where MS functions in Kerala, but would need to follow the course of need based prioritization, as essential in the MS process. The potential for convergence of MS with the Dutch assisted water and sanitation programme needs to be strategically built into the programmes to complement each other. It would strategically be desirable for MS to prioritize its work towards building women's organizations; with integration of educational agenda so that they can address these needs as and when they arise. MS could collaborate with the Water scheme based on a locational convergence i.e. that the scheme include areas of MS coverage, so that MS groups may then explore the potential of engaging in the implementation of such schemes or participating in their management etc.

While programmes such as Swa Shakti and Kudumbashree pursue economic empowerment goals, their processes are target oriented and centrally managed giving little space for women to influence or own them. MS experiences in the economic sector are grounded in a feminist analysis of economic trends, and based on the priorities determined for women for economic sustainability and empowerment MS creates holistic paradigms based on women's perceptions and ownership of such processes. MS should be strengthened to play a resource support role for the inclusion of a more holistic framework for empowerment in these economic programmes. It should function as demonstration and trainer to influence such initiatives towards ownership by women. Mainstreaming women's perceptions and strategies from the experiences owned by women in the MS programme has implications for sector reform and institutional change processes, and may well have the potential to inform economic growth models with women's experiences.

State governments in AP and Gujarat accord a high priority to education as reflected in the State Policy and Vision documents. While MS has engaged with the DPEP programme for mobilization of communities towards achievement of enrollment and attendance targets, links need to be strengthened with DPEP towards engendering programme content and materials, in training of teachers, linkages for enrolment. MS groups can also play a greater role monitoring and auditing of DPEP at the field level. MS could share its learning and experiences of holistic and relevant education especially for girls. Greater synergy can be generated through creative strategies for collaboration between the two programmes initiated in areas of common coverage under Dutch

assistance such as in Gujarat. Given the present status of the programme in that state, this process will need facilitation and external resource input.

The empowerment of women towards effective participation and agency within the decentralization and local self-governance process is a common priority for MS and the RNE. MS has worked with women to create awareness about development processes and procedures, and with women representatives to strengthen their linkages with the Sanghas. Efforts in Kerala to strengthen understanding and capacities for gender budgeting and women's component plan would serve to facilitate good governance and gender equality goals within the decentralized democratic planning framework. *MS should work intensively with the Sanghas and Panchayat members in one district to demonstrate the efficacy of an engendered budgeting process, while collaborating with state planning department and training institutions to integrate gender issues into all development sectors*

At the National level, the programme is located within the education sector. It has gained recognition for the innovations in girls' education and organization of women through education. This has also enabled it to retain autonomy. This recognition of the unique character of the programme and the potential it offers needs to however reflect in other programme and policy initiatives of the Department such as the CE programme and the initiatives for Girls and women's education planned for the 10th Plan period. While discussions have been on-going for MS to implement the CE programme of the GOI, there is little evidence of the MS processes and principles having been incorporated into the new CE programme and its operational strategies. Nor does MS material get used in the CE programme. While CE and literacy target groups are primarily women, by virtue of their low levels of literacy, the learning of the MS programme have not been brought to bear on these national programmes. This may be attributed to the lack of institutional spaces that permit such collaboration and exchanges, since programmes are implemented in a vertical bind, as well as the absence of adequate perspective to sustain a dialogue to promote the programmes experiences, in the absence of National Consultants. While MS has greater credibility as a women's empowerment programme, the educational processes that have enable this empowerment to happen need to be articulated and show cased with greater effect. Greater initiative is required from the national office to render the educational elements of the programme visible through advocacy within the department itself. The establishment of the National Resource Centre for Women and Girls could provide a space for such synergistic learning. RNE may consider support to the NRC as a mainstreaming opportunity for the learning and experience gained from the MS programme, and thereby ensure that the NRC is rooted in the experiences gained from the MS programmes in the Dutch assisted states. Strengthening the MS programme in its gender and education capacities through early appointment of Consultants, and strengthening the NRG to link up with the NRC are vital for the programme for the achievement of the shared goals of Gender Equality and Good Governance.

3.3 MS Convergence with Government and NGO Activities

MS is basically an autonomous NGO located within the Government structure. The added value is that it should influence government policies regarding gender and empowerment. Within the State, MS is seen as a vehicle to implement government policies, as it has been part of massive campaigns like the Pulse Polio programme in all States, and has acted swiftly in the delivery of emergency relief and food supplies in the

quake affected areas of Gujarat. While MS in Gujarat is a partner in implementation of programmes with Chetna ¹⁴ as the lead NGO in the MOH/Family Welfare/ World Bank (WB) programme, MS itself facilitates this process and has gone to scale in UP. Through this programme, the interface with the government health system has increased and women are more aware and demanding accountability. MS has also been able to work in a convergence of interests on access to health issues in collaboration with NGOs in AP and participate in the Peoples Health Assembly.

Through the efforts on co-operative farming in AP, UP and Kerala MS Sanghas are creating alternative paradigms for production that address the needs of the poor for livelihoods and food security. These need to be disseminated and shared more widely with the mainstream sector to bring about significant impact. MS is associated with the DPEP programme in Gujarat and part of the programme in 6 districts of UP. This presents an opportunity to transfer learning, develop materials pedagogy etc and to work synergistically while adhering to the principles of the MS of providing space and opportunity for women to question, challenge, prioritize and seek strategies and opportunities for their own development.

Linkages are evident at the Block/ Mandal / Taluka level through the participation of MS in the meetings and committees of various development programmes. In some states District officials participate in planning and review meetings of MS. In AP the Mandal Development Officer visits the Sanghas to get feedback on development issues and seeks support of the federation and programme for awareness campaigns on women's issues and child rights.

Mahila Samakhya Kerala works closely with the Government of Kerala. It is viewed as a potential state resource agency for social empowerment inputs and mobilization of women, to create an environment for greater participation, and involvement in delivery of other projects and missions. **Mahila Samakhya Kerala is seen as a key agency to facilitate the shift from Women in Development (WID) approach to Gender and Development (GAD) focus in state planning processes. MS can play a role in building perspectives within the Kudumbashree programme towards gender sensitivity especially in the areas of social empowerment.** Provided that this is recognized as a key issue within the programme framework by the leadership of the Kudumbashree and commitment to such a partnership includes the adoption of operational strategies required addressing social empowerment needs.

Women have set up their own courts or Nari Adalats but work in collaboration with the district and taluka authorities as well as cooperation from the police to create alternatives that are more responsive to the needs of women and the poor. Ms has acted as pressure groups to address women's issues, monitor literacy programmes and direct local Panchayats to consider equitable access to water. In Gujarat MS also implements the Swa shakti programme. Although partnerships may be mutually beneficial enhancing they do not necessarily coincide with MS perspectives essential for empowerment and sustainable development. **Spreading MS activities to implement programmes needs to be negotiated with caution and based specifically on women's own analysis of needs priorities and strategies and within the framework of the non-negotiable principles laid down. Otherwise MS stands the danger of being reduced to a mobilization role for numerous target-oriented interventions.**

¹⁴ Chetna is a Support Agency on Gender and Health issues and is located in Ahmedabad

4. MONITORING & REPORTING

Information flow in the MS Program has been captured in a flow chart in Exhibit 1. It shows the nature, time, frequency and direction of information flow between various functionaries/levels of the structure. The different levels at which information is generated and reports produced can be categorized as:

- Field: consists of Junior Resource Persons/Resource Persons and Sahayoginis;
- District: consists of supervisory and administrative employees like RP, accountants, DEOs and headed by DPC;
- State: consists of supervisory and administrative employees like RPs, Consultants, Accounts Officer, Assistant Accountant, Internal Auditor, SPD. Policy making and approval bodies like Executive Committee are also at the State level; and
- National Level: Office of the National Project Director and RNE.

The Exhibit presents a comprehensive listing of almost all the reports produced in any of the MS Societies. It also shows the direction in which reports are sent. Some of the states may not be producing all of these. Appendix I has more details on reporting.

MS has been producing a fairly high volume of monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual reports, which capture all the activities being performed within the program. Reflection, analysis and feedback on these reports is carried out in the day to day interactions among program functionaries, particularly during monthly meetings. However, there is a need to add greater analytical depth so that reporting captures not only the processes and itinerary of events but assesses problems, hurdles and learning. Follow up on previous reports is not integral to the reporting process, it is also advised to include action taken component as a standard feature. The process of feedback on reports also needs to be formalized.

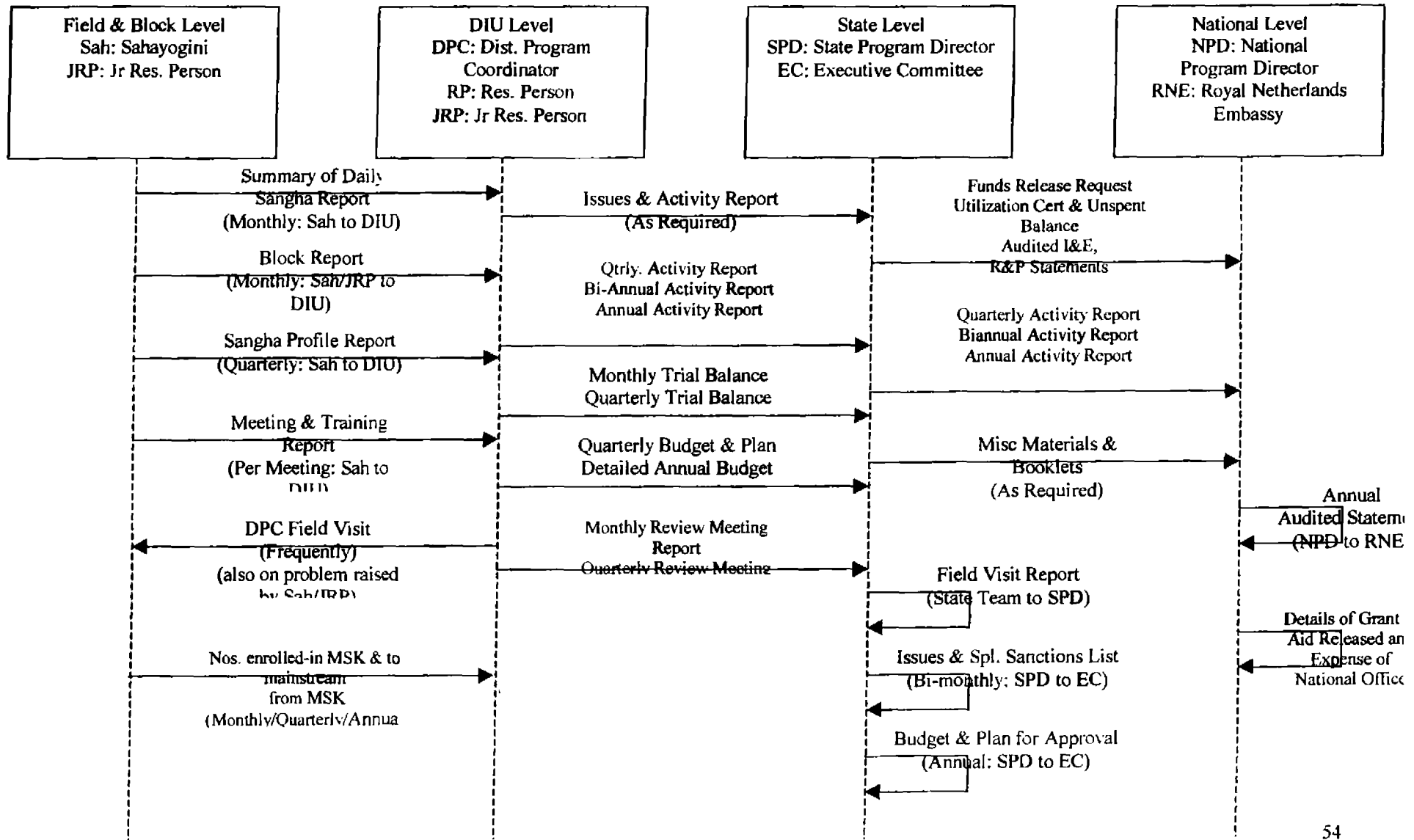
Besides regular reports, documentation in MS covers a wide spectrum, which includes process documentation, workshop/training reports, exchange visit reports, special events reports like camps/Melas etc. Some of these have immediate use and therefore have shorter shelf life whereas others have potential of long term use and would benefit a wider community. There is a need for greater systematization, analysis, indexing and utilization of these for future planning as well as for wider dissemination, through the Resource Centres at state and district levels.

MS accords high importance to observance and recording of the processes that are articulated in the Green Book (MS document 1997-2002). These processes have the potential of transforming status and bringing about empowerment. It should be assessed periodically if the processes are achieving the intended transformation or not. It is important to stress on processes insofar as they assure quality of output but it is also important to keep assessing these processes to avail of any opportunities of increasing their time and resource efficiency.

There is a need to introduce a formal and regular evaluation cycle which approaches evaluation in a systematic manner, based on a study-design suitable for social science research. It must assess the 'empowerment-construct' in the

program group over a time series as well as differences with control groups which have not received MS inputs

EXHIBIT 1: INFORMATION FLOW IN MS



Information Flow to the RNE

Mechanisms and terms for information flows to the RNE are contained in the "Green Book" - Mahila Samakhya Ninth Plan Document of the Mahila Samakhya (1997-2002) which provides the Guidelines for Project Implementation. The document states "as this is a 100% externally assisted project (Dutch Assistance) the six monthly and annual reports are to be furnished to them". This needs to be adhered to for facilitating information flow to GON in the interest of the programme.

RNE has been receiving copies of documents produced by MS Societies, which relate to program in the past, in addition to annual audited statement of accounts and annual reports. However, over the last few years this flow of program related documents has reduced. It is recommended that this flow should be commenced again on a regular basis. Significant booklets and learning materials, published by the States programmes from time to time, should be forwarded to the RNE through the National Office. This additional documentation on the programme provides inputs for RNE and serves to highlight the emerging focus areas, learning and achievements of the programme.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

MS is registered as an autonomous society and is a National Programme. Being located at the National level in the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, and operationalized through independent Societies at the State level provides an autonomous environment to ensure a process oriented approach at the State level. The Center provides minimal guidance regarding the program at state level, leaving sufficient room for state specific planning and management. The Green Book contains broad guidelines for the States to help them organize the programme with flexibility and autonomy, leaving room for decentralized planning suitable to State specific requirements.

National

Coordination of the MS programme through a National Office imparts a national identity, which is helpful in providing visibility to the programme and establishing space and autonomy for itself in negotiations with state departments. The program at the national level is headed by the National Project Director (NPD). The NPD (an IAS officer) is responsible for the coordination of the program at the Center and for providing overall direction with the support and guidance of the NRG. The NPD is supported by two consultants who provide substantive inputs and support staff for clerical assistance, although currently there is no Consultant at the National Office since June 2000. The criticality of the consultants' role in providing perspective attains greater significance in the absence of an NPD from the women's movement to provide the substantive inputs and direction to the programme. **Consultants in the past have facilitated exchanges and development of perspectives. They have also facilitated the flow of information between the states. The lack of consultants at the national level has significantly impacted these processes over the past one and a half years.**

The Coordination is facilitated through a National Resource Group consisting of women activists, development functionaries, social scientists and educationists, knowledgeable of the women's movement in one or more States. NRG members provide guidance to the programme as EC members, at NRG meetings and as and when States request for their inputs for studies, research and capacity building along with valuable guidance. However, not all the states are

able to seek their guidance. There is a need for the National Office to facilitate State-NRG interface more actively.

National Resource Group (NRG) acts as an advisory body and gives direction to the program at policy level. It has contributed significantly to the development of a strong gender perspective for processes of empowerment to be grounded soundly in the programme in the early phase. The meetings of the NRG held in different states have also facilitated greater learning, while individual NRG members provided significant inputs to state programmes. **The infrequency of NRG meetings and the shift in focus towards programmatic issues is noted with concern.** NRG meetings are desirable at least on a six monthly basis to focus more clearly on the strategic developments of the programme, especially in view of the proposed establishment of a National Resource Centre for Women (NRCW). The revitalization of the NRG is essential to ensure strong linkages with the women's movement as well as to provide direction to the programme and inputs to the proposed NRCW to ensure its strong linkage and to embed it in the MS programme in the 10th Plan period. States are able to draw upon expertise of this body, as representatives from NRG are also members of State Executive Committee. States can also benefit from their expertise by requesting NRG members directly to provide programmatic inputs.

Functional decentralization has been ensured through the delegation of powers to the State Office and support from the State Executive Committee to devote the energies of the programme towards creation of enabling opportunities and entitlements for women and girls. The obstruction of functional autonomy is largely attributable to the constitution of the EC, where the representation is largely that of State agencies. The interests they present also reflect such a pattern, which in turn creates extraneous compulsions on the programme, often negating or in conflict with the strategic interests of women.

It would be in the best interest of the programme in order to fortify its autonomous nature that the local non-government representation is increased. The National office should ensure the linkage of the MS programme to the women's movement and development agencies and facilitate dissemination and sharing of experiences between States. The Mission recommends the installation of a full team of professional staff in order to take the programme forward across States and districts culminating in what could potentially become a subaltern grass root women's movement with critical mass.

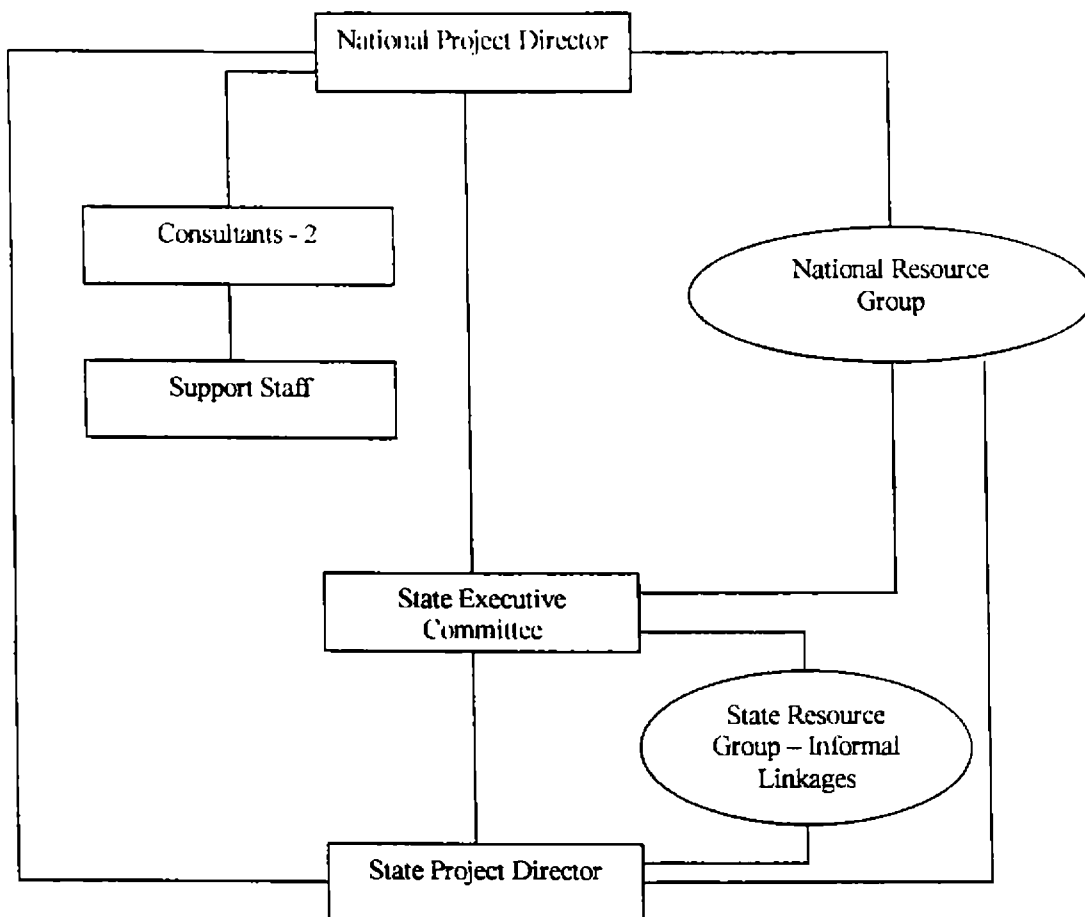
In case of positions of some functionaries at the state and district level there is an overlap and lack of clarity in their respective roles. Although this may lend flexibility in the short term, it could cause problems in the long term. There is a need to review and rationalize the job descriptions and new emerging roles to cater to the emerging perspectives of State and District Resource Centres as well.

The mission observed that states are duplicating efforts in developing management processes and systems. Centralized efforts are sometimes put in place whenever there is a need for uniformity in structures and management processes across States. The example of one such effort is the national workshop of MS Accountants/DPCs/SPDs. This has been able to standardize accounting practices across the States. It is desirable if the Center plays a more proactive role in either developing these systems or coordinating between States to avoid duplication of efforts and bring about standardization. Of course no system that is developed at the Center or by a particular State could be applied 'as it is' in each State. However, it can be

used after it has been suitably adapted accounting for changes in State specific needs. Some of these systems and processes could be:

- development of State specific strategy and objectives;
- annual planning and budgeting- already done by most states except Kerela;
- reporting and monitoring systems (including MIS , already initiated in UP);
- staff performance appraisal & training needs assessment – initiated by AP, UP
- design of evaluation framework
- Computerisation of accounts

Exhibit 3: National Level Organizational Chart



National Resource Center was proposed in the last plan period but is proposed to be established in the 10th plan period. The RNE should consider support to the NRC as a means of bringing the experience of MS to the centre of the debate and practice of education for women and as a means of mainstreaming its learning with other educational programmes. An NRC will facilitate linkages and learning of programme processes between states of RNE support and other states. It will enable the programme to develop resource inputs to feed into other mainstream educational programmes such as the CE programme, the proposed programme for Women and Girls Education etc in the Tenth Plan Period. It would provide a national institutional space for the vision and concerns of the programme to inform the formulation of educational policy from a gender perspective.

State

The state Executive Committee is an empowered body that takes decisions relating to governance and program direction. The Executive Committee facilitates the approval and implementation of the state Action Plan through the State Program Director (SPD). The SPD, preferably from the non-government sector, is responsible for overall execution and smooth running of the program within the State.

The majority of the representation in EC is either Government's ex-officio members or their nominees. It would be in the best interest of the program that its autonomous nature be fortified by making its representation even broader by including greater representation of local NGOs and committed persons that have credentials in these areas.

Unlike the NRG, State Resource Group (SRG) at the State level is an informal group. MS Societies have forged their own linkages with other NGOs and like-minded individuals whose resources and expertise are drawn from time to time.

A greater role is recommended for the SRG to facilitate linkages of the programme with other networks. SRG because of its proximity to respective MS Societies and state specific expertise would be able to give much greater context specific technical support and advice. Some SRG members may also be inducted in the State EC to strengthen its substantive capacities. SRG members might also facilitate MS negotiate its relationship and participation with other movements and networks on an operational level.

State Gender Resource Centres are an organic outcome of the programme's evolution and the consequent changes in the roles that the State MS office is now performing. The scope of the State office is moving beyond programme implementation to a wider role of facilitation of processes in the development, while providing a renewed impetus to its own programme towards expansion and consolidation through the adoption of revised strategies. The mission is of the view that support to the State Gender Resource Centres in the three states-UP, Karnataka and AP- as a measure of consolidation of the programme gains in the first 2 states where RNE is withdrawing support. In AP, and gradually in the states of Kerala and Gujarat as and when the process so evolves, it would provide continuity to the programme and direct its energy to respond to the emerging needs of federations, as well as facilitate strategic work on research and pedagogy. An SRC could engage with the women's movement and networks towards women's solidarity and empowerment, as well as serve to influence the discourse on gender and development in the state. This is all the more critical in the context of programme initiatives such as the DPIP and Kudumbashree that represent a limited and instrumentalist vision of women's empowerment.

In the case of some positions at the State and District level there is an overlap and lack of clarity in the respective roles. Overlapping JDs of two positions may lend flexibility in the short term but could cause problems in the long term. There is a need to review and rationalize the job descriptions and roles in all states and to incorporate the vision for formation of the state and district resource centres.

With the process of issue based federation formation starting in the next phase there would be newer and higher expectations of Sahayoginis/ Karyakartas. It is proposed that in each district, positions for five 'Issue Based Coordinators' (IBCs) should be created at par with RPs/JRPs in organizational hierarchy and would be responsible for guiding and building capacity of Federations and new Sahayoginis in their areas of expertise. This is visualised to operate much as the issue based committees of the Sanghas in the Karnataka model, with IBCs taking on facilitation and capacity building roles on specific issues, and transferring the same to the Sanghas and the federations and to Sahayoginis who are working in other areas. It is expected that such an approach would provide opportunity for deeper engagement and development of expertise in specific subjects among the workers, which could also create a resource pool for other programmes and agencies in and around the districts.

6. HUMAN RESOURCES

MS has been able to carve a special position for itself and make its presence felt on the ground due to its dedicated personnel. However, there is a serious problem of staff turnover. Honoraria and travel allowance fixed in 1997 have since not been revised. This is leading to serious morale and retention issues. The programme stands the risk of losing its momentum and jeopardizing its gains if this personnel remuneration issue is not handled effectively immediately. There is a need to benchmark MS compensation and employee benefit practices to the level of other programmes to be able to attract and retain proficient personnel. The recommended revisions should also incorporate provisions to account for provident fund, medical facilities/insurance, and general inflation. Measures should also be introduced to give recognition to significant contributions by team members.

MS personnel especially Sahayoginis/Karyakartas work under extremely difficult socio-geographical conditions, which raise safety and security, concerns. These issues should be closely examined and organizational arrangements instituted in the form of insurance-cover, etc. The Mission noted that some of the states like Karnataka, UP and Andhra Pradesh have instituted medical benefits and Provident Fund for their employees.

A one-year-contract system of employment has led to insecurity in employees. There is a need for permanency or longer term of tenure. However to address the issue of an eventuality when funding to MS may stop, the contract of employment should be for the duration of the programme and subject to availability of funds from the GOI.

Whereas, there is regular interaction between levels of the MS functionaries which is quite facilitative in achieving organizational objectives collaboratively, a formal personnel appraisal system should be put in place, on the basis of which further renewal of contract, promotions and all other personnel decisions should be based. Annual employee appraisals should also feed into the Training Needs Assessment and Human Resource Development, which should further feed into Annual Plan in accordance with States' strategic objectives. Wherever induction into the organization is through an on-the-job process, it has been found to be insufficient. There is a

need for formal induction and orientation processes/training at all levels for new recruitment or when personnel are promoted and when new states are included in the Programme. Exchanges and exposure visits promote learning among grassroots groups that accelerates the learning and transfer of experiences most effectively. These need to be undertaken more regularly between districts and state programmes, as well as with other projects. Participation in Women's conferences and people's campaigns will serve to sharpen perspectives, and facilitate networking around key concerns.

There is a need to especially account for and make room for additional administrative resources whenever additional projects like the UNDP project Samata Dharani in Andhra Pradesh and Kisan Samakhya in UP and SwaShakti in Gujarat are taken up.

Considering the expansion of the programme and the complexities that come with it, it would be helpful if skills of MS personnel are upgraded in documentation, strategic planning including MIS, basic budgeting process and financial management and programme management (large scale). Better financial skills would not only enable informed management of programme through better understanding of financial-physical linkages, it would also enable better finance appreciation and self management skills to be transferred to Sangha women.

7. PLANNING & BUDGETING

The National Office guidelines in the Ninth Plan Document (Green Book), are the basis on which the States prepare their annual plans and budgets. All the States (except for new States like Kerala) follow more or less similar process through which they prepare their annual budgets. An outline of this process is represented in Exhibit 2.

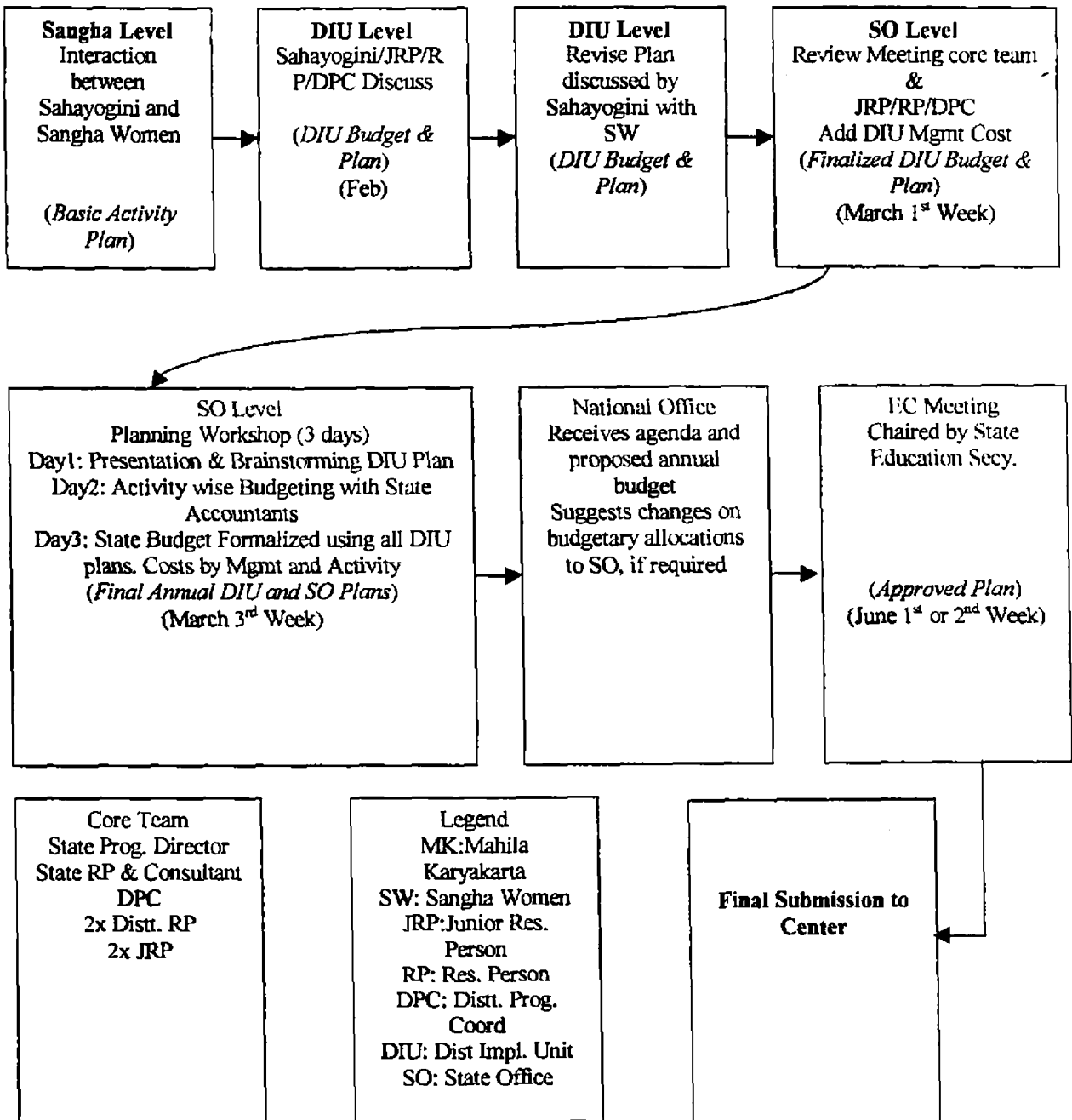
- Sahayoginis/ Karyakartas/JRPs carry out discussions with sanghas/clusters of sanghas to assess members' expectations and priorities in the coming year.
- Based on these discussions Sahayoginis/Karyakartas prepare plans and this is discussed with DPCs/RPs.
- To the above basic activity plan, activities planned at the DIU level are added. An estimated budget is prepared for the above plans and management costs at the DIU level are added to arrive at a consolidated DIU Budget. In UP they plan with SMART objectives at district level to have focussed plan of activities.
- The DIU team visits the State to share these plans and budgets with the Core team as well as appreciate State level thrust areas.
- DPCs finalize and submit their plans to the SPD after contextualizing them in the light of State level thrust areas two to three months before the end of the financial year.
- After the submission of Annual Plans by the districts, activity wise costs are established and the budget plan is consolidated for the whole State.
- Accountants at the District level as well as State level prepare management budgets based on guidelines that are provided in the Green Book and number of villages in which the program is being implemented within each district.
- District wise budget is consolidated into a State budget and sent for an informal feedback to the Center.(optional)
- The Center studies the budget and sends it back to SPDs along with their comments.
- Annual plan or the budget is revised to incorporate Center's comments and placed before the EC for their approval (which is expected to be done before the commencement of the financial year).

- The budget approved by the EC is finally submitted to the Center for release of funds.
- The Centre takes about two months to process the demand of funds by a state and releases sanctioned allocations in tranches, according to utilisation trends of the states.

RNE works on the principle of reimbursing the amounts disbursed to the States by the National Office for implementing MS program.

MS Planning has evolved over the years. Within the overall inviolable principle framework of the programme, a bottom up mechanism has been institutionalized. An extremely detailed annual activity plan is drawn up which feeds into the annual budgeting process. There is a need to further strengthen this process. The state at present follows the National guidelines (objectives) for the preparation of their budgets. It is recommended that they frame state level objectives, which would then become the basis for planning activities, budgeting, analyzing progress and variances. The progress as well as the monitoring can then become more focussed and state specific.

EXHIBIT 2: ANNUAL PLANNING & BUDGETING PROCESS



The annual budget is used by the National Office in conjunction with other financial and accounting factors to release funds to States; it is also used by the state and district accountants to keep check over expense variances. It is recommended that an activity and amount wise variance analysis be carried out in all states. This will facilitate better management and information flow and contribute towards improvements in future planning and budgeting.

8. FINANCE & TAXATION

Accounts: Accounting practices across the MS States are professional and satisfactory. A national level workshop was convened for accountants/DPCs/SPDs of all states and these practices can be attributed to that process. However, there is still a need to standardize financial reporting across all States. Disclosures in the accounting statement should also be standardized.

Reporting to RNE from GOI: Annual statements received by RNE from GOI reflect expenditure on MS programme. The said expense is fully borne out of funds remitted by RNE towards the MS programme. It is advised that the State Societies, which receive RNE funds, should reflect advances, liabilities and bank balances on account of MS Programme separately in the audited balance sheets.

Legal requirements: Legally all the State Societies should file Income Tax Returns. There is a lack of clarity with respect to this across the States. Gujarat MS is filing returns regularly, while some States (UP, Karnataka) have applied for Tax Exemption from the competent authorities and others need to follow this up. It would be advisable to comply with all requirements. The process of obtaining Tax Exemption should be coordinated and facilitated by the National Office.

Funds Flow: The flow of funds from GOI to States usually takes two months from the date of receipt of 'request for funds' to final issue of demand draft. Factors like the amount requested, utilization certificates, audited statements and rate of utilization are used by the center to determine the amount to be released. States should be informed about the process followed at the Center in adequate detail in the interest of timely transfer of funds and to enable State offices to plan their expenditures in a better way

Payments: It is a good practice in MS that all payments above Rs 500.00 (Rs.1000 in Gujarat) are made by cheque, though some States are not following this rule. Gujarat and Kerala are currently paying honorarium and stipends in cash. It is recommended that all the honoraria and stipends should be paid by bank transfer or cheque, and cheques should be issued for all other payments above Rs 500.00.

Purchase: Purchase process adopted by MS is similar to that being followed by government in all the states and should be simplified, considering the fact that it is time consuming and imposes unnecessary burden on the programme. It is advised that the process be simplified at least for purchases below Rs.20,000 without compromising on transparency.

Bank Accounts: Usually District Offices and State Office have separate bank accounts. This is however not the case in Kerala. It is recommended that separate bank accounts should be maintained for the State Office and each District Office. A process of devolution is adopted in AP for the new districts brought under the programme, where the state accounts team facilitates the initiation of the procedures, and provides guidance to personnel in the procedure to be followed from the state office for about a year. Subsequently the process is transferred to the district.

In some states however, the practice of keeping separate bank accounts for each project and for each district is not followed -AP. It is recommended that separate bank accounts should be maintained for the State Office & District Offices. A separate bank account should also be opened whenever a new project is taken up.

Authorization of Vouchers: All payment vouchers are authorized by the SPD at the State Level and DPC/Accountant or in some cases RP/Incharge DIU also authorizes payments. In certain Societies at State level routine bills for utilities are being cleared by the Accounts Officer in Karnataka and Gujarat.

Too much load of approving all the expense vouchers falls on the SPD/DPCs. The authorization of expense vouchers should be delegated to the level of Resource Person depending on the person who has incurred the expense. Only a limited number of vouchers should come to the SPD/DPCs. A limit could be fixed above which all the vouchers would need to necessarily be approved by the SPD at the State Office and the DPC at the District Office.

Internal Controls: A strong system of internal control is maintained through proper distribution of workload right from the Sangha Level to the Executive Committee level. At the Sangha level the internal control is exercised through checks at various stages by DPC/ DRP/ JRP/ Members of the Sanghas. For expense approval, actual payment handling, recording and authorization are all handled by different functionaries in the organization. Monthly/Quarterly internal audit exercises are carried out by the State Accountants who visit different districts by rotation and check all the vouchers at the DIU level. Accountants keep a check on items being spent and budgetary provisions.

The only weakness on the internal control front is that there is no budgeted activity/amount v/s actual verification and analysis, which could show some variations, which need to be carefully analyzed. The same as given in the Budgeting section of the report.

Purchase: Purchase process adopted all the MS Societies is similar to that being followed by government. Authority to purchase up to a specified amount limits has been delegated. Whenever a purchase decision exceeds an employee's limit then she has to take approval from the competent authority. The process of purchase is briefly given in Appendix III.

The purchase process is time consuming and imposes unnecessary burdens on the program, therefore it should be simplified. It is recommended that simplified purchase procedures up to a limit of Rs. 20,000 should be suggested to all MS Societies. The basic underlying principle for an effective purchase procedure is to be able to carry out all purchases under practical conditions of transparent system rather than be burdened by procedures and system followed by the Government. A feasible alternative has been provided in Appendix IV.

Funds Flow: Funds have to flow from the Center to States to finally the Districts so that program activities can be implemented on ground in a time bound manner. The flow of funds from the Center to States usually takes two months from the date of receipt of 'request for funds' to final issue of draft. Factors like the amount requested, utilization certificates, audited statements and rate of utilization are used by the center to determine the amount to be released. States send requests every quarter based on the projected quarterly expenditure that is submitted to the Center. Generally the National Office releases funds in 2 to 3 installments. The process of flow of funds is shown in detail in Appendix V.

Some of the states (AP, UP, Karnataka) express that at certain points of time they are not able to carry out certain activities because funds were not available to them at the time these were required because of delays. It has been observed that delays may be exception rather than the norm. However, the balance limit at which States can send request for funds may need to be determined more judiciously and past expenditure may not always be a reflection of the expenses to be incurred in coming months. It is recommended that in the interest of transparency and to enable States to plan their funds in a better way it is advised that all States should be informed about the process followed at the center in adequate detail.

Idle Funds: MS societies (Karnataka, Gujarat, UP) invest their idle funds in Fixed Deposits, whenever funds available are more than the projected expenses for the next month. This is not being done in Gujarat and Kerala. There is a need to standardize this practice and idle funds should be invested in all States (and in all districts) in Fixed Deposits of 46 / 60 / 90 days according to requirement of funds.

Community Contribution: The current accounting system does not report the contributions received from community which become available to the programme in any of the states. The budgeting also does not keep in mind resources that would be available from this source. This also contributes to budget surpluses currently observed across the States. Community contribution accounting would make the budgeting process more realistic.

Budget Reappropriation: The SPD has complete authority to reappropriate budgets. However, funds allocated for activity costs cannot be appropriated to management costs but the opposite is possible and valid. DPCs have to send the request to SPDs for a reappropriation. This practice should continue the way it is.

Legal requirements: Only one States is filing Income Tax Returns – Gujarat regularly. UP has applied for exemption from the competent authorities whereas the remaining are not fulfilling their legal obligations. Statutory audit of accounts is carried out for all the MS Societies.

Legally all the Societies should file Income Tax Returns. There is a lack of clarity with respect to this across the States. It is advised to comply with all requirements or seek exemptions from doing so as the respective MS societies may choose. This process should be coordinated and facilitated by the Center.

Reporting to RNE from GOI: Annual statements received by RNE from GOI reflect expenditure on MS program. The said expense is fully borne out of funds remitted by RNE towards the MS program. The National Office sends to RNE only that portion of the Audited accounts, which pertains to RNE funding.

Computerization: Given the large volume of data likely to be involved in planning, budgeting, monitoring, reporting and accounts processes it is recommended that these processes should be gradually computerized in a phased manner. The process of computerization should not create a parallel substructure within the organization but should be adopted by the existing management towards professional outputs. Such capacity building inputs could be an area for Technical Assistance in the next phase.

9. UTILIZATION OF FUNDS¹⁵

Table 2 provides an overview of utilization of funds by MS during the 1997-2002 phase of Program. RNE had committed a total of XXX for the 1997-2002 period.

Table 2: Utilization of Funds by Dutch Assisted MS Societies during 1997-2002

(Rupees in Lakhs)

Financial Year	Opening Balance	Funds received during year	Expenditure during year	Closing balance (31st March)
1997-98	328	359	468	224
1998-99	224	488	581	198
1999-00	198	562	578	161
2000-01	161	859	689	349
2001-02*	349	440	-	-

* 2001-02 – Status as on Date

¹⁵ The figures presented in this section appear to be incorrect. Correct figures have been requested and would be updated as and when they arrive. Virat , where are the correct figures ???

MS has utilized a total of INR 100 of this committed amount till 31-12-2001. There is still INR 100 left of the original commitment by RNE after deducting this utilization. Table 3 provides an analysis of year wise expenditures against the original estimates in 1997-2002 budget.

Table 3: Actual versus Budgets for the 1997-2002 period

Financial Year	Actual Expenditure	Budget	Actual Expenditure as a ratio of Budget
1997-98	468	570	82%
1998-99	581	639	91%
1999-00	578	691	84%
2000-01	689	796	87%
2001-02*		804	

It is observed that expenditures have been somewhat lower than the annual budgets during the 1997-2002 period. The Expenditure to Budget ratio has ranged between 91% to 82%. Some of this may be attributed to the fact that expansion to new districts was in fewer districts than what was originally planned. Another reason could be the delay in receiving funds for planned activities, which at times were stalled due to non availability of funds at that juncture.

D. THE NEXT PHASE

1. Rationale for A New Phase

Mahila Samakhya programme at this point is at a critical juncture, given the new policy initiatives planned for the Tenth Plan period, with the new programme for Women and Girls' Education and Education for All. The programme is faced with the challenge to consolidate its gains related to the empowerment of women and create and strengthen institutional frameworks for the same, at the same time enhancing its influence and role in the engendering of educational agenda at the national level.

The Mahila Samakhya programme has been successful in establishing the linkages between educational processes and women's empowerment in the areas under RNE project assistance. It has adequately demonstrated the means to empower women through processes of education and organization and stands on its own achievements as an alternative paradigm. This is manifested in various forms and degrees across the states, and points to the diversity that has been allowed to flourish through a flexible people based approach. Recognition has come in various ways, reflected in the expectations articulated by different groups that the mission interacted with, the demands from external sources that the programme has responded to as a resource group as well as, more significantly, in the confident faces and voices of the women we met. The expansion of institutional spaces that women have created for themselves: Sanghas at the village levels, the Cluster forums and Federations, the Nari Adalats provide agency to grassroots women to pursue learning and gain empowerment while offering the potential to engender mainstream structures, informed by their own experiences. Women's articulation of issues, analysis of concerns and

commitment to democratic processes was in evidence and offers the potential to bring about sustainable processes for social change leading to gender equality and good governance provided these are adequately supported and up-scaled. The next phase of the programme should focus on establishing and demonstrating mainstreaming strategies within the framework of the programme's core values and principles- the "non negotiables".

The programme has also made some headway in the scope of its activities for girls and in the creation of a demand and environment for education that is meaningful for the rural poor. It has contributed significantly to the achievement of developmental goals in the areas where it is located, compelling other programmes and agencies including the State to acknowledge and seek learning of its qualitative processes and perspectives. **Demands are being made on the programme to provide these inputs and to undertake a larger role in practically all the areas of its operation, and the programme has also gained the strength to negotiate these relationships in most areas.** It is therefore necessary that the programme receive support to intensify its efforts in its current area, to expand to new areas and to explore innovative strategies to expand its outreach in the next phase.

In the midst of a myriad of programmes that are working with a focus on women, MS serves to **demonstrate a women centred approach to planning and development.** It also presents a programme that nurtures organizational spaces for women, based on their priorities and the advocacy of women's interests in the larger paradigm of development. Through strengthened linkages with other grassroots formations of women, it could seek to strengthen and gain strength to emerge as a movement for women's empowerment and equality at grassroots level. **It has demonstrated its potential to facilitate transformatory processes for social change** in family, community and society in general-through its engagement in various campaigns and issues. As evinced by the quality of outcomes it is inferred that a critical mass needs to be generated through greater intensification and support to such processes, to provide the means for educational processes that are empowering. This would enable women to bring about changes in their own lives and in their communities and impact on the mainstream institutional framework in a more significant way.

MS programmes in the Dutch assisted states have provided a space for critical reflection and for women to arrive at an alternative framework for understanding and engaging with development and social change. **It has gradually sought to challenge gender and class/caste biased paradigms and, in seeking alternative frameworks poses challenges to the mainstream structures.** Through the creation of space for innovation and creativity to address gender and caste/class relations, it presents an opportunity that needs to be strengthened and shared in greater measure. The programme has also initiated work with success in this initial phase into the tribal areas of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh and has the potential of evolving a sound programme strategy.

A positive indicator of recognition at the National level is the proposal for provision of Rs 120 crores under a separate budget line in the 10th plan period for the MS programme. MS has been identified as a separate National programme with a unique approach, at a time when all programmes of the Department were being dovetailed under the umbrella of the Sarva Shiksha Abhyan programme for Education for All.

2. Recommended Strategy for Mahila Samakhya in the Next Phase- 10th Plan Period

MS is currently at a crossroads, confronted by developments that pose challenges as well as opportunities for the programme:

Internally:

- The Sanghas have emerged strong and self reliant especially in the old districts, capable of forming new Sanghas and forging their own forums in the form of the Federations, and taking on issues and negotiating with institutions of authority independently. In the new districts however this process needs to be intensified, with renewed energy drawing upon the women's organizations and external resource persons in greater measure. Gujarat would specifically need to focus on strengthening Sanghas and facilitating the emergence of Sanghas as agencies for social change remains poor.
- The processes that women in Sanghas initiate also influence the processes in the newer districts and **there is much potential for peer learning through exchanges**, with minimal support from the DIU and the SPO.
- Sanghas and Sahayoginis/ Karyakarthis/Sevanis are currently engaged in evolving new approaches that encompass groups of varied origin and affiliation and focus into their purview, to build a common ground swell towards the achievement of women's equality in AP and Kerala. This strategy may well provide the multiplier in numbers but is faced with the inadequacies of earlier initiatives that have left the groups in a somewhat mixed state of autonomy, and with the onerous task of addressing larger issues of social change to address strategic gender interests.
- Much work needs to be done with regard to **strengthening Federations**, which are at a nascent stage and of varying quality in their levels of mobilization and intensity of commitment to action. This requires a different kind of input from those that were necessary in the mobilization stage, for which competencies of Sahayoginis?Karyakarthis / Sevanis and RPs and Sangha leadership will need to be enhanced.
- The Mission notes the commendable initiatives to establish a strong programme of Nari Adalat and to help in the establishment of federations as **alternative institutional frameworks** created within the programme. These will require substantive and resource support for some time to come to establish their viability. They will also require **facilitation towards enhancing their financial sustainability** while addressing the issue of autonomy.
- Programme implementation and geographical outreach needs urgent attention, as the pattern of growth has been spread without adequate densification for tangible impact on the socio-economic and cultural environment in most areas. Since MS is not a service delivery model, the impact of its processes can best be demonstrated through intensive coverage and mobilization of a critical number of women
- The experience of the Varanasi society (Gramras) initiated by the Sahyoginis, the Banda group starting a separate NGO (Vanangana) and the disillusionment of the Baroda group of Sahayoginis point to the need to ensure programme consolidation prior to initiation of withdrawal processes, to be sustainable. The mission recommends that Federations be provided adequate support to become viable in raising resources for their activities and negotiating for their needs. This can be done through **establishment of district resource teams** that provide guidance to the Federations.
- Similarly the processes that have been set in motion through the programme in the 2 states not included for RNE concentration- **UP and Karnataka**- are at a critical juncture. They would require continued support to emerge as a resource agency based on the

learning from the programme, while the programme implementation per se can be dealt with by GOI and State governments through provisions made for the 10th Plan Period.

1 The linkages of the MS programme to the Women's Movement and other development agencies has dwindled in this phase and needs to be pursued concertedly, to facilitate growth of the movement within the programme. **Networking and sharing of experiences** with other organizations and forums of women within the states and across provide learning that will enrich processes and consolidate strengths. It will also serve to build conceptual clarity or understanding of the key principles of the Programme amongst staff that is somewhat uneven across districts and states.

Externally:

- The programme has received recognition at district levels for its contribution in **mobilization and awareness building** to stop gender discriminatory practices and changes in social attitudes and by building alternative justice systems in the Nari Adalats. This recognition has however led to increasing demands being made on the MS staff and Sanghas to function in the capacity of mobilizers and motivators towards achievement of developmental goals of the government, without consideration of the perspective these present.
- MS as a process oriented need based programme that has provided the space for development to follow the pace of women's progress is **confronted with market driven models of development** such as Swa Shakti, DPIP and Kudumbashree to address poverty. These programmes address income poverty, but do not incorporate the understanding of essential poverty of which women are the primary victims and which MS processes are seeking to address. Based on provisions of matching grant and subsidy, these programmes are likely to impact the development scenario in a significant manner due to their scale and the incentive of quick monetary returns, but with no processes to ensure the sustainable benefits to women in other spheres of their existence.
- **Educational initiatives are snowballing towards the achievement of EFA goals-access, retention and quality-** related to primary education in the country, within which women's roles are viewed primarily as mobilizers for girls' education. **Women's education would take a back seat in such a scenario, unless gains from the process are not adequately demonstrated.**

The programme would therefore need to move towards:

- **Consolidation** in existing blocks, covering new villages and including more women to develop a critical mass in these areas. This could be through the programme or through the initiatives of old Sanghas and federations as well as through outreach to existing Sanghas and groups of varied denomination, being conscious of the priority to address social empowerment agenda.
- **Expansion** of area beyond the present districts in the 3 concentration states, by forming its own Sanghas as a nucleus for its activities and towards the formation of Village Sanghas and cluster Sanghas where there is a saturation of groups already.
- **Diversification** of its roles from an implementation organization to a resource agency, informing the formulation and implementation of educational programmes and policy, and initiatives in various sectors.

3. Organization Structure And Programme Initiatives

The New Phase marks an enhanced role for the programme in the states and at the national level, and a shift to dual roles as **implementing and resource organization** for education for women's equality for the period 2002-2007. This process of resource support to other organizations should be determined by the priority needs of the programme in areas of direct implementation. In Gujarat however the pace should be determined by the programme's ability to strengthen its perspective and enhance qualitative aspects of its work within a limited time frame.

At the National level:

The proposals for the 10th Plan period provide **significant opportunities for the Mahila Samakhya to play a strategic role in building competencies and facilitating adoption of gender sensitive processes of development.** The MS Programme can provide vital inputs towards engendered planning and programming based on its experiences especially in the Dutch assisted states. This provides opportunities for value addition for MS and other initiatives seeking to address/integrate women's concerns in the states of RNE priority and concentration. The Mission Team is of the opinion that the Netherlands Government should consider support for the National Level Programme of Mahila Samakhya and to the National Resource Centre for Women and Girls Education proposed in the 10th Plan period. This would enable the formulation of National level strategies and initiatives based on the experiences of the Dutch assisted programme. It would also provide an opportunity for the MS programme to influence the integration of gender in other programmes of the Department of Education and for women's empowerment in the country.

The National Resource Centre for Women proposed in the 10th Plan period is envisaged as an autonomous organization located possibly in a National University/Institution. It should have a lean and autonomous institutional structure, and should draw upon the human resources and experiences of the MS at the state levels as well as the NRG to meet its goals. While its scope will include but be larger than the MS programme, it could be envisaged to play a role in developing and overseeing policy interventions towards gender equality, drawing upon and strengthening the State and District Resource Centres and the Federations of grassroots women. The National Resource Centre could facilitate the exchange of experiences and learning across the Dutch Assisted and other MS states, extending the current identity of the Dutch Assisted programme to a national one. It could facilitate the generation of new knowledge, to strengthen the programme at the grassroots level as well as to inform MS in other states and other efforts – especially education - to address gender equality within (and outside) the country.

The Mission further recommends that the **National Consultants/ Resource Persons are reinstated with immediate effect, the NRG group is revitalized** with regular meetings and focus on the substantive issues and direction of the programme towards achievement of programme goals. Activists and development workers experienced in working with disadvantaged groups in society through holistic approaches need to be brought within the NRG. The NRG can become advisory to the National Resource Centre in due course of time, to ensure the transference of learning and to root the NRC in the experiences and expertise generated by the MS.

The varying levels of development and strength of the programme indicate requirements for different kinds of support from the NRG and the National office.

- Kerala as a new MS state requires support for streamlining the activities while maintaining its focus on the primacy of strengthening of group processes and perspectives and establishing forums of solidarity with the WERs.
- In Gujarat the programme requires urgent attention to strengthen the Sanghas and build capacities and perspectives of functionaries of the programme and leaders of Sanghas. Consolidation of the programme based on a planned strategy is a prerequisite for any new initiatives to be undertaken.
- In Andhra Pradesh the programme has grown spatially and spirally, incorporating new strategies and institutional forms as it has evolved, but would require support to strengthen its educational interventions as well as its linkages with the Womens Movement.
- The developments in the old districts of AP, Karnataka and some districts of UP warrant greater strategic support in formulation of strategies with Federations and issue-based inputs for Sangha and Federation leadership. In other areas however the support requirement will continue to remain one of programme strengthening.
- The National Office should consider the areas where the programme has emerged as a strong voice for women as its demonstration areas. It should encourage greater exchanges with these areas, as well as involve these districts as partners and a resource base for the NRC, and in the formulation of strategies for linkages with other educational programmes of the GOI and the states such as the CE programme.

The most urgent requirement is that of revisions in the remuneration to the programme functionaries based on the current situation in the development sector and taking into account the fact that no such revisions have been made in the last 5 years. In the view of the mission an increase of $\leq 100\%$ is warranted, with provisions for future annual increases and taking into account inflationary trends. This should be done without further delay (from the commencement of the 10th Plan Period) to maintain the pace and ensure the gains from the programme. These changes would also need to be incorporated into a revised edition of the Green Book¹⁶, ensuring that the key principles and non-negotiables are adhered to.

At the State level

The programme stands to benefit from the present positioning of being an autonomous agency with direct linkages to the National Government, with the Principal Secretary of the Department of Education as the Chairperson in the States. This provides functional autonomy, that is established with national office support, and has enabled the programme in the states to negotiate a functional relationship with various departments and agencies of the State governments without compromising on the basic principles of the MS. It does not limit the scope of the programme to a sectoral straitjacket and enables it to collaborate with multiple agencies to respond to the learning and empowerment needs of women. A strong team at the state office, supported by the requisite expertise from the Centre ensures an effective form of functioning based on the needs of women as they emerge. At this juncture these needs have necessitated a two pronged response from the State offices –

a) As the Implementers, the State programmes would need to address:

- Strategies focussing on issue based action with larger number of women through existing groups and with new groups at village and cluster level in new areas for expansion.

¹⁶ ibid

- Partnerships with larger programmes such as the DPIP, DPEP, Swa Shakti, as a training input for their teams on gender issues in the first instance, and then through negotiated partnerships towards the achievement of holistic goals of empowerment. These partnerships may in the long run be viewed as efforts to influence the processes of these programmes from within
- Greater involvement with women's and girls education through expansion of MSKs, enhanced outreach, and more intensive processes of teachers training, materials development therein. Enhancement of quality of teaching learning processes, creating opportunities for greater outreach to women and systematic structuring of the ALCs and the MSK as spaces for women's education are demands that need to be addressed. These efforts should aim to demonstrate viable models for the education of women and girls as well as facilitate the development of appropriate curriculum and materials. Linkages with the existing bridge programme and the innovative education scheme may be explored towards this end, with adaptations made where required, to retain the commitment to the key principles of the programme
- Linkages with women's groups in the states and at the regional level, to gain and exchange learning based on the priorities of the programme. Linkages with NGOs and organizations would also benefit to strengthen strategies.
- Facilitation of the federative processes and provision of backstopping support to the Federations.

b) As A Resource Agency

At State level MS experiences can be shared to enhance the learning of other organizations and people's efforts towards women's empowerment. For this State Gender Resource Centres have been visualized, for which Andhra Pradesh has taken the lead while Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka have also initiated preparations. These Centres will help programmes to mainstream gender issues in various sectors of development. They will also develop rollback and outreach strategies for the programme, and facilitate the emergence of women centred block level institutions for good governance and social justice, while exploring strategies for sustainability of such institutions. MS will also be able to assist Sanghas to realize their objectives through intensive capacity building inputs for socio-cultural, political, economic and physical autonomy and stronger links and alliances with the Women's Movement.

• State Gender Resource Centre

The establishment of the State Gender Resource Centre is envisaged to provide resource support, capacity building, action research, and advocacy towards women's education and equality. The State Gender Resource Center could:

- cater to the needs and demands of the other programmes for perspective and capacity development on gender and women's issues, with specific sectoral inputs, cadre building towards women's empowerment etc
- upscale the experiences as an out reach strategy for expansion of MS philosophy.
- initiate/undertake projects which are in line with MS programme
- Take up action research projects to validate MS experiences.
- Lobby and advocate for policy interventions for women and development issues.

The Resource Centre should have a formal identity with autonomy to function under the banner of MS. It could receive funds from ministries, departments and autonomous bodies of the government (State Government and GOI) and from donor agencies to implement

programmes and projects to further the aims and objectives of MS. The SGRCs should enter into contracts with clarity and specificity about the role of and expectations from it on condition that it does not adversely affect the work of MS.

By establishing a Resource Centre MS would provide technical support to government agencies, NGOs and others, to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment processes in their ongoing initiatives, as well as to strengthen gender perspectives of educational interventions.

Networking and collaborative efforts of the programme with the Women's Movement and with other agencies and people's forums towards common goals of women's equality and social justice could also be facilitated by the SGRC. It could also provide support to the District Resource Centres, involving those resources necessary to emerge into resource agencies capable of support to the federations as well as to other programmes and departments as the need arises. It could also cater to the demands from the state and other agencies to undertake policy and capacity development activities with other organizations and undertake sectoral database development on gender issues in collaboration with key sectors.

In order to strengthen the programme support components and address specific needs for documentation, capacity development and management support, some options like having short term placements from universities, women's studies centres and institutes at the state level as well as collaborations with women's groups and NGOs may be explored. Existing team members with good skills and competencies should be given opportunities for working at the state level for specific assignments, in order to enable them to broaden perspectives and to move into new roles. Staff members could be extended as guest faculty to institutions for greater out reach of MS philosophy. **The entire orientation of the programme would need to shift from hands on implementation to facilitation and planning, management support and backstopping resource development, action research and capacity building.**

The relationship of the SGRC with the proposed NRCW is envisaged as a partnership and collaboration. In the meantime, the NRG (with renewed zeal and enhanced competencies) and national (to be immediately appointed) and state resource persons have critical roles to play in strengthening the programme and evolving a strategic plan for the next phase for each state and for the programme as a whole.

c) At the district level the programme would:

- Facilitate the formation of district resource teams/centres to provide the inputs for grassroots level organizations of women to emerge, to provide backup support in the form of organization development and management inputs etc till such time that these tasks are gradually managed by the women themselves
- Provide issue based and management inputs towards perspective and capacity development for Sanghas and federations, as well as linkages with opportunities towards viability and outreach of Federations at least in the short run

The financial and budgetary implications incorporated in the new budgetary framework as part of this main general report have been worked out at the State and National level to facilitate the new dimensions of the Programme.

With the envisaged new structure focussing on the State and District level Resource Centres, learning and capacity building needs of the functionaries and the Sanghas /federations, human resource development and additional staff requirement become a priority. The number of activities within MS would increase as well as demands from organizations and institutions would arise for gender focused inputs. More team members with the appropriate perspective and skills would be needed or else the present staff would be stretched. **The most immediate need however is to address the problem of low remuneration of staff, and to benchmark MS salaries at the level of other development programmes. This would solve the current problem of turnover, retention of old staff and recruitment. The staff is the core strength to the effective grounding of the programme, and its motivation levels directly impinge on the qualitative aspects of the programme.** Immediate efforts to address these issues would enable the programme to work towards consolidation, expansion and diversification of its programme as envisaged above so that the programme goals can be achieved.

4. State Specific Strategies Recommended

A) In States of RNE Priority and Concentration

Andhra Pradesh

The mission recommends that:

- The programme be extended for densification to new groups in existing districts, in old and new blocks/mandals
- Strategic inputs be provided in 3-4 new districts in collaboration with other initiatives for women's development such as the DPIIP to strengthen social and gender inputs and organization for women's empowerment in a phased manner.
- The expansion of MSKs at district and block level with enhanced outreach and turnover of larger number of girls, along with an agenda to cater to women's literacy needs.
- Systematic inputs to strengthen the perspective of the educational component for teacher training and curriculum development, catering to the needs of girls and women. Building competencies among young girls and women (possibly MSK passouts) to provide the learning inputs to women and other girls in the village, to overcome the constraints experienced presently by the (male) BMK teachers
- Facilitation of the Federations as they emerge in the seven districts and support to District Resource Centers, based on the emergence of women's Federations, to provide issue-based support to them and to a larger clientele.
- Strengthening of the State Gender Resource Centre, already been approved by the Executive Committee, through perspective building and technical competency development especially in policy research and documentation as well as advocacy.
- Strengthening of linkages with the women's movement at the programme level as well as with the Federations as grassroots women's organizations.
- Increased opportunities for learning exchanges and exposure for women and staff between new and old district districts to enhance transfer of experiences and networking between districts. Similarly more opportunities for exposure to other related programmes and grassroot organizations are required.
-

Gujarat

While commendable initiatives to establish a strong programme of Nari Adalat have been taken, and MS has facilitated the interface with Panchayati Raj in various places, progress remains uneven and there remain **areas of concern** relating to the programme:

- After twelve years of implementation, evidence of the empowerment of women at the Sangha level even in older districts is uneven.
- There is insufficient conceptual clarity & understanding of the key principles of the programme amongst the project staff, and there is little visible effort being made to address this issue.

The **consolidation of the programme needs to take place in Gujarat** before the next phase is planned. The mission was given to understand that a state level visioning workshop was planned. In its meeting with the MHRD, DOE and the RNE in December 2001, the Mission team had already recommended that a team, with adequate representation of the NRG, be assigned the additional task of formulating a Plan of Action with the team in Gujarat and the National Project Office to strengthen the programme to meet its objectives within a three-month period. The team should further to track the progress in operationalizing the Plan of Action and report on its progress and achievement by December 2002, at which point consideration may be given to withdrawal of support to dysfunctional districts. A winding up may then be suggested providing two years NGO grant in aid funding after which Dutch support for the district is either terminated or functions on its own without the MS support.

Kerala

The programme in Kerala is recent and is implemented in two blocks of two districts;

- **Rapid expansion** is warranted in the two districts where the programme is already operating in the next year itself with greater focus on strengthening of Sanghas and Cluster/Vanitha Sabhas
- **Greater support is required from the National Office** for the State programme, to maintain its focus in the context of the guiding principles.
- Based on the strengthening of the above, expansion would be warranted to two additional districts in the subsequent years, including a tribal district, where women's literacy and development indicators are low.
- The programme needs to work in a more focused way to **strengthen alliances with women members of Panchayats** to create a stronger constituency of women, as well as to address the incorporation of gender in the decentralized planning process. Strategies to strengthen the alliances between Sangha women and the WERs would facilitate the emergence of a common forum for solidarity and collaboration.
- In a 2 –3 years the programme can develop a Resource Center for Women. The process of providing gender inputs to other organizations/programmes such as Kudumbshree and the State Water and Sanitation Mission could begin even earlier, provided that priority is given to strengthen programme perspectives and processes in the area of operation.
- The programme needs to develop **stronger links with networks** for women's empowerment in the region.

The programme also needs to consider appointment of additional Sahayoginis in each Panchayat, based on the population/number of Sanghas that Sevani form and coordinate, as the intensity of inputs from the Sevani determine the strength and quality of processes that emerge in the Sanghas in the long run. As the Sanghas progress, these Sevani could progress to new panchayats or new roles in the programme.

B) States Outside Areas of RNE Priority And Concentration

Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka

A process of consolidation needs to be supported focusing on the gains of the programme. The proposed State level Gender Resource Centres are needed to consolidate the learning of the programme and to inform the initiatives at the state and national levels through its linkages with the NRCW towards the integration of gender. It would also provide sustaining management, information and issue based support to the District Resource Centres and to the emerging Federations. These would need to be supported by the RNE as part of its withdrawal strategy from these states, while the programme implementation needs may be met by the GOI from its own or alternate resources.

The District Resource Centres would require support in order to continue to provide issue-based inputs to the emerging Federations in the districts, and to render assistance to other CBOs/NGOs on women's issues. They would also support the networking and linking of Federations with other developmental initiatives in the region. With support from RNE to the national programme and to the NRCW these states would also be linked to these institutional initiatives and can benefit from the programmes planned therein.

A part of Uttar Pradesh recently became an independent state: Uttaranchal. The MS programme is running in 3 districts- Tehri Garhwal, Pauri and Nainital- of which Tehri is the oldest single district funded by the Government of Netherlands. Since the district units are implementing the programme, and Sahayoginis are functioning in the field, the involvement of the SPO in UP should urgently be taken over by an independent unit in the new state of Uttaranchal. This programme should also be linked to the National level initiatives and provided support thereof, as well as provided support for networking and learning exchanges, and capacity development of staff to strengthen the programme in the new state.

Future Budget

Financial allocation for Mahila Samakhya has been made to the amount of Rs 120 crore for the 5 year period by the GOI in the 10th Five Year Plan and GOI is committed to bridge gaps, if any that arise due to withdrawal of external funding. Alternative resources are yet to be determined, and the option of seeking alternate external resources may also be explored.

The task assigned to this Mission was to make financial estimates limited to three concentration states of Gujarat, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. However, it is felt that the envisaged NRCW offers avenues for up-scaling the learning from the RNE supported programme, these should be incorporated. Hence, apart from supporting the programme in the three concentration states for the next phase over a period of 5 years, the RNE should consider support to this national initiative as well as to the consolidation efforts in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, as its gradual phase out from these states. This support proposed in the form of State Resource Centers and District Resource Centres is a critical step towards autonomous women's institutions committed to the goals of Mahila Samakhya and capable of facilitating a larger process within these states.

The budget for the 10th Plan Period cannot be accurately estimated currently as program processes and structures for the future are under revision. These have not been defined exactly as yet. The budget that has been formulated here is basically a broad indicator of total finances

that might be required. A more detailed activity wise budget would require much more inputs from the various States, and a clearer conceptualization of the organizational arrangements, which is beyond the purview of this Mission. However, for the future budget it is recommended that previous budget be adjusted for additional factors like:

- i) proposed salary increase ($\leq 100\%$) for all levels
- ii) inflation (5% per annum, 2002 onwards);
- iii) additional resources for the new structures that are proposed (National, State, District Resource Centers, and
- iv) Additional resources required for new processes like creation of Federations.

Proposed salary increases of 100% are in view of the fact that the present salaries have been continuing from 1997 and are much below other such programmes and projects in the country. The high turn-over of staff does affect the quality and processes of the programme, besides requiring capacity building investments too. This increase would also in a sense reward the existing staff who do not have other incentives and benefits apart from PF. Salary enhancement is imperative not only to maintain the morale of the functionaries, and as a right given the nature and quantum of work they perform. It is also necessary for the programme's image as giving fair recognition and acknowledgement of women's contributions. It would also enable the programme to attract professionally competent persons with adequate experience. This will also cut short requirements for on the job learning and long capacity building inputs, thereby accelerating the pace of the programme qualitatively. The agenda for Women's empowerment that the programme espouses have to give due consideration to the empowerment and well being of the women functionaries who are the backbone of the programme. Low honoraria have actually dis-empowered those women who work for other's empowerment. Their voices need to be heard and their issues addressed of fair and just remuneration.

The first three provisions for adjustments are concrete and can be incorporated in devising the budget for the next phase, however during the field visits it was felt that States do not have accurate information on the financial requirements and organizational viability of federations as yet. Thus, whereas this Mission does recognize that some form of support would be required for Federations it is important that this support is only extended after following criteria are met by states:

- Concrete plan of action that spells out Federations' agenda; and
- Plan for long term sustainability of these federations. Support should only be provided for a limited period after which they should be able to continue to function and raise their own resources. It is recommended that MS support to federations should be provided for an initial period of three years.

Estimates for NRC, SRC and DRCs are based on interactions and discussions with SPD, NPD and NRG members. No provision for inflation has been made in their budget as it is expected they would be able to meet the deficits due to inflation out of other self-generated revenues. These Centers would not only provide service to the program internally but would also provide professional technical assistance and consultancy services to other programs for a fee. From a long-term perspective all these resource centers can become more self-sufficient either through charging fees for assignments or accessing funds (donations and grants) from sources other than GOI.

Table 4 provides an overview of Financial Estimates in the period 2002-2007. Details of these workings can be found in Appendix VI.

Table 4: Overview of Financial Estimates 2002-2007

		Rs. in Lakhs
S.No.	Particulars	Total
I	National Level	
	i) Management Cost	111.81
	ii) Programme Activities	184.77
	(A) Total	296.58
II	National Resource Center	
	i) Management Cost	252.32
	ii) Programme Activities	145.05
	(B) Total	397.37
III	Federation Support Fund (for three states)	93.60
IV	State Level	
	i) Management Cost	143.23
	ii) Programme Activities	110.88
	Total for one state	254.11
	(C) Total (for three States)	762.32
V	State Resource Center	
	i) Management Cost	615.84
	ii) Programme Activities	301.85
	(D) Total (for five States)	917.70
VI	District Level	
	1 For on-going districts	
	i) Management Cost	1665.85
	ii) Programme Activities	1624.21
	(E) Total	3290.06
VII	New Districts	
	i) Management Cost	29.12
	ii) Programme Activities	47.66
	(F) Total	76.78
	Grand Total (A+B+C+D+E+F)	5834.40

* Allocations would also need to be made for vehicles that have degenerated and have to be replaced in the districts/state offices.

Appendix I: Reporting Process in MS

The reports that are produced in the organization at each level are described in brief in this Appendix. These reports have a more or less similar format and frequency across districts within a State.

- Sahayoginis/Karyakartas prepare daily reports, that contain an account of the activities that they complete during the day. These reports are submitted to JRPs/RPs on a monthly basis. JRPs/RPs read these report and provide comments to Sahayoginis so that they can improve upon their work.
- JRPs/RPs also maintain a daily report, which she submits to DPC at the end of month. These reports contain information about the happenings of each day. DPC goes through these reports and provide feedback to RPs about her work in the monthly review meeting.
- DPCs submit a quarterly progress report about the district's performance to SPO. This report contains a snapshot of district's position on date as well as description of activities that were performed during the last three months.
- DPCs send a monthly expense statement, which contains information about all the expenses incurred during the month to the State Office.
- All MS Societies have a system of documenting each and every event that is organized or participated in. These events can be workshops, exposure visits, visits by outsiders, melas, camps etc. Reports that explain whatever transpired on these accounts are diligently maintained.
- MS Societies also produce documents relating to their substantive area. Whenever a ground level process, which is innovative or has been proved to be extremely successful and popular is identified and documented for wider use.
- Besides reports, minutes of meeting and Action Plans of the District are also sent by DPC to SPD.

MS Societies diligently monitor the activities performed by their functionaries and the inputs that have gone into these activities. These are adequately reflected in the current reporting system.

The Center receives audited/unaudited quarterly and audited annual financial statements from the States. It also receives quarterly progress reports, six monthly statistical reports and annual progress reports. There are a few parameters, that are commonly reported across all states and remaining details are qualitative / descriptive in nature. There have been isolated attempts of orienting reporting towards outputs.

RNE receives Annual Reports and audited annual accounts.

Appendix II: Accounting System followed in MS Societies

In MS Societies following books of accounts are generally maintained:

- Cash Book;
- General Ledger;
- Journal Voucher Register;
- Asset Register & Inventory register of consumables
- Usually separate books of accounts are maintained whenever an external funded project is taken up.
- Expenses & income are recorded on accrual basis and a double entry system is followed.
- All vouchers are properly receipted and revenue stamp is affixed for any cash payment of Rs.500/- and above.
- Depreciation is charged on the assets as per the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Appendix III: Purchase Process

This Appendix presents key points of the purchase process followed in almost all the MS Societies with minor variations.

- All purchases below Rs. 500.00 per item may be made directly from the market after making simple verbal inquiries regarding prices and quality.
- All purchases involving amounts above Rs 500 but below Rs. 50,000 (this limit varies from State to State depending upon what their EC has approved) may be made from the market after receiving sealed quotations from dealers/shops or may be purchased from any of the State or Central Government Corporations, handicraft boards, khadi and village industries etc. without any other quotations being taken as per procedures of DRDAs. In case the lowest quotation is not accepted, the reasons for deviation should be recorded in writing before placing the order. The purchases are made upon the approval of purchase committees.
- Purchase of items involving more than Rs. 50,000.00 may be made either in accordance with a rate contract of the State or Central Government or after inviting open tenders. In case of vehicles, it may be purchased from Government authorized dealer.
- Expenditure limits for various employees have been set up and these vary from State to State. Splitting of items of purchase is not permitted for the exercise of these delegated powers.
- There are sub-committees at state and district level for deciding the unit costs of activities and related expenditures, that review the rates and processes and provide recommendations for maintaining expenditure limits.

Appendix IV: Alternative Purchase Process

This Appendix presents an alternative purchase process which is simpler compared to the existing process being followed. MS Societies can either use this or design their own taking help from this.

Whenever a purchase has to be made following step process should be followed:

- SPD appoints any one functionary to survey the market and procure three quotations from reputed shops. She should then make a detailed report about her recommendations after discussion with the SPD.
- This note along with all the quotations and analysis of the same should then be handed over to the Accounts Officer who should through other sources confirm whether all the prices mentioned in the quotations are appropriate or not.
- After this the same note, along with the process followed for verification and findings of the Accountant should be put in front of the SPD for approval.
- After the approval of the SPD, there should be a formal purchase order placed with the selected dealer in writing, detailing all the terms and conditions agreed upon between the dealer and MS Society. On the basis of the above purchase order payments to the dealer should be released.

Appendix V: Funds Flow

This appendix explains in brief the process that is followed in transferring funds from Center to States and then onwards to Districts.

The flow of funds from Center to State follows following steps:

- After Center receives 'request for funds' it forwards it to the Ministry of Finance (MOF). In certain cases MOF may have queries which are answered either by Center or State depending upon whom it has been addressed to and who has an explanation.
- After the Financial Advisor clears the proposal, these papers go to the Internal Finance – 1(IF-1) division in the MOF.
- The IF- 1 certifies that the funds are available. After this the approval goes to Payments and Accounts Office (PAO) who formally sends instruction to the bank for preparation of a demand draft in favor of the respective MS Societies.
- This draft is then released either by Registered Letter or Speed Post to the respective States. The whole process takes about 2 months.

The flow of funds from State to District are along the following steps:

- As soon as funds are received at the State Office most of the said amount is transferred to Term Deposits of duration of 46,60 & 90 days in lots of Rs.50,000/- each, based on the requirement.
- Amounts are released in advance by the State Office to District Implementation Unit. Every quarter the District Offices send in a request of funds to the State Office along with their proposed expenditure in the coming quarter.
- State Office verifies request with that district's past expenditure statements and plan for future.
- State Office then releases funds based on balance available with district office and as and when funds become available from Center.

FINANCIAL ESTIMATES
An Overview

Rs. in Lakhs

S.No.	Particulars	Total
I	National Level	
	i) Management Cost	111.81
	ii) Programme Activities	184.77
	(A) Total	296.58
II	National Resource Center	
	i) Management Cost	229.29
	ii) Programme Activities	131.25
	(B) Total	360.54
III	Federation Support Fund	93.60
IV	State Level	
	i) Management Cost	143.23
	ii) Programme Activities	110.88
	Total for one state	254.11
	(C) Total (for three states)	762.32
V	State Resource Center	
	i) Management Cost	591.60
	ii) Programme Activities	287.25
	(D) Total	878.85
VI	District Level	
	1 For on-going districts	
	i) Management Cost	1665.85
	ii) Programme Activities	1624.21
	(E) Total	3290.06
VII	New Districts	
	i) Management Cost	29.12
	ii) Programme Activities	47.66
	(F) Total	76.78
Grand Total		5758.72

Phasing of District Resource Centers

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total
Andhra		2	5	7	9	
Gujarat		2	4	6	8	
Kerala				2	2	
All States		4	9	13	17	
Budget	-	25.20	59.54	90.29	123.98	299.01

Phasing of Federations

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total
No. of Districts		4	9	13	13	
Budget	0	9.6	21.6	31.2	31.2	93.6

Federation Formation process coincides with formation of DRCs

Support to Federations is Proposed for three years after which they should be self sustaining.

Support for 1 district has been taken @ Rs. 60,000 per federation per annum for four federations in a district

Phasing of New Districts**Management Cost**

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total
Andhra		2				
Gujarat			2			
Kerala	2	2				
All States	2	4	2	0	0	
Budget	6.93	14.55	7.64	-	-	29.12

Program Cost

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total
Andhra		2				
Gujarat			2			
Kerala	2	2				
All States	2	4	2	0	0	
Budget	11.34	23.81	12.50	-	-	47.65

Phasing of Old Districts**Management Cost**

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total
Andhra	8	10	10	10	10	
Gujarat	7	7	9	9	9	
Kerala	2	4	4	4	4	
All States	17	21	23	23	23	-
Budget	238.00	308.70	355.01	372.76	391.39	1,665.85

Program Cost

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total
Andhra	8	10	10	10	10	
Gujarat	7	7	9	9	9	
Kerala	2	4	4	4	4	
All States	17	21	23	23	23	-
Budget	232.05	300.98	346.13	363.44	381.61	1,624.21

Yearly Cost Estimates for SRCs

Total Cost

State	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total 2002- 2007
UP	68	54	54			176.77
Karnataka	68	54	54			176.77
Andhra	68	54	54			176.77
Gujarat			68	54	54.13	176.77
Kerala			67.67	53.97	54.13	176.77
All States	203.01	161.92	297.72	107.95	108.25	878.85

Management Cost

State	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total 2002- 2007
UP	49	35	35			118.32
Karnataka	49	35	35			118.32
Andhra	49	35	35			118.32
Gujarat			49	35	34.98	118.32
Kerala			48.52	34.82	34.98	118.32
All States	146.56	104.47	201.97	69.65	69.95	591.60

Program Cost

State	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total 2002- 2007
UP	19	19	19			57.45
Karnataka	19	19	19			57.45
Andhra	19	19	19			57.45
Gujarat			19	19	19.15	57.45
Kerala			19.15	19.15	19.15	57.45
All States	57.45	57.45	95.75	38.30	38.30	287.25

NATIONAL PROJECT OFFICE

Rs. in Lakhs

No.	Items of Expenditure	Posts	Annual Average Last Budget	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total 2002-2007	PM per person
	MANAGEMENT COST									
I	Salaries									
i)	Programme Director	1	1.72	3.44	3.61	3.79	3.98	4.18	19.01	28667
ii)	Consultants - 24 women months	2	1.92	3.84	4.03	4.23	4.45	4.67	21.22	16000
iii)	Desk Officer	1	1	1.60	1.68	1.76	1.85	1.94	8.84	13333
iv)	Assistant	1	0.7	1.12	1.18	1.23	1.30	1.36	6.19	9333
v)	Accounts Asstt	1	0.6	1.08	1.13	1.19	1.25	1.31	5.97	9000
vi)	Typist	1	0.28	0.56	0.59	0.62	0.65	0.68	3.09	4667
vii)	Stenographers	3	2.15	2.15	2.26	2.37	2.49	2.61	11.88	5972
viii)	LDC	1	0.48	0.77	0.81	0.85	0.89	0.93	4.24	6400
ix)	Driver	1	0.48	0.48	0.50	0.53	0.56	0.58	2.65	4000
x)	Peon	2	0.72	0.72	0.76	0.79	0.83	0.88	3.98	3000
			10.05	15.76	16.65	17.37	18.24	19.16	87.07	
II	Office Expenses									
i)	Vehicle		2.25	2.87	-	-	-	-	2.87	
ii)	Vehicle fuel & maintenance		1.35	1.72	1.81	1.90	1.99	2.09	9.52	
iii)	Telephone, stationery		1	1.28	1.34	1.41	1.48	1.55	7.05	
iv)	Office Equipment (non-recurring)		0.5	0.64	0.67	0.70	0.74	0.78	3.53	
v)	Contingencies		0.25	0.32	0.34	0.35	0.37	0.39	1.76	
			5.35	6.83	4.15	4.36	4.58	4.81	24.73	
	Total Management Cost		15.4	22.58611	20.7002	21.73521	22.82197	23.96306	111.81	
	PROGRAM COSTS									
III	Meetings & Workshops									
i)	TA/DA		3.4	4.34	4.56	4.78	5.02	5.27	23.98	
ii)	NRG meetings and workshops		1	1.28	1.34	1.41	1.48	1.55	7.05	
iii)	Documentation and publication		0.6	0.77	0.80	0.84	0.89	0.93	4.23	
iv)	Evaluation		0.4	0.51	0.54	0.56	0.59	0.62	2.82	
v)	Fees & Honorarium		0.55	0.70	0.74	0.77	0.81	0.85	3.88	
vi)	Journals & magazines		0.45	0.57	0.60	0.63	0.66	0.70	3.17	
			6.4	8.17	8.58	9.01	9.46	9.93	45.13	
V	Grants to NGOs & Institutions									
i)	Studies & Research		4.8	6.13	6.43	6.75	7.09	7.45	33.85	
ii)	Programme implementation in Non-MS states		15	19.14	20.10	21.11	22.16	23.27	105.78	
			19.8	25.27	26.53	27.86	29.25	30.72	139.63	
	Total Program Cost		28.2	33.44	35.11	36.87	38.71	40.64	184.77	
	Grand Total A+B		41.6	56.02	55.81	58.60	61.53	64.61	296.58	

Budget in case of following heads may be pre-utilized or carried forward but total expense under that head may not exceed Total for 2002-07

1. Office Equipment (non-recurring)
2. Documentation & Publication
3. Evaluation
4. Fees & Honorarium
5. Studies & Research

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

Rs in Lakhs

S.No.	Items of Expenditure	Frequ ency	Amount (p.m.)	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total 2002 2007	PM per person
A	MANAGEMENT COSTS									
I	Salaries									
i)	Director	1	0.35	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	21.00	
ii)	Full Time Consultant	5	0.25	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00	75.00	
iii)	Accounts and Admin Manager	1	0.15	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	9.00	
iv)	Program Assistant	1	0.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	6.00	
v)	Peon	1	0.04	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	2.40	
vi)	Driver	1	0.04	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	2.40	
				23.16	23.16	23.16	23.16	23.16	115.80	
II	TA/DA	6	0.05	3.60	3.60	3.60	3.60	3.60	18.00	0.60
III	Office Expenses									
i)	Communications	1	0.25	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	15.00	3.00
ii)	Printing & Publications	1	0.20	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	12.00	2.40
iii)	Rent, water, electricity, etc	1	0.30	3.60	3.60	3.60	3.60	3.60	18.00	3.60
iv)	Fuel and Maintenance	1	0.25	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	15.00	3.00
v)	General maintenance (equip, etc)	1	0.20	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	12.00	2.40
vi)	Stationery	1	0.20	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	12.00	2.40
vii)	Miscellaneous	1	0.02	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	1.25	0.25
viii)	Non Recurring Expense									-
	Car/Jeep	1	6.50	6.50					6.50	78.00
	Computers	6	0.60	3.60					3.60	7.20
	Fax Machine	1	0.10	0.10					0.10	1.20
	Telephone Connection	2	0.02	0.04	-	-	-	-	0.04	0.24
				27.29	17.05	17.05	17.05	17.05	95.49	
	Total Management Cost			54.05	43.81	43.81	43.81	43.81	229.29	-
B.	PROGRAM COSTS									
IV	Meetings & Workshops									
	Meetings/Seminars/Workshops			3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	15.00	
	Training and Capacity Development			5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	25.00	
				8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	40.00	
V	Research and Advocacy									
	Research and Advocacy			5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	25.00	-
	Consultants Honoraria (part time)	2	0.02	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	30.00	0.18
	Database & Information			3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	15.00	
	Fellowships			4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	20.00	
				18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00	90.00	
VI	Contingencies			0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	1.25	
	Total Programme Cost			26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	26.25	131.25	
	Grand Total A+B			80.30	70.06	70.06	70.06	70.06	360.54	

STATE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Rs. in Lakhs

S.No.	Items of Expenditure	Posts	Annual Average Last Budget	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total 2002 2007	PM per person
A	MANAGEMENT COST									
I	Salaries									
i)	State Programme Director	1	1.20	2.40	2.52	2.65	2.78	2.92	13.26	20000
ii)	Associated Prog. Director	1	0.96	1.92	2.02	2.12	2.22	2.33	10.61	16000
iii)	Resource Person	1	0.84	1.68	1.76	1.85	1.94	2.04	9.28	14000
iv)	Consultants - 24 woman months	2	1.44	2.88	3.02	3.18	3.33	3.50	15.91	12000
v)	Accounts Officer	1	0.60	1.20	1.26	1.32	1.39	1.46	6.63	10000
vi)	Auditor	1	0.60	1.20	1.26	1.32	1.39	1.46	6.63	10000
vii)	Accounts Asstt.	1	0.54	0.96	0.91	0.95	1.00	1.05	4.77	7200
viii)	Stenographers	2	1.08	1.08	1.13	1.19	1.25	1.31	5.97	4500
ix)	Data Entry Operator	1	0.42	0.59	0.62	0.65	0.68	0.71	3.25	4900
x)	LDC	1	0.42	0.59	0.62	0.65	0.68	0.71	3.25	4900
xi)	Driver	1	0.42	0.42	0.44	0.46	0.49	0.51	2.32	3500
xii)	Peon	2	0.72	0.72	0.76	0.79	0.83	0.88	3.98	3000
			9.24	15.54	16.32	17.13	17.99	18.89	85.87	
II	TA/DA		2.50	3.19	3.35	3.52	3.69	3.88	17.63	
III	Office Expenses									
i)	Non-recurring office equipment (Computer and photocopier including office furniture)		0.76	0.97	1.02	1.07	1.13	1.18	5.37	
ii)	Rent, electricity, water		1.26	1.61	1.69	1.77	1.86	1.95	8.89	
iii)	Vehicle		2.00	2.55	-	-	-	-	2.55	
iv)	Vehicle fuel & maintenance		2.00	2.55	2.68	2.81	2.95	3.10	14.10	
v)	Postage and tel. Expenses		1.00	1.28	1.34	1.41	1.48	1.55	7.05	
vi)	Contingencies		0.25	0.32	0.34	0.35	0.37	0.39	1.76	
			7.27	9.28	7.06	7.42	7.79	8.18	39.73	
	Total Management Cost		19.01	28.01	26.73	28.07	29.47	30.95	143.23	
B	PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES									
IV	Documentation, Publication & Library									
i)	Annual Report		1.00	1.28	1.34	1.41	1.48	1.55	7.05	
ii)	Media and Publicity		0.58	0.71	0.75	0.79	0.83	0.87	3.95	
iii)	6-monthly report		0.25	0.32	0.34	0.35	0.37	0.39	1.76	
			1.81	2.31	2.43	2.55	2.67	2.81	12.76	
V	Workshops and Seminars		2.50	3.19	3.35	3.52	3.69	3.88	17.63	
VI	Evaluation									
i)	State Level Evaluation		1.41	1.80	1.89	1.99	2.09	2.19	9.96	
ii)	Thematic evaluation		0.50	0.64	0.67	0.70	0.74	0.78	3.53	
iii)	Action/ reflection meetings		0.50	0.64	0.67	0.70	0.74	0.78	3.53	
			2.41	3.08	3.23	3.39	3.56	3.74	17.01	
VII	Trainings									
	Fees and Honorarium		2.00	2.55	2.68	2.81	2.95	3.10	14.10	
	State Level Trainings for MS personnel		2.00	2.55	2.68	2.81	2.95	3.10	14.10	
			4.00	5.11	5.36	5.63	5.91	6.21	28.21	
VIII	Grants-in-Aid to NGOs for Programme implementation		6.00	6.38	6.70	7.04	7.39	7.76	35.26	
IX	Resource Centre		2.50	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	Total Programme Activities Cost		18.22	20.07	21.07	22.12	23.23	24.39	110.88	
	Grand Total (A+B)		37.23	48.08	47.80	50.19	52.70	55.34	254.11	

Budget for Resource Center Prepared Separately

Budget in case of following heads may be pre-utilized or carried forward but total expense under that head may not exceed Total for 2002-07

1. Non-recurring office equipment (Computer and photocopier including office furniture)
2. State Level Evaluation
3. Thematic evaluation

STATE RESOURCE CENTER

Rs in Lakhs

S.No.	Items of Expenditure	Frequenc y	Amount (p.m.)	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	5th Year	Total 2002- 2007
A)	Management Costs								
I	Salaries								
i)	Director	1	0.35	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	21.00
ii)	Full Time Consultant	3	0.25	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	45.00
iii)	Accounts and Admin Manager	1	0.15	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	9.00
iv)	Program Assistant	1	0.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	6.00
v)	Peon	1	0.04	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	2.40
vi)	Driver	1	0.04	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	2.40
				17.16	17.16	17.16	17.16	17.16	85.80
II	TA/DA	4	0.03	1.44	1.61	1.59	1.67	1.75	7.96
III	Office Expenses								
i)	Communications	1	0.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	6.00
ii)	Printing & Publications	1	0.20	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	12.00
iii)	Rent, water, electricity, etc	1	0.30	3.60	3.60	3.60	3.60	3.60	18.00
iv)	Fuel and Maintenance	1	0.20	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	12.00
v)	General maintenance (equip, etc)	1	0.20	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	12.00
vi)	Stationery	1	0.20	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	12.00
vii)	Miscellaneous	1	0.02	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	1.20
viii)	Non Recurring Expense								
	Car/Jeep	1	6.50	6.50					6.50
	Computers	4	1.80	7.20					7.20
	Fax Machine	1	0.10	0.10					0.10
	Telephone Connection	2	0.02	0.04					0.04
				29.92	16.15	16.23	16.31	16.39	96.00
	Total Management Cost			48.52	34.82	34.98	35.13	35.30	168.75
B.	PROGRAM COSTS								
IV	Meetings & Workshops								
	Meetings/Seminars/Workshops			2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	10.00
	Training and Capacity Development			3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	15.00
				6.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	25.00
V	Research and Advocacy								
	Research and Advocacy			3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	15.00
	Cosultants Honoraria (part time)	1	0.35	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	30.00
	Database & Information			2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	10.00
	Fellowships			3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	15.00
				14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00	70.00
VI	Contingencies			0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.75
	Total Programme Cost			19.16	19.16	19.16	19.16	19.16	95.75
	Grand Total A+B			67.67	53.97	54.13	54.28	54.45	284.50

DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION UNIT

Rs. in Lakhs

S.No.	Items of Expenditure	Posts	Annual Average Last Budget	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total 2002-2007	PM per person
A	MANAGEMENT COST									
I	Honorarium									
i)	District Programme Coordinator	1	0.72	1.44	1.51	1.59	1.67	1.75	7.96	12000
iii)	Resource Person	1	0.60	1.20	1.26	1.32	1.39	1.46	6.63	10000
iv)	Jr. Resource persons	2	1.08	2.16	2.27	2.38	2.50	2.63	11.94	9000
v)	Accountant	1	0.54	1.08	1.13	1.19	1.25	1.31	5.97	9000
vi)	Assistant	1	0.48	0.96	1.01	1.06	1.11	1.17	5.30	8000
vii)	Stenographer	1	0.48	0.96	1.01	1.06	1.11	1.17	5.30	8000
viii)	Data Entry Operator	1	0.42	0.84	0.88	0.93	0.97	1.02	4.64	7000
ix)	Driver	1	0.42	0.84	0.88	0.93	0.97	1.02	4.64	7000
x)	Messenger	2	0.36	0.72	0.76	0.79	0.83	0.88	3.98	3000
			5.10	10.20	10.71	11.25	11.81	12.40	56.36	
II	TA/DA		0.50	1.00	1.05	1.10	1.16	1.22	5.53	
III	Office Expenses									
i)	Recurring & Non-recurring office equipment in the Districts (Computer and photocopier including office furniture etc.)		0.25	0.50	0.53	0.55	0.58	0.61	2.76	
ii)	Rent, electricity		0.50	1.00	1.05	1.10	1.16	1.22	5.53	
iii)	Vehicle, fuel and maintenance		0.50	1.00	1.05	1.10	1.16	1.22	5.53	
iv)	Contingencies		0.15	0.30	0.32	0.33	0.35	0.36	1.66	
			1.40	2.80	2.94	3.09	3.24	3.40	15.47	
	Total Management Cost		7.00	14.00	14.70	15.44	16.21	17.02	77.36	
B	PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES									

IV	Material Production, Documentation, Publication & Library								
	i) Annual, Newsletter and office library	0.50	0.53	0.55	0.58	0.61	0.64	2.90	
		0.50	0.53	0.55	0.58	0.61	0.64	2.90	
V	Evaluation								
	i) Action/reflection meetings	0.25	0.26	0.28	0.29	0.30	0.32	1.45	
VI	Training/Workshops:								
	i) Fees & Honorarium	0.25	0.26	0.28	0.29	0.30	0.32	1.45	
	ii) Sakhi/Sangha training	0.50	0.53	0.55	0.58	0.61	0.64	2.90	
	iii) Sahayogini training	0.25	0.26	0.28	0.29	0.30	0.32	1.45	
	iv) Training of Instructors/ Teachers	0.25	0.26	0.28	0.29	0.30	0.32	1.45	
	v) Training of DIU Personnel	0.25	0.26	0.28	0.29	0.30	0.32	1.45	
	vi) Panchayatraj/ legal awareness, Health/ other trainings	0.50	0.53	0.55	0.58	0.61	0.64	2.90	
		2.00	2.10	2.21	2.32	2.43	2.55	11.60	
VII	Sahayogini*								
	i) Sahayogini honorarium								
	ii) Stationery and reading material etc.								
VIII	Mahila Sangha*								
	i) Sakhi Honorarium/ Sangha Fund								
	ii) Recurring Expenditure	10.25	10.76	11.30	11.87	12.46	13.08	59.47	
	iii) Non-recurring expenses								
	iv) Mahila Kutir								
IX	Educational Activities :								
	i) MSK*/NFE**NE*/ECCE*/ Innovative Programme								
	Total Programme Cost	13.00	13.65	14.33	15.05	15.80	16.59	75.42	

	Grand Total (A+B)		20.00	27.65	29.03	30.48	32.01	33.61	152.78
	For New Districts								
	Management Cost		3.30	3.47	3.64	3.82	4.01	4.21	19.15
	Programme Cost		5.40	5.67	5.95	6.25	6.56	6.89	31.33
			6.50	6.83	7.17	7.52	7.90	8.30	37.71
	Total		52.00	54.60	57.33	60.20	63.21	66.37	301.70

District Resource Center

S.No.	Items of Expenditure	Posts	Annual Average Last Budget	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	5th Year	Total 2002-2007
I	Issue Based Coordinator	5		6.00	6.30	6.62	6.95	7.29	33.15

Proposed Increase

Salary100	100%	Sal100
Salary80	80%	Sal80
Salary60	60%	Sal60
Salary40	40%	Sal40

InflationPA 5% InfIPA

While these figures provide the main framework, the next phase needs to provide for the following in the budget :

1. Research and studies and fee and honoraria to may be transferred to the NRC as and when it is established and the tasks it performs are supportinve to the
2. Provision for vehicles that have depreciated and are now in poor condition at the state and district levels to be replaced
- 3 programme costs for NRC for seminars, training, workshops at national level.
4. At district level (DRC)resources may be provided as a Challenge/Innovations fund for innovations in education /continuing education of Sanghas at Rs 2.0 lakh per federation for three years.
5. Resources for participation in national and international training and learning fora and study tours.
6. Cost escalations should be built in, in the figures year wise. Salary increases and management costs should be calculated with 10% escalations for every
7. Provisions for costs related to insurance, Provident Fund and medical coverage should be built in to the cost at the initial stage in the budget itself
8. Sanghas should receive money only for 3 years and after they have become strong enough to absorb such resources, not from year one. .
9. No allocations are needed for Sakhis

TERMS OF REFERENCE **November 2001**

Indo-Dutch Joint Final Review of Mahila Samakhya

Mahila Samakhya emerged in response to the National policy on education in 1986, which envisaged education as an agent of change in the basic status of women. The programme aims at empowerment of women through creating a conducive environment and generating a demand for learning. This National programme is fully funded by the Netherlands Government in five states of India, i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. The programme is implemented by Ministry of Human Resource and Development at the Centre through the mahila samakhya societies established at the 5 states.

The MS programme is flexible and facilitative in nature and is a process, rather than, target oriented. The programme is guided by the non-negotiable principals, i.e., allowing sufficient space and time to women to come together and to influence the shape and pace of programme, to create an environment of learning that will enable the women to question, to conceptualise, seek answers, act and reflect on their actions and also acquire the necessary skills and capacities to determine their own development. The process of empowerment is the heart of the programme. Empowerment is defined as enhancing the self-image and self-confidence of women, thus enabling them to recognize the value of their contribution to the society. In this process, the role of the programme functionaries and agencies is facilitative and not directive. All programme interventions are developed in response to articulated local needs and demands.

The women's collective (Sangha) at the village level is the focal point of the programme and all activities are planned around the Sangha. The pace, form and content of all activities are determined by participating Sangha women at the village and priorities of women are respected and heard by others.

The MS programme started in 1988-89 in Karnataka, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, end of 1992 in Andhra Pradesh and January 1998 in Kerala. Given the existing scope for self-definition and organic expansion, MS is at different stages of development in the various states and even within each state.

Within the MS programme of each state there is a continuous process of annual and periodic review and evaluation. In addition to this there is a National Resource Group as well as State Resource Groups consisting of experts in this field who act as a 'think tank' and often have state and national level brainstorming sessions on intensive reviewing of the programme and future plan of action.

Mid term joint evaluation was carried out in January 1997 in all the states except Kerala where the programme was introduced in 1998. The joint conclusion of the mission was that MS has great potential for effecting social change and it has to continue and grow with a perspective of a long-term development. The programme has tried to offer rural women the opportunity to reflect critically on their lives - to understand the socio-economic processes which impinge upon it and

to maximise individual and collective self expression, and promote personal and political growth. Further the mission recommended a 5-year budget neutral extension starting from January 1998. Accordingly, the programme was extended for 5 years until December 2002.

Beginning 1999, within the Embassy there was extensive internal review of the country portfolio, shift in the policy of Development Co-operation and introduction of sectoral approach. The overall Dutch aid policy and effectiveness of aid programmes was reviewed and reconsidered. It was decided that sectoral approach will be the working method and the organising principal of Dutch developmental programmes, with the key policy aims of good governance, poverty reduction, gender equality and women's empowerment, institutional development and environmental protection (GAVIM). Important conditions for the sectoral approach would be:

- "Good governance" environment in the recipient country, good policies, and effective and accountable institutions to implement those policies;
- "Ownership" for programmes, which are aligned with the responsibilities of local authorities;
- "Coherence", where the various donor-supported activities fit together;
- "Donor - co-ordination".

As a result of this exercise the Netherlands Government restricted the support programmes only to three states of India i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Kerala. The programmes in other states are planned to be gradually phased out by the end of 2002.

Therefore, the task of the Final Evaluation Mission will be to intensively review MS programme in 3 concentration states of RNE, namely Gujarat, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh and at the same time endorse the views, suggestions and opinion of the State Programme Directors of other states, i.e. Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka.

2. Objective of the Mission:

The objective of the mission is two folds:

1. To review the progress of the programme since January 1998, and assess its impact in terms of empowerment of women
2. To recommend strategy for next phase (2003 to 2007) in the 3 concentration states, i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Kerala, consistent with policy of GOI and the policy of GON.
3. To provide an estimate of total budget for the next phase.

3. Specific Tasks of the Mission

Within the above mentioned objectives the specific task of the Mission will include but are not limited to the following:

1. Women's Empowerment:

- a) The impact of MS programme on women's personal and family life in terms of women's autonomy and its impact on socio-cultural environment.

- b) The ability of the programme to create a foundation for grass-roots level women's movement
- c) Achievement in terms of women's political participation
- d) Achievement in terms of attainment of women's legal rights
- e) The ability to address women's issues cutting across caste and class divides.
- f) The emerging trends in terms of growth, pace and impact.

2. Education:

- a) Achievements and contribution to the state /district/village level educational programmes within the state.
- b) Assess the impact of 'Mahila Shikshan Kendras' and its contribution to girl child.

3. Inter-linkages with National/ State level Organisations

- a) Assess the interface and linkages of MS with other Government or Non-Government programmes at the national/ state/district and village level.
- b) Contribution of MS to various Govt./non-Govt. programmes
- c) Contribution of MS to child labour

4. New Phase

- a) Recommendation on the need for a new phase
- b) Recommend strategies of MS in the new phase within the state.
- c) Review the existing structural arrangement of Mahila Samakhya being registered as a society with direct reporting to the centre (Ministry of Human Resource Development) and recommend if required alternative structural arrangement in the light of expansion.
- d) Time frame and pace for the new phase within the state
- e) Assess required additional capacity and training as well as human resource development needs for expansion.

5. Reporting and monitoring:

An assessment of the quality and appropriateness of the monitoring system existing at Sangha level, District level and State level, with suggestion to strengthen/improve it, if found weak or inappropriate.

To suggest a mechanism for flow of appropriate information from the programme to RNE at required intervals and vice-versa.

6. Organisational Structure and Financial Management

- a) Assess the organizational set-up and structure with regard to capacity and opportunity.
- b) Assess the staff situation with regard to professional and technical functions, administrative functions, seniority and career growth.

- c) Is the implementing organization at the state level institutionally, management and capacity wise competent enough to implement the programme in the set time frame.
- d) Is there sufficient financial management capacity and is this capacity organised in such a way (checks and balances) that accountability and transparency can be assured.
- e) Assess and analyze expenditure and utilization of funds in relation to approved budgets.
- f) Financial accounting processes and procedures, flow of funds, procedure of submission of physical and financial reports/claims
- g) Recommend budget and period for the next phase
- h) Suggest ways of improved financial reporting from the Ministry of Human Resource Development at the centre to RNE
- i) Is there a need for Technical Assistance ? If yes, formulate recommendations for this TA including duration, purpose and budget

7. **Interface with RNE:**

Appraise the existing system of flow of information from MS to RNE and vice-versa. Recommend improved management information system for monitoring.

8. **Expected Output**

The mission will produce the following outputs:

1. A mission aid-memoir upon completion of the mission, to be submitted to Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) and RNE before departure of the mission team members;
2. A completed filled up COCA-list (enclosed) to be submitted along with mission aide-memoir
3. Draft final mission report, to be submitted to MHRD and RNE within two weeks after finalization of the mission;
3. Final mission report along with filled COCA-list to be submitted to MHRD and RNE within two weeks after receiving written comments on the draft final report from MHRD and RNE.

9. **Methodology**

It is suggested that the mission use the following methodology to complete the tasks assigned:

- Review all the relevant MS documents (including but not limited to)
- Field visits to the three states; Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat
- Discussion with the State Programme Directors of Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.
- Discussions with MS personnel at the centre, state, district and village level.
- Discussions with other stakeholders and civil society
- Interact with representatives of the National and State Resource Group of MS.
- Briefing and debriefing meetings with MHRD and RNE.

VI. Timing and staffing of the Mission

The mission will start 29 November up to 20 December 2001. Two teams will be formed; one team with 3 experts and a GOI nominee will visit Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, whereas the other team will visit Gujarat and then for two days each to Lucknow and Bangalore to have discussions with the SPDs. At the end of the mission the members will submit an aide-memoir to MHRD and RNE. Within 2 weeks after the end of the field time of the mission the draft final report will be submitted.

The mission will consist of the following members:

Gender expert - 2

Financial expert - 2

Organisational/Institutional expert - 2

One of the senior and experienced members of the mission will be the team leader. The team leader will be responsible to ensure that the expected outputs of the mission are produced on time and up to the required standards. The team leader will be responsible for overall co-ordination of the team members inputs, including the logistical arrangements for the team activities in various states.

The other team members will be responsible to provide specialist inputs on the relevant aspects of the mission. Each team member will be responsible to provide written contributions to all the expected outputs, under the co-ordination of and reporting to the team leader.

TRAVEL ITINERARY OF THE MISSION

DATE	ITEM
<i>29th November 2001</i>	<i>Mission Briefing at RNE, New Delhi to Mission Members</i>
<i>30thNov 1st December</i>	<i>Preparatory work by mission members</i>
<i>2nd December</i>	<i>Briefing by GOI, Dept of Education Joint Secretary and NPD to mission members-2 GOI representatives join the mission Both teams depart to the states to undertake field work</i>
<i>3rdDecember-8th Dec</i>	<i>Team 1 in AP and team 2 in Gujarat</i>
<i>9th December</i>	<i>Team 1 in Kera'a-joined by third GOI rep on mission for 5 days Team 2 travels to Karnataka</i>
<i>10th December</i>	<i>Team 2 conducts field work in Kerala Team 2 holds interactions in Karnataka state office</i>
<i>13thDecember</i>	<i>Team 2 travels to UP for interactions at State office</i>
<i>15th December</i>	<i>Both teams return to Delhi</i>
<i>16th to 20th Dec</i>	<i>Mission Team meets and holds discussions to draw conclusions for Aide Memoire</i>
<i>21st December</i>	<i>Presentation of the Aide Memoire and Conclusions to GOI and RNE and NRG representatives</i>
<i>22nd December</i>	<i>Team members disperse to respective destinations with brief to send sections of state reports based on team-wise work distribution and based on the Report Framework provided.</i>

Abbreviations

ANMs	Auxillary Nurse Midwives
ANTWA	Agriculture Training for Women Programme of the Govt of Andhra Pradesh
BDOs	Block Development Officers
BMK	Bala Mitra Kendra
CDOs	Community Development Officers
CE	Continuing Education
CEDAW	Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
DoE (EE)	Department of Education-Elementary Education Section
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
DPIP	District Poverty Initiatives Programme
EFA	Education for All
EWRs	Elected Women Representatives
GAD	Gender and Development
GDI	Gender Development Index
GOI	Government of India
GON	Government of the Netherlands
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
KMSS	Kerala Mahila Samakhya Society
MS	Mahila Samakhya Programme
MOH	Ministry of Health
NA	Nari Adalats
NRG	National Resource Group
NIAS	National Institute for Advanced Studies
NLM	National Literacy Mission
NPD	National Programme Director
NRC	National Resource Centre for Women and Girls
OBC	Other Backward Classes
POA	Plan of Action
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
RNE	Royal Netherlands Embassy
SC	Scheduled Caste
SDMCs	School Development and Management Committees
SECs	School Education Committees
SHGs	Self Help Groups
SPD	State Programme Director
ST	Scheduled Tribes
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universalization of Primary Education
VECs	Village Education Committees
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	World Bank
WCP	Women Component Plan
WHO	World Health Organization
WID	Women in Development
WERs	Women Elected Representatives of Panchayats

Glossary

<i>Bal Kendras</i>	<i>Child care centres</i>
<i>Bal Mitra Kendras,</i>	<i>Children's education centres</i>
<i>Bandhs</i>	<i>agitation or protest by stopping work</i>
<i>Block/Taluka</i>	<i>Smallest administrative unit, comprising about 100 villages</i>
<i>Cheli sanghas /</i>	
<i>Kishori Sanghas</i>	<i>Forum/group of adolescent girls</i>
<i>Devadasi /Jogini</i>	<i>Girl dedicated to Goddess , prostitution sanctioned by religion</i>
<i>Gram Sabhas</i>	<i>Village Level meeting</i>
<i>Kendras</i>	<i>Centres</i>
<i>Kishori Kendras /</i>	
<i>Mahila Shikshan Kendras</i>	<i>Centres for learning for adolescent girls</i>
<i>Mahasanghas</i>	<i>Federations</i>
<i>Mahila Pradhans</i>	<i>Women leaders of Panchayats</i>
<i>Mandal</i>	<i>Smaller than a block, identified units of about 40-60 villages in AP</i>
<i>Nari Adalats</i>	<i>Women's courts</i>
<i>Panchayat</i>	<i>Local Governance body</i>
<i>Sahayogini /sevani/ karyakartha</i>	<i>Field worker of the MS programme</i>
<i>Sanghas</i>	<i>Collective or group of women at the village level</i>
<i>Sanghamitra</i>	<i>Literally means "Friends of the collective"</i>
<i>Sammelan</i>	<i>Conference or public gathering</i>
<i>Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan</i>	<i>Campaign for Education for All</i>
<i>Sarpanch</i>	<i>Elected leader of the Panchayat</i>
<i>Swatantra Vidyalaya</i>	<i>Free/open school</i>
<i>Swa Shakti</i>	<i>Scheme of the Deptt of Women and Child Devptt, Govt of India, with World Bank assistance</i>
<i>Van Panchayats</i>	<i>Peoples forums for Forest management</i>
<i>Yatras</i>	<i>Fair or procession, usually for religious purposes</i>
<i>Yuvati Shibirs</i>	<i>Camps for Adolescent girls</i>

MAHILA SAMAKHYA

INDO-DUTCH REVIEW MISSION 2001

MAHILA SAMAKHYA GUJARAT

Team Members:

Fatima Ali Khan

Riet Turksma

Shushmita Dutt

Virat Divyakirti

CONTENTS

Preface

A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

B. MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME IN GUJARAT

C. PROGRESS AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

1. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- 1.1 Impact on Women's Personal and Family Lives, Autonomy and Socio-Cultural Environment*
- 1.2 Political participation/Panchayat Raj*
- 1.3 Women's Legal Rights*
- 1.4 Cutting across Class And Caste Divides*
- 1.5 Towards Building a Women's Grassroots Movement*
- 1.6 Emerging Trends, Pace and Impact*

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 2.1 Women's Education And Governance Of Education*
- 2.2 Girls Education*
- 2.3 Contribution to reduction of child Labour*

3. LINKAGES WITH GOVERNMENT, NGOs, WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND RNE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 Linkages with Government Departments and Agencies*
- 3.2 Linkages with NGOs and Women's Movement*
- 3.3 Added Value and Linkages with RNE Sectoral Approach Priorities*

4. REPORTING AND MONITORING

5. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

6. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

7. HUMAN RESOURCES

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Accounting*
- 8.2 Internal Controls*
- 8.3 Purchase Procedures*
- 8.4 Funds Flow*
- 8.5 Disclosures*
- 8.6 Payroll System*
- 8.7 Utilization of Funds*

D.NEXT PHASE

Annexures, Mission Itinerary, Abbreviations, Glossary

INDO-DUTCH REVIEW MISSION 2001 MAHILA SAMAKHYA GUJARAT

A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Gujarat is the second most industrialised state with the fourth highest per capita income in India. It has a high growth rate but a declining agricultural sector. The lack of irrigation facilities and erroneous water management slowed agricultural growth. The unregulated excavation of wells has contributed to the lowering of water tables and general environmental degradation. The uncontrolled and unregulated exploitation of Gujarat's water resources could lead to a serious drinking water crisis. The state's economic growth is thought to be at the cost of the environment. Gujarat food grain production ranks 13th in India, affecting household food security.

Status of Women and Current Issues

Gujarat figures low on the Gender Development Index, which is in contradiction with its high ranking in the economic field. This confirms the evidence that social development and not mere economic development holds the key for the emancipation of women in society. It has been argued that women's development in Gujarat is the outcome of macro variables, poor environment and ecology, low safety against violence in different types, and widespread regional disparities. Appropriate policy interventions are required to ensure that there are socio-economic and political gains for women from development of the state.

TABLE 1: Sex Ratio 2001

District	Sex ratio
India	933
Gujarat	921
The Dangs	986
Vadodara	919
Rajkot	930
Banaskantha	931
Sabarkantha	985
Panchmahals	939
Surendranagar	948

Source: Census tables 2001

While there have been notable initiatives from women's organizations in the state, there has been no major policy initiative regarding the enhancement of the position of women in Gujarat. Gujarat lacks a State Commission for women and a draft policy paper on gender is still to be finalized.

Literacy

Gujarat ranked fifth in literacy (1991) after Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Punjab. Its literacy rates are higher than the national average. However, tribal women have a very low literacy levels. In contrast, literacy among scheduled caste women is almost at par with the overall literacy levels. Low female literacy rates among tribals may be attributed to periodic migration by tribal males, resulting in double burden for

women and high drop-out rates. An effort to raise literacy levels for tribals is being made by the DPEP.

Table 2: Gujarat Female literacy rates-2001

India	54.16%
Gujarat	58.60%
<i>Banaskantha</i>	<i>34.54%</i>
<i>Sabarkantha</i>	<i>52.85%</i>
<i>Surendranagar</i>	<i>48.72%</i>
<i>Rajkot</i>	<i>67.64%</i>
<i>Vadodara</i>	<i>61.24%</i>
<i>The Dangs</i>	<i>48.99%</i>
<i>Panchmahals</i>	<i>45.43%</i>

Source: Census of India 2001

The incidence of child labour in Gujarat is less than the all India average and lower among girls in the state. About 1.7 % of girls in rural areas and 0.5 % in urban areas are working against 4.8% and 2.1% of boys in rural and urban areas. The Mission found that many boys and girls drop out of school as they migrate with their parents and family livestock to seasonal grazing grounds.

There are reasonably good infrastructure facilities for primary education. There were 33,119 primary schools in 1995-96, and 5713 secondary and higher schools. More than 90% of the villages have at least one primary school within the village. It is not the infrastructure but the administration and quality of primary education that essentially hampers efforts to reach universal literacy in the state. The teacher student ratio is 60, which is not conducive for learning. Teacher absenteeism and teacher supervision are problem areas.

The District Primary Education Programme with its objectives of raising enrolment, retention and achievement is being implemented in Banaskantha, Godahara, Dahod and Dangs districts. The DPEP is planned for extension to Jamnagar, Junagadh, Sabarkantha, Kutchch, Bhavnagar and Surendranagar. The Ministry of Human resource Development has also approved preparatory activities for 14 districts namely Anand, Kheda, Patan, Bharuch, Narmada, Surat, Valsad, Navsari, Ahmedabad (rural), Vadodara, Rajkot, Amreli, Gandhinagar and Mehsana districts under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan.

Health

Gujarat is above the all India average in the number of hospital beds per million persons. Life expectancy of women in Gujarat is close to the all India average, though, Gujarat's IMR is below the national average. Overall, Gujarat ranked low in terms of health indicators. This can be explained by the quality of the services rendered by the health institutes and also because the majority of facilities are in urban areas.

Nutrition

Under the Public Distribution System (PDS) the number of fair price shops in Gujarat has increased over time. However, this has not been able to keep up with population growth. The population covered per shop remains at 3200 since 1977 which is a poor record of PDS extension particularly with respect to tribal areas. MS has intervened

in distribution of the World Food Programme emergency food aid in earthquake affected areas.

B. MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME IN THE STATE

Activities of the MS Programme

The MS Programme was launched in Gujarat in 1989 and is presently being implemented in 36 blocks and 1,422 villages in Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Panchmahal, Surendranagar, Vadodara, Rajkot and Dangs.

During 2000-2001 the programme was expected to cover 60 villages of the tribal Dangs district. However only initial mobilization efforts have so far been made.

Activities of MS Gujarat include:

- * Seminars and Training programmes on health, education, law, Panchayati Raj, ecology etc.
- * Information on development schemes in blocks and districts
- * Establishment of Nari Adalats, Mahila Kutirs
- * Literacy classes
- * Small scale craft production and marketing
- * Training in Micro Credit
- * Creation of Mahasanghs

Table 3: Mahila Samakhya Gujarat: coverage

District/ villages	Sabarkan tha	Baroda	Rajkot	Banaska ntha	Surendra nagar	Panchm ahal	Dangs
Total no. villages	719	1,183	813	435	245	344	311
MS coverage	250 (34.77)	322 (27.2%)	323 (39.7%)	170 (39%)	110 (44.8%)	120 (34.8%)	60 19.2%)

Based on table in MS Annual Report, 2000-2001

The coverage of villages by MSG within each block remains fairly low. This needs to be considered to enhance the visible impact of the programme

Table 4: Formation and Functioning of Sanghas Between 1999-2000

Baroda	Banaskanth a	Rajkot	Sabarkantha	Panchmahal	Surendra -nagar
1. Training: Law, health literacy, Sakhi	1. Training: To strengthen sanghas to form dist. To vill. level committees	1. Formation of 55 Sanghas 2. Collabor- ation with govt. and NGOs	1. Training: In fishery 2. Nari Adalat Functioning	1. Decentral- isation of the MS programe i.e. planning and execution of programmes in association with other organisations	1. Formation of Manch at block level 2. Literacy classes
2. Nari Adalat	2. Informatio n on govt. schemes, Nabard, SGSY	3. Formation of MS Federation	3. Sangha decentralis a-tion	2. Child Care Centre linked to	

<p>4. Sahyogini workers cover new villages to form</p> <p>5. Mahasangh formation</p>	<p>3. Planning: for co-operation of Sanghas with other institutions</p>	<p>Specific Activities not stated</p>	<p>effected</p> <p>4. Formation of Mahasangh and Collaboration with Govt. schemes</p>	<p>DPEP</p> <p>3. Formation of 13 Sanghas.</p>	
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Health

MS Gujarat has established and utilized forums such as Mahila and Yuvati Shibirs, health fairs, Jilla Arogya Mela to raise awareness of health issues. Childcare centres have been set up in Rajkot and Sabarkantha districts. These need to be extended to other districts as well. Training of Sahayoginis and nurses has been carried out in Rajkot and Surendranagar districts. MS Gujarat has participated in AIDs awareness training programmes. MS Gujarat has collaborated with international organizations like WHO as well as local and state organizations like Chetna with reference to health programmes. A district-wise description of MS activities in this area are given below:

Table 5: Health related activities of Mahila Samakhya Gujarat

Rajkot	Banaskantha	Baroda	Panchmahal	Sabarkantha	Surendranagar
<p>Aids training</p> <p>Follow up block level training by WHO for 288 women</p> <p>Child Care Centre implemented under MS</p>	<p>18 Shibirs on child health in collaboration with Chetna</p>	<p>Training of MS Sahyoginis</p> <p>Health and Aids Camp: Training on AIDS</p> <p>Health Fairs Dissemination of material</p>	<p>Information + Training on AIDS by Aids Control Society, Gujarat</p> <p>Proposal for RCH in collaboration with Chetna</p>	<p>Jilla Arogya Mela</p> <p>RCH + anaemia shibirs</p> <p>Yuvati shibirs</p> <p>Child Care Centre implemented under MS</p>	<p>Health Shibir</p> <p>Gynaecological camp</p> <p>PHC assisted MS in shibir</p> <p>Training of nurses</p> <p>Health camp for 241 women</p>

Legal Rights: Nari Adalats

Rajkot has been successful in establishing and using Nari Adalats to benefit women. In Baroda district, MS collaborated with an NGO Majlis from Mumbai, that gave legal literacy training for starting Nari Adalats. The districts of Banaskantha, Sabarkantha and Surendranagar have not been able to establish effective Nari Adalats. While Sanghas have been formed in six districts, their specific activities in Panchmahal, Sabarkantha and Surendranagar are not clear. The issues regarding the objectives

Emergence of Nari Adalats: The case of Rajkot district, Gujarat.

Nari Adalats are emerging as a vibrant alternative system of justice for women, with wide acceptability in the community, and the Mission Team visiting Gujarat was able to observe this at a Nari Adalat that was in session at Vankaner taluk in Rajkot district.

In the early Sangha meetings the issues raised by women related largely to the demand for facilities – water, roads, schools or ration cards and health. Rarely were issues related to gender like violence and harassment, which affected women at a personal level, raised in the meetings. Later though, at training conducted outside their own villages women began to talk freely and through a sharing of experiences realized they were not alone in experiencing violence and harassment. Women began to speak about violence in public and to address and adjudicate in cases brought up by Sangha members. But when these involved men from their own villages, women were subjected to threats and pressures and felt the need to conduct meetings away from their villages to be able to deal effectively with cases of violence. The most appropriate and central place for such meetings was seen to be the taluk headquarters, which the women used to visit from time to time. Meetings began to be held there on a fixed date every month.

The Nari Adalat was formally started in Rajkot district in June 1998 after the MS had organized a Legal Training Programme by Majlis, a Mumbai based NGO that had earlier facilitated the starting of the first Nari Adalat in Vadodara district. By 1999 there were 5 Nari Adalats functioning in Varodara; Dabhoi, Sankheda, Padra, Vaghodia and Pavi Jetpur. The Nari Adalat at Padra was registered. By December 2001 Nari Adalats were functioning in seven taluks of Rajkot, each having about forty women from about twenty villages. MS also conducted workshops where women from Nari Adalats of different villages and taluks shared their experiences and strategies and formed a strong network. By December 2001, 335 cases had been successfully resolved in the Nari Adalats of Rajkot and 56 registered cases had been withdrawn.

Nari Adalats are comprised of a wide cross-section of women. Apart from the Sangha women and one or two Sahayoginis they include some women whose cases have been solved earlier, some single and elder women, those from lower castes and women members from Gram Panchayats. The type of cases brought before the Adalats pertain mainly to domestic violence, physical and mental harassment, fraudulent marriages and bigamy, divorce and maintenance, alcoholism, child marriage and child abuse and the harassment of women not able to have children, specially sons. Cases related to economic issues like property are taken up if women are affected.

Other MS States that are in the process of starting Nari Adalats visit Rajkot/Vadodara to observe and study their functioning. The ICRW⁵ has been assisting MS Gujarat in documenting the Nari Adalat cases in Vadodara and Rajkot. The DIU Rajkot had also spoken highly of the effectiveness of the training provided by NGO Majlis from Mumbai. Other MS States could also be provided this training.

Legal Awareness Shibirs, campaigns on the legal issues are conducted in all the districts. The local administration has also begun to focus attention on legal issues

⁵ International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) is conducting this research in Gujarat as well as in the Tehri district of UP MS and is facilitating the process documentation of cases thereby.

brought up by the Sangha women. As Sahayoginis started to work on this issue in partnership with the police in Vadodara they were issued identity cards.

During discussions with the DIU it emerged that the NAs involve time spent by Sahayoginis and RPs and expenses for traveling, documenting etc. The Sangha women also incur expenses in travelling for casework and incur loss of wages. No detailed plans for sustainability of NAs seem to be in place, apart from some mention of collecting a small fee for cases registered to "cover costs". Space is generally obtained free of cost at the *Tehsil* headquarters from government.

Impact of Nari Adalats

The concept of Nari Adalats has gained wide acceptance among Sangha women and their families and in the wider community. Women also bring cases from other villages where the news of the work done by NAs has reached. Nari Adalats have come to be supported and promoted by government (provision of free accommodation for meetings) and the police (cases referred by the police) that give them greater credibility. By bringing the women's perspective to the solution of women's problems, Nari Adalats have challenged the patriarchal structures and increased the participation of women in the process of obtaining justice.

Nari Adalats provide space for women to articulate problems of violence and harassment and have imbued them with the confidence that justice can be sought and obtained. They have created a new identity for women in the family, village and community. **Nari Adalats cut across caste, class and religious divides and are filling the gap created by a legal system that is perceived as patriarchal and unreachable, slow and expensive.** An infrastructure has been created where women can get justice that is accessible, affordable and gender sensitive. They have changed the way people perceive the problem of violence against women and have brought the women's perspective to the concept of justice and punishment. Nari Adalats have had an impact not only on the women whose cases were addressed but on their families and on adolescent girls, village leaders and panchayats, and on lawyers, police and MS personnel.

Support To Nari Adalats for Sustainability

While Sangha women play a lead role in the initiating and functioning of Nari Adalats, Sahayoginis continue to play a critical role in facilitating and documenting the process. This adds to their workload and affects the time available for their regular work. **There is also no budget line in MS for expenses related to the Nari Adalats and this needs to be included.** The Sangha women who participate in the Adalat incur transport costs for traveling to and from the Tehsil headquarters and also suffer loss of wages. Some of the Nari Adalats are in the process of working out a small fee to be charged for the cases that are being dealt with, however continuing support particularly for documentation would be necessary till they become self-sustaining. **The Annual Report mentions briefly that there have been discussions about federating Nari Adalats but details of this are not clear. This element should however be envisaged as part of the future cost components being provided as future support for NAs.**

Federations/Mahasanghas

MS teams and Sangha women have been discussing the eventual withdrawal of the MS Programme and the role of Federations in consolidating and sustaining the Sanghas. At the cluster level meeting of Sangha women representatives in Rajkot, most women who had been Sangha members were clear about the need, structure and functioning of Federations. They had identified five core issues: Education, Health, Legal Issues, Economic Development and Panchayat Raj - as areas necessary to focus on and had formed small Committees of Sangha women interested in these issues at the village and cluster level and taluk level to work in solidarity on these issues.

Night meetings and training of these committees have been conducted to create an understanding of the processes of federation, structure, registration, monetary requirements, roles and responsibilities. The process of forming Federations has been ongoing in Rajkot for two years. Sangha women and Sahayoginis have participated in defining the mandate of the federation as:

- coordinate at the taluk and district levels with government and NGOs
- provide support to Nari Adalats working at the taluk level to form a federation
- identify needs of Sanghas and place them before the Executive to carry them out
- inform Sanghas about government projects and schemes of benefit to them and help to secure them

MS Rajkot has also identified various possibilities of raising funds for Federation work which include

- government grants
- Sangha contributions
- voluntary contributions by Sangha women
- membership fees
- foreign aid
- collection of funds from Institutions, Trusts and Donors
- Sangha earnings from training
- Contributions from villages.

MS Rajkot has formed five Taluk level Federations of which two are in the process of being registered. Federations are being formed in some of the other districts also. The model adopted for Sabarkantha district is given below:

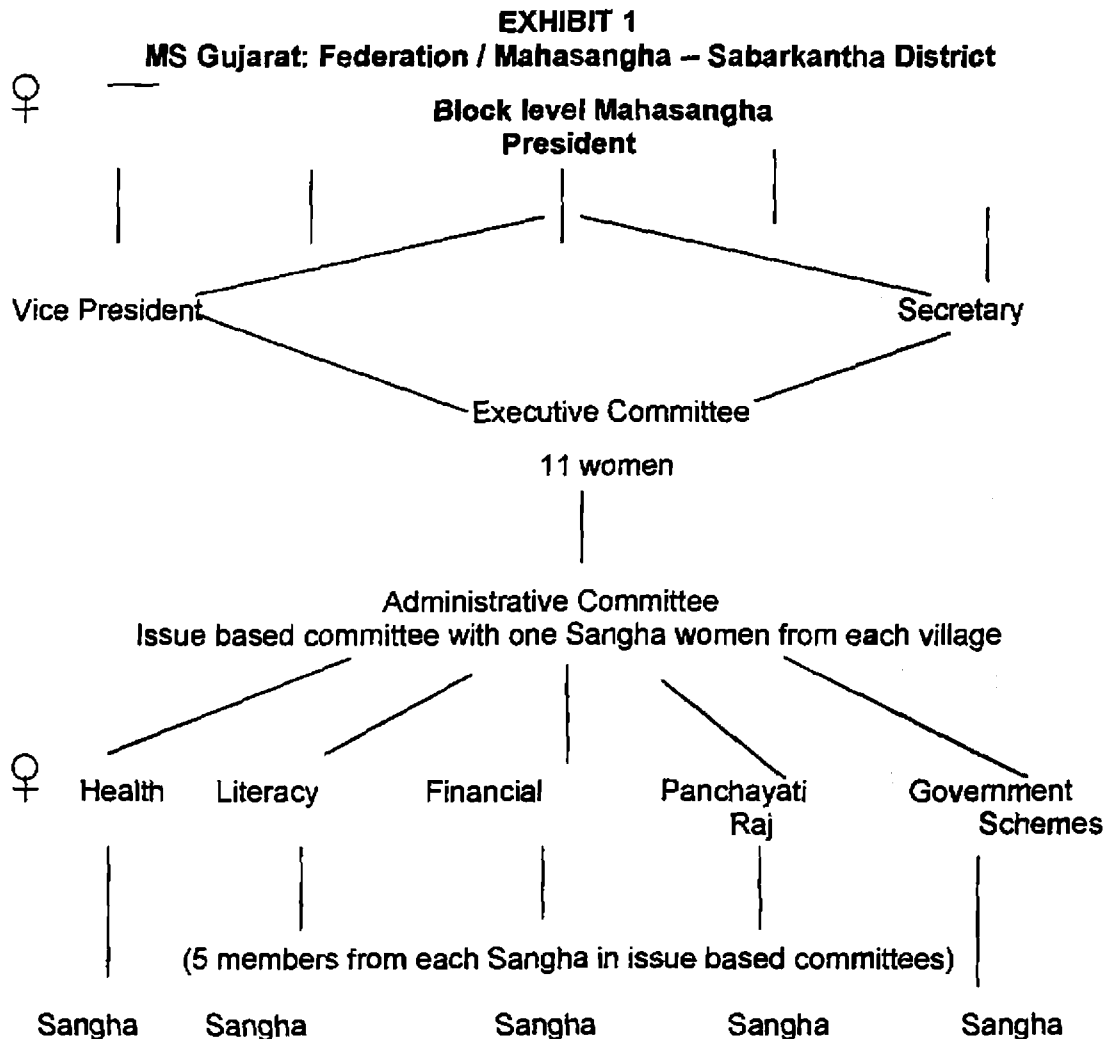
1. 4 Cutting across Class And Caste Divides

The MS Programme has been able to cover approximately 35,000 SC and ST women which is 0.02% of the total population of the districts in which MS is working.⁶ While MS has addressed issues within certain caste groups these are not specified.

MS Sanghas include women across caste/class divides. Some Sangha activities provide effective platforms to further inter-caste and inter-religious group interaction, though the constraints or difficulties in overcoming caste/class/religious differences are complex. MS has addressed women across religious boundaries as described in Rajkot Nari Adalat, which was attended by Muslim women. On occasions, women from other caste groups attend meetings without officially being part of the Sangha. Issues like water management and installation of hand pumps facilitate inter-caste interaction. The literacy and health programmes and childcare centres become a

⁶ MS Annual Report, 2000-2001.

space for various caste and religious groups to come together. MS provides an opportunity to bring women together in a secular manner across religious groups, irrespective of these barriers, to work in solidarity for social transformation towards equality and justice. This important issue needs greater attention in discussions within the organization and personnel oriented to ensure that it remains upfront within all organizational activities.



1.5 Towards Building a Women's Grassroots Movement

The MS Programme in Gujarat has raised awareness regarding women and social change in the regions of the six districts covered by it and has initiated the process in a cautious way in the Dangs district. However, the programme implementation and geographical outreach needs to be planned strategically for greater consolidation and impact in a given area. The number of villages covered within each block need to be expanded for greater intensification and the blocks covered increased. Efforts should thus focus on building alliances of women's Sanghas over a contiguous area for greater and visible impact.

According to figures provided by MS for the period 1997- 2000, the indication is that initiatives like the Nari Adalats, Mahila Kutirs and Yuvati Shibirs all need renewed effort in order to expand and to retain their momentum. The performance of

Panchmahal, Surendranagar, Banaskantha and Dangs district is of special importance in this respect where the progress of MSG over a five-year period remains poor. Women's political empowerment is confined to small pockets and it is hoped that future efforts shall be more widespread. The expansion of women's networks is essential towards increasing MS outreach across districts and facilitates women's mobilization for change.

The Sanghas expressed the need of building a meeting place of their own. So far 17 Mahila Kutirs have been constructed and a few more are under construction. The Sanghas have been resourceful in raising funds for the Kutirs, providing voluntary labour and building low cost structures. The Nehru Yuvak Kendra, the corporate sector, the Tribal Department and DRDA have all contributed to Mahila Kutir funds. Some Sanghas plan to house a childcare center at the Kutir as well as use it for meetings. At least seven Sanghas are in the process of acquiring land and an additional eleven others have been successful in obtaining land. The main impediment to building Mahila Kutirs appears to be the difficulties and formalities concerning land acquisition.

1.6 Emerging Trends, Pace and Impact

Mahila Samakhya has been able to act as an intermediary and bridge the gap between women and mainstream development. Progress in different districts and areas is not similar and depends upon the infrastructure and available programmes/schemes in the district or region. Simultaneously women have also acted upon their own initiative at times as they did in Panchmahal where they successfully tackled the issues of alcoholism, violence against women and debt relief through public action. In practical terms therefore there is a shift in focus of the programme from Sahyoginis to women's autonomous initiatives and action. What is required however is for women to be visible in larger numbers within an administrative or spatial unit to have the requisite visibility or exert the required pressure on the various institutions and forums of governance and power. Without that women's energies may only dissipate with little effect.

Some of the good/positive practices and the related challenges within MS Gujarat were:

- Sahayoginis who have been trained have acted as resource persons and trainers of new Sahayoginis and Sangha training, and others need similar systematic orientation and inputs at frequent intervals.
- The formation of Sanghas and Mahasanghas has rendered women and their needs visible and strengthened women's self-perceptions.
- Nari Adalats have created a public space for women to debate issues regarding women's legal rights within the family and invested them with substantive bargaining power as well as public visibility and mobility.
- The Sanghas and Nari Adalats have functioned as pressure groups/agents for change. The successes of MS will serve as incentive and inspiration for women who are not yet part of Sanghas or women's collectives.

Women have set up their own courts and acted as pressure groups to address women's issues, monitor literacy programmes and direct local Panchayats to consider equitable access to water. Women have also initiated counselling centres, established women's banks, trained health workers, established Mahila Shikshan Kendras (that were unfortunately subsequently shut down), initiated loan schemes and other facilities for women. Yuvati Shibirs are useful initiatives where younger

women are imparted training on issues including family, health, cleanliness and sanitation, information on government facilities and schemes and other social issues. Since progress across districts has not been uniform, despite its successes there is a need to assess the past and see how the limitations can be overcome in order to expand and strengthen the programme as women's movement across all seven districts.

There is also a need to reflect upon the deterrents in taking the programme forward for evolving and developing strategies in order to strengthen the programme. On the whole, MS Gujarat still has a long way to go in terms of reaching out to the majority of subaltern women in the seven districts and the processes in place need to be strengthened substantially to lead to empowerment.

2. EDUCATION

2.1 Women's Education And Governance Of Education

The Mahila Samakhyia programme was developed as a result of the emphasis of the National Education Policy (NPE) 1986 to initiatives with a 'positive, interventionist role' in catalyzing women's empowerment. The NPE saw a strategic conceptual shift from providing equal educational opportunities for women to educating for women's equality.

Mahila Samakhyia was initiated to ensure that poor, powerless women understood the structures that kept them poor and powerless and of their own volition acted to redress the impediments. One major tool that MS provides women with in their action to raise their status is education.

The concept of literacy within the MS programme is not restricted to reading and writing skills. It includes the ability to critically analyze one's environment and position and take measures to improve these. Thus literacy requires to be systematically paired with gender orientation and training to enable it to play its role in an overall strategy for empowerment.

The Female literacy rates in Gujarat State (Census 2001) are higher than the national average but are very uneven for the districts that MSG is working in. MS requires to be alert about the SC/ST Female Literacy Rates and study the reasons for low literacy indicators. For example, the ST Female Literacy Rate in Banaskantha is only 9.45%. On the other hand, Vadodara with high Female Literacy Rate has only 919 females to 1000 males. MS may like to discuss and analyze these issues among programme personnel and with experts from the women's movement so that MS activities may be planned after taking such variations into consideration.

Districts have approached literacy in different ways. Some literacy initiatives in MS Gujarat arose when the women realized the importance of being literate while addressing their problems like lack of water, electricity and road. Sabarkantha developed learner materials in the local language; Varodara concentrated on self learning method; Rajkot preferred the classroom approach. All districts have organized literacy camps, night classes and campaigns frequently to impart literacy at a time convenient to the learner. MS Gujarat has also used literacy materials developed by Gujarat Vidyapeeth. Sabarkantha Sanghas running literacy classes between 1989 and 1999 had conducted self-evaluation and made monitoring

committees. It was found that women learnt more efficiently when literacy is linked to knowledge about women's rights, law and government schemes.

MS started working with the Education Department to implement the Total Literacy Campaign from 1993, especially in Rajkot, Sabarkantha and Varodara. Women from all ages have been included in the TLC implementation. It would appear from the annual report that MS Gujarat hopes that this initiative will lead to women being able to voice their needs, demands, become knowledgeable about various subjects, recognize their right to equality, and be capable of resisting violence and harassment. MS also hopes that literacy will help women acquire an enhanced status within the family. **An objective review of the situation leads to the concern that perhaps the expectation from mere literacy classes without any additional input for enhancing analytical thought processes may be unrealistic. Thus an unplanned literacy initiative may be limited in its ability to reach MS objectives. Literacy initiatives require to be strengthened with simultaneous awareness and concientization inputs.**

The tables below give a bird's eye view of literacy efforts between 1989-1999 and subsequently between 1999-2001.

Table 8a. Women and Girls Covered Under Literacy Programme In MS, Gujarat, between 1989-1999.

Districts	Sanghas	NFEs	Women enrolled	Girls enrolled
Sabarkantha	9	9	925	70
Varodara	70	12	70	50
Rajkot	57	37	347	508
Banaskantha	22	22	-	210
Surendranagar	-	7	18	95
Total	247	87	1340	933

Source: *A cursory Glance at Mahila Samakhya Gujarat, 1989-1999.*

Table 8b : Women Covered Under Literacy Programme In MS, Gujarat, between 1999-2001.

Districts	Number of literacy classes	Total women enrolled
Rajkot	45	630
Sabarkantha	18	270
Banaskantha	15	300
Surendranagar	03	55
Panchmahal	07	129
Baroda	02	20
Total	90	1,404

Source: *MS Gujarat Annual Report, 2000-2001.*

Progress in literacy initiatives is uneven across districts in the 1999-2001 period. For example Banaskantha, Sabarkantha and Rajkot districts have had a reasonable number of literacy initiatives, similar progress seems not to have taken place in others. Literacy efforts in the Dangs have yet to take off. The target group varies from a maximum of 630 to 20 women between 1999-2001.

MS is associated with the Post literacy and Continuing Literacy programme at block level. MS requires to work in partnership with these programmes in the development of post literacy material. The availability of appropriate post literacy reading material

would be beneficial in keeping many Sangha women from lapsing into illiteracy. This material should be developed with a clear understanding of the information and entertainment requirements of the women. Subsequently the material could form resource material for Sangha training. Thus it would be in the interest of MSG to be associated in the development of post literacy material from the beginning.

2.2 Girls Education

There has been some demand for including girls in the Sangha activities as may be seen by the number of Yuvati Shivirs organized. The Yuvati Shivirs have, among other issues, discussed the status of women, the importance of education, information regarding the role of local institutions like banks, post offices and health centers. A fall out of this has also been a number of short duration literacy camps for girls and women. In Surendranagar women's own initiatives have resulted in MS facilitated public funding for girls' primary education. Balika Shikshan Kendras have facilitated education of school dropouts in Vadodara and Surendranagar.

In 1996 Sabarkantha district took the initiative to start Mahila Shikshan Kendras with the intention of catalyzing interest in education among girls who for a variety of reasons may have either not had an opportunity to complete primary education or have never enrolled at school. The initiative had the two-fold aim of

- mainstreaming those girls young enough to return to primary school
- offering an opportunity to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills to those who may have passed that age
- offering a variety of life skills.

The first batch of graduates from this residential programme showed visible change in attitudes towards education and life. By 1999 Sabarkantha had conducted 3 batches of MSKs, while Rajkot and Varodara had conducted 2 batches each. The duration of the residential course varied between 3 months (Rajkot) to 9 months (Sabarkantha). Some of the students were helped to appear for regular school examinations. The 1989-1999 MS document reports a need to improve the inputs for pedagogy, class room methods, tenure of MSK and availability of trained teachers.

After the last batches completed the programme and a number of the students were successfully streamlined, the programme took the decision to close the centers down. Similarly, the Balika Shikshan Kendras have also been closed down, apparently due to difficulty in hiring appropriate accommodation and the cost ineffectiveness of too few students.

Table 8c: Mahila Shikshan Kendras, 1997-1999.

Districts	Blocks	Girls enrolled	Appearing for Exams.
Varodara	6	106	88
Rajkot	7	93	25
Sabarkantha	2	94	79
Total	15	293	193

Source: A cursory Glance at Mahila Samakhya Gujarat, 1989-1999.

The Balika Shikshan Kendras and Mahila Shikshan Kendras serve a niche requirement not fulfilled by any other education programme. This is especially true of the tribal areas such as Dangs. The initiative may have been the last opportunity for many adolescents at receiving an education before being engulfed by adulthood and an opportunity for many younger left-outs to be mainstreamed and continue their education. **The Mission was therefore concerned to learn that the MSKs were**

no longer functioning. The Mission recommends that the scheme be re-examined for reintroduction.

The curricula of the Kendras may be reviewed before restarting to ensure that they address the needs of the clientele group. The group would probably consist of

- some girls young enough to be mainstreamed after a short preparatory period
- Some others within the group could be those young women and girls who may need additional inputs for enhancing their quality of life.

Thus curriculum must be carefully developed to answer these varying needs. Teaching methodologies and teacher training would require to be in line with the objectives of the initiative.

From 1997 MS Gujarat has also established linkages with the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). DPEP aims at raising quality of primary education and lowering gender and social group disparities in enrolment, retention and achievement. The MS State Programme Director (SPD) and the District Programme Coordinator (DPC) are ex-officio members of the DPEP Executive Committee and District Resource Group respectively.

DPEP is present in five of the seven MS districts (Sabarkantha, Panchmahal, Banaskantha, Dangs and Surendranagar). DPEP is poised for expansion in at least 6 more districts (3 with NRE funding) and may offer more opportunity for partnership. Sangha women are members of the Village Education Committees (VECs) in some places but there is no formal Government order for the inclusion of MS representation in all VECs as in some other states. MS Sanghas have taken part in enrolment drives and have been associated with some amount of VEC monitoring of schools. Sahayoginis have been associated with DPEP community mobilization activities at block level.

Unfortunately, this association of Sangha women with enrolment drives has not resulted in a uniform reaffirmation and commitment to girls' formal school education among Sangha members. Field visits clearly showed that not all Sangha women were sending their daughters to primary schools. The point of greater concern was the fact that the women did not seem to regard the situation as one needing to be addressed (mothers laughingly commented that girls stayed behind to look after goats!). There was also little evidence that the importance of girls' education, as an issue, had been discussed at previous Sangha meetings. Girls' are commonly burdened with household chores but some situations may have solutions; such as requesting a village grandmother to share the girls' burden. In view of a general trend evident in MS (more positively in other states) in the direction of engaging in the education of girls, Gujarat Sangha women's lack of (universal) commitment to the issue reflects negatively upon the clarity and commitment within the state MS structure.

MS has not been associated in the curriculum or textbook development of DPEP. Nor has it been involved in teacher training or contributed to development of any other gender sensitization materials. The mission is of the view that a closer association of the MSG with teacher training and curriculum development in DPEP would help to engender these initiatives and be beneficial to both programmes. DPEP plans to start Alternate Schools (AS) or Education Guarantee Scheme schools (EGS) in hard to service areas. MSG would have knowledge of the most needy habitations from its grassroots work and could direct DPEP interventions to the appropriate locations.

Activities undertaken to achieve broader educational aims between 1999-2001 are enlisted below:

Table 8c: Educational Efforts of MS Gujarat.

Rajkot	Banaskantha	Vadodra	Panchmahal	Sabarkantha	Surendranagar
45 literacy classes, 630 enrolled	15 Literacy classes are conducted for 300 women Literacy Camp for 17 women from one village	Balika shikshan kendra formed by MS provides education for School drop-outs. 2 literacy classes, 20 enrolled.	7 literacy classes, 129 enrolled. Women from MS study after completion of Sangh Training Facilitated Attendance of children to attend Anganvadi in Jambughoda Block	Balikaashikshan kendra caters to drop-outs 18 literacy classes for 270 women 66 girls attend school	3 literacy classes with 55 enrolled. Voluntary public contribution Facilitated by MS to ensure education for girls Literacy classes for girls and married women MS literacy camp with 120 women from 3 villages

Source: MS Gujarat Annual Report, 1989-1999 and 2000-2001.

2.3 Contribution To Reduction Of Child Labour

There is widespread involvement of children, specially girls, in household chores, sibling and livestock care which impedes their education. Seasonal work on family fields or even for wage payment may lead to irregular school attendance and dropping out. More regular work for wage payment may lead to non-enrollment. Though MS Gujarat encounters child labour regularly the programme has not undertaken any specific campaign or initiative addressing the issue.

MS Gujarat has been addressing child enrollment, including of working and non-enrolled children, through its involvement with DPEP VECs, P/MTAs and enrollment drives. Even so, the mission is of the opinion that more targeted advocacy against child labour and reaffirmation of the importance of school enrollment and attendance at an appropriate age requires to be undertaken. MS may require to identify villages where the problem is particularly rampant and initiate dialogue with other local stakeholders like parents, community and PRI members to formulate strategies to address the problem. MSG needs to be more proactive regarding the issue.

Recommendations.

The following measures are recommended to improve the quality and efficacy of the educational interventions of the MS programme in Gujarat

- Literacy classes require an additional input for enhancing analytical thought processes towards strengthening empowerment efforts.

- MS requires to work in partnership with Continuing Education Programmes of government and other agencies in the development of post literacy material. The availability of appropriate post literacy reading material would be beneficial in keeping many Sangha women from lapsing into illiteracy.
- A closer MS association with teacher training and curriculum development in DPEP would help to engender these initiatives and be beneficial to both programmes.
- The need to restart the MSKs and BSKs cannot be overstated since the Balika Shikshan Kendras and Mahila Shikshan Kendras serve a niche requirement not fulfilled by any other education programme.
- More targeted advocacy and pro-active measures against child labour are required.

3. LINKAGES WITH GOVERNMENT, NGOS, WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND RNE PRIORITIES

3.1 Linkages with Government Departments and Agencies

MSG has initiated linkages with a number of Government schemes. It is not immediately apparent whether this followed any serious dialogue and introspection within MSG regarding the benefits of such linkages to the Sangha women. It is also not clear whether these partnerships contributed to meeting the objectives of MS in any way. Linkages have been established with DW CRA, DRDA, TRYSEM, NABARD, DPEP, ICDS, the Tribal Department and Mahila Samridhi Yojana. MSG role in the partnerships appear to be that of an extension/implementation agency of the government. Many of the activities undertaken by MSG seem one off activities, not linked organically to the overall empowerment process of the Sangha women. MS Sangha women have been trained in various income generating skills. MS requires to review the end results of these trainings and make a judgment regarding similar future trainings. Activities and partnerships entered into by MS should be in conformation with MS principles and objectives.

MSG has also collaborated with NGOs like CHETNA, Ahmedabad in awareness building for health. MSG is implementing the Swa-Shakti project in Surendranagar District. MSG requires to generate internal review and dialogue regarding whether it is appropriate for a strongly process oriented programme like MS to partner a target oriented project like Swa-Shakti. MS stresses strengthening the women themselves to make informed choices. Overall, MSG must decide which activities are the most beneficial for the Sangha women. These issues should be discussed with NRG advisors and within the organization before arriving at a decision. MS Gujarat may like to dialogue with other state MS programmes like MS Karnataka and U.P. where negotiation and operational strategies are planned to ensure that the fundamental concerns of the MS philosophy are not compromised through collaborations and partnerships for economic/rural development programmes.

3.2 Linkages with NGOs and Women's Movement

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) has been working in partnership with selected Sahyoginis, District Coordinators and Junior District Coordinators to process and ongoing documentation of the development of Nari Adalats. The ICRW team is also assisting the MS team to systematically record the essentials of the cases handled by the NAs. The research project has the two-fold snowballing of MS Sanghas by women members at least 2 to 4 Sanghas each. Expansion imparted to other women. In Valathooval Panchayat, for example, there has been

benefit of the NA processes being documented and the MS personnel gaining hands on training in the requirements of documentation.

It is felt that MSG requires to be in closer touch with NRG members and draw upon other women's groups for advice and for use as sounding boards. MSG has had few trainings and workshops for its own personnel on gender orientation in the last two years. This is urgently requires to be corrected. There also appears a lack of dialogue within the organization regarding direction for action, especially dialogue prior to introduction of new activities.

There is an ongoing discussion and movement within MSG towards formation of Mahasanghas and Sangha Federation as independent bodies. These will serve as a scope for increased linkage, greater support for women's networks and a general strengthening of the programme across the districts. The formation of Yuvati Shibir which focus on gender inequality is a useful initiative where younger women are imparted training on issues including family, health, cleanliness and sanitation, information on government facilities and schemes and other social issues. These initiatives are need based and initiated from the Sangha women instead of on the instigation of the demands of other programmes. The expansion of women's networks is essential towards increasing MS outreach across districts and facilitate women's mobilization for empowerment and towards building a women's movement. There is a need to assess the past and see how the limitations of the past can be overcome in order to strengthen the women's movement across all districts.

It is far too early to comment on the involvement or influence of MS in the tribal development plan since its work in the Dangs has only just begun, and nor was any mention made of the recent tension in the area. It would be important however to observe and ensure that these issues are incorporated in a future strategy and action plan

3.3 Added Value and Linkages with RNE Sectoral Approach Priorities

The last decade saw a near universal focus on basic and primary education in all the international donor community activities. Much of this attention has now shifted to poverty alleviation. Education has remained a major focus in Dutch development co-operation policy and is now being seen as crucial for social well-being and economic progress, both of which are key inputs for poverty alleviation. The Netherlands has not reduced its budget for education while including an emphasis on poverty alleviation.

Dutch Development Policy on education concentrates upon basic education in order 'to meet people's learning needs and to enable them to acquire the basic knowledge and the essential skills and values they need for their personal and social development, and to play a useful role in society.' NRE believes that this goal may be reached through either formal or non-formal education.

The Dutch Development Policy has been arguing that the perspective in which Universal Primary Education is seen is required to move beyond traditional 'formal' paradigms. It is perhaps time that the formal system is no longer seen as the standard and legitimate one while the non-formal becomes the 'second', 'also ran' or 'stop gap'.

The formal and the non-formal should start to complement each other as parts of the same system. At present non-formal education for adults is seen as legitimate but not for children. Strategies to facilitate learning in and out of school need to be

integrated. Non-formal education requires to leave behind its low cost, small scale, local image and move on to possessing the same value, status and quality as the formal since both these paradigms have a role in meeting the needs of poor people in society.

Additionally there is sometimes the difficulty that the norms for opening formal schools do not allow a school to be opened in remote or very small habitations thus negatively impacting certain already deprived groups. Therefore, RNE is now stressing the need to include innovative outreach approaches. In this context, the MS innovation of Mahila Shikshan Kendras and other educational initiatives are of interest.

The holistic view of education requires to make place for the non-formal as well as other inputs like Early Childhood Education. Introducing the Early Childhood Development (ECD, which includes education, nutrition, clothing and health and is the presently accepted nomenclature) is an effective strategy to overcome some of the impediments that many disadvantaged children face in the pre-school period. The disadvantages faced in the pre-school period impact their performance in primary school. In this context the MS child care centers are of interest.

In keeping with this thinking RNE has been supporting the second phase of the centrally sponsored scheme, DPEP II. DPEP began in 1994 and supports replicable, sustainable and cost effective programme development in primary education. DPEP is presently being implemented in 271 districts in 18 states. RNE supports the programme in three districts of Gujarat of Banaskantha, Dangs and Panchmahal through a co-financing agreement with the World Bank.

DPEP works for improved pedagogy, enhanced learning achievement and bridging gender and social gaps in education. The Government of Gujarat (GOG) proposed to fund three additional districts (Jamnagar, Junagadh and Bhavnagar) and invited RNE to fund three others (Surendra Nagar, Kutch and Sabarkantha). Additionally all the reconstruction and repair costs for schools in the post Gujarat Earthquake (26 Jan 2001) period (minus those being funded privately or through NGOs) are being provided by RNE in DPEP districts. Basic educational infrastructure were affected in 18 districts which included Banaskantha, Panchmahal, Kutch, Surendranagar, Sabarkantha, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar and Junagadh. In order to minimize school disruption, GOG plans to complete repair and reconstruction work within 18 months. RNE is contributing approximately 40 million US dollars.

Gujarat is one of the three states identified for concentration of RNE initiatives as part of the revised strategy and based on the Sectoral Approach. Within the Dutch policy objectives and the objectives of GAVIM (Dutch Acronym for Good Governance, poverty reduction, institution building, and the environment) the sectoral focus identified for collaboration in the state of Gujarat includes area of Education, Mental Health, Water Management, and reconstruction.

The Universalization of Elementary Education and full functional literacy has been given high priority in the GoG's Social Infrastructure Action Programme as outlined in the policy document 2010. RNE has also been engaged in dialogue with GOG and some professional institutes (IIM, Ravi Mathai Centre for Educational Innovations) NGOs (Pratham, Eklavya and SEWA) regarding educational reform. RNE is also facilitating CARE's dialogue with GOG regarding a partnership in ECE, mother's education, dropouts, monitoring, mapping of various schemes that have an impact on education. RNE is working with NOVIB (Dutch funding agency specializing in development and educational projects) and the Center for Educational Management

(CEMD) in educational management and urban education. It is hoped that these initiatives will support MS educational efforts in 7 districts.

MS in Gujarat is funded by the RNE. The programme is presently being implemented in 36 blocks and 1,422 villages in Sabarkantha, Banaskantha, Panchmahal, Surendranagar, Varodara, Rajkot and Dangs. The Mahila Samakhya programme offers the potential to address a number of the issues that have been prioritised for the state within the framework of the RNE sectoral approach and within the GAVIM framework.

Women in Sanghas have prioritized water as a key issue of survival and could well prove a resource towards involvement in **effective water management strategies** by communities. The **educational initiatives** of MSG strengthen ties with DPEP and help engender the programme, bridge gender gaps in enrollment. However, MSG requires to take more constructive roles in developing content and teacher training inputs.

MSG has been involved in the **relief and rehabilitation efforts** in the State following the devastating earthquake in and beyond its area of work. MSG requires to **address the social reconstruction agenda and institution building** by providing space for Sanghas, Federations and Nari Adalats to work across class /caste/religion barriers towards a more inclusive approach to empowerment.

4. REPORTING AND MONITORING

Information flow in Mahila Samakhya Gujarat (MSG) has been captured in a flow chart in Exhibit 2. It shows nature, time, frequency and direction of information flow between various actors of the structure.

The different levels at which information is generated and reports produced can be categorized as:

- Field: consists of Resource Persons and Sahayoginis;
- District: consists of supervisory and administrative employees like RP, accountants, DEOs and headed by DPC;
- State: consists of supervisory and administrative employees like RPs, Consultants, accounts officer, internal auditor, SPD. Policy bodies like Executive Committee are also at the State level; and
- National Level: Office of the National Project Director and RNE.

Appendix I has more details on reporting.

MSG like other State Societies has been producing a fairly high volume of monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual reports, which capture all the activities being performed within the program. Reflection, analysis and feedback on these reports are carried out in day to day interaction among program functionaries.

There is a need to add **greater analytical depth** so that reporting captures not only the itinerary of events but **assesses problems, hurdles and learning**. Follow up on previous reports is not integral to the reporting process, it is also advised to include action taken component as a standard feature. The process of feedback on reports needs to be formalized. Reporting procedures have to improve in order to lend

themselves to analysis against objectives, as well as formatted appropriately for comparability. The Mission advises improved reporting procedures.

Besides regular reports, **documentation** in MSG covers a wide spectrum, which includes process documentation, workshop reports, exchange visit reports, special events reports like Melas etc. Some of these have immediate use and therefore have shorter shelf life whereas others have potential of long term use and would benefit a wider community. There is a need for greater systematization, analysis, indexing and utilization of these for future planning as well as for wider dissemination.

5. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

MSG follows the guidelines issued by Center in the Green Book⁷ to prepare its annual plans and budgets as is the practice in other states. An outline of this process is represented in Exhibit 3.

6. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

Organization Structure

State

Exhibit 4 shows organizational set up of MSG upto district level. Program at the State level is headed by a State Project Director who is guided by Executive Committee which in turn is responsible to the Governing Council.

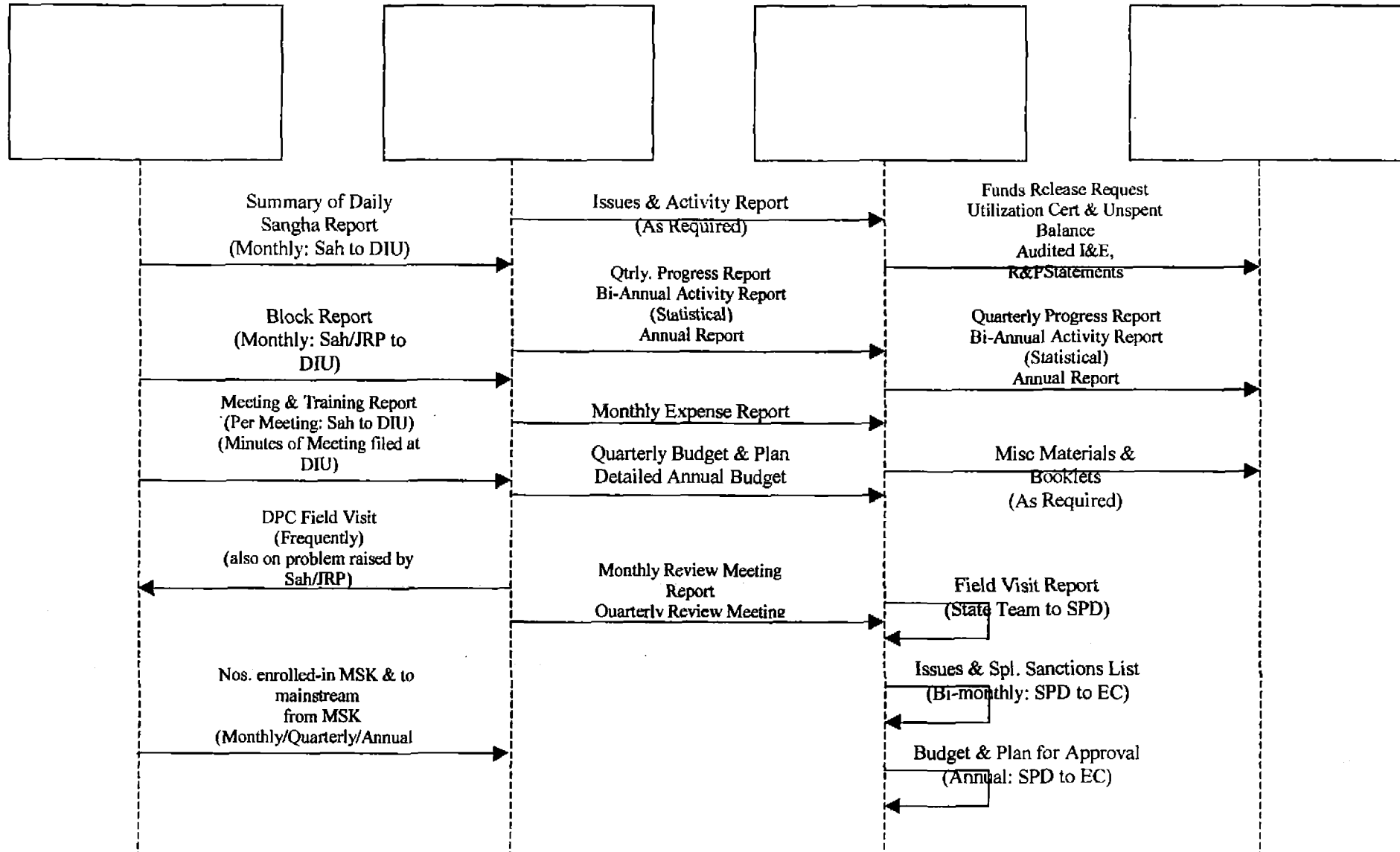
State Level structure is described in brief below:

- sahayoginis carry out discussions with their sanghas to assess members' expectations and priorities in the coming year.
- Based on these discussions sahayoginis prepare plans and this is discussed with DPC.
- After assessing expectations of sanghas through the sahayoginis, DPCs visit State to share these with SPD/ RPs/ Consultants and appreciate State level thrust areas.
- DPCs finalize and submit their plans to the SPD after contextualizing them in the light of State level thrust areas.
- After the submission of annual plans by the districts, activity wise costs are established and plan is consolidated for the whole State.
- Accountants at the district level as well as State level prepare Management Budget based on guidelines that are provided in the Green Book and number of villages in which the program is being implemented within each district.
- District wise budget is consolidated into a State budget and sent for an informal feedback to the Center.
- Center studies the budget and sends it back to SPD along with their comments.
- Annual plan or the budget is revised to incorporate Center's comments and placed before the EC for their approval.
- After the budget has been approved by the EC it is finally submitted to Center.

Center receives an annual budget statement, which has been approved by the EC.

⁷ MAHILA SAMAKHYA (Education For Women's Equality) (Ninth Plan Document 1997-2002) 1997, Ministry of HRD, (Deptt. Of Education) Govt of India, New Delhi.

Exhibit 2: Information Flow in MS Gujarat



themselves to analysis against objectives, as well as formatted appropriately for comparability. The Mission advises improved reporting procedures.

Besides regular reports, **documentation** in MSG covers a wide spectrum, which includes process documentation, workshop reports, exchange visit reports, special events reports like Melas etc. Some of these have immediate use and therefore have shorter shelf life whereas others have potential of long term use and would benefit a wider community. There is a need for greater systematization, analysis, indexing and utilization of these for future planning as well as for wider dissemination.

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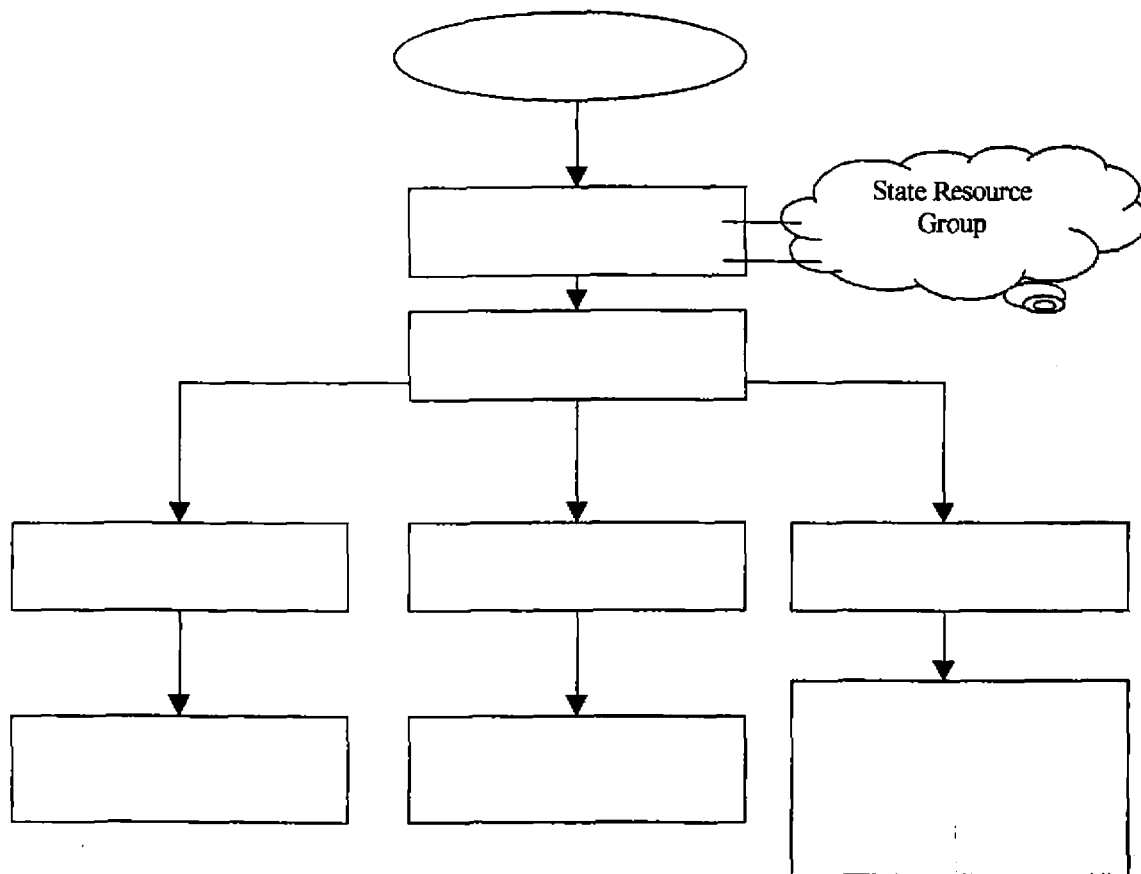
Exhibit 4 shows organizational set up of MSG upto district level. Program at the State level is headed by a State Project Director who is guided by Executive Committee which in turn is responsible to the Governing Council.

State Level structure is described in brief below:

- Sahayoginis carry out discussions with their Sanghas to assess members' expectations and priorities in the coming year.
 - Based on these discussions Sahayoginis prepare plans and this is discussed with DPC.
 - After assessing expectations of Sanghas through the Sahayoginis, DPCs visit State to share these with SPD/ RPs/ Consultants and appreciate State level thrust areas.
 - DPCs finalize and submit their plans to the SPD after contextualizing them in the light of State level thrust areas.
 - After the submission of annual plans by the districts, activity wise costs are established and plan is consolidated for the whole State.
 - Accountants at the district level as well as State level prepare Management Budget based on guidelines that are provided in the Green Book and number of villages in which the program is being implemented within each district.
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⁷ MAHILA SAMAKHYA (Education For Women's Equality) (Ninth Plan Document 1997-2002) 1997, Ministry of HRD, (Deptt. Of Education) Govt of India, New Delhi.

**EXHIBIT 3: ORGANIZATION CHART OF MAHILA SAMAKHYA GUJARAT
- STATE LEVEL**



RNE works on the principle of reimbursing the costs that have been incurred by the supported States for implementing MSG.

- The annual planning and budgeting exercise in MSG builds up on the expectations of the Sangha women in conformity with project principles. A detailed annual activity plan is drawn up which feeds into the annual budgeting process. There is a need to further strengthen this process and to strengthen the role of Sanghas in undertaking such planning and determining their activities especially in districts where these processes have been weak. Moreover, as in the case of other states, Gujarat also follows the national guidelines (objectives) for the preparation of their budgets. It is recommended that they should frame their own objectives, which should then become the basis for planning activities, budgeting, analyzing progress and variances. The progress as well as the monitoring can become more focussed and more state specific.

General Council is the top most body in the Society. It is the final authority at the State level which provides policy support, considers annual budget, audited accounts, forms bye laws and rules and delegates powers to EC so that it can discharge its duties effectively. The Governing Council cannot add and amend any rules. It cannot form any bye-laws without the approval of GOI.

The State Executive Committee is an empowered body that takes decisions relating to governance and program direction. It is responsible to the Governing Council. Executive committee puts its plans into action through the State Program Director (SPD). SPD is responsible for overall execution and smooth running of the program within the State. The majority of the representation in EC is either Government's ex-officio members or their nominees. It would be in the best interest of the program that its autonomous nature be fortified by making its representation even broader by including greater representation of local NGOs and public figures that have credentials in these areas. Greater involvement of the NRG representatives may also serve to strengthen the programme perspectives and capacities to deal with empowerment concerns.

Unlike the NRG, State Resource Group (SRG) at the State level is not a formal body. MS Societies have forged their own linkages with other NGOs and like-minded individuals whose resources and expertise are drawn from time to time.

A formal status for the SRG is recommended, as this would be useful in binding the current informal network of the MSG together. SRG because of its proximity to MSG and state specific expertise would be able to give much greater context specific advice. At certain points they might also be able to help MS negotiate on an operational level by making their networks and contacts available to them.

SPD has a team of following personnel to help her:

Table 9: Personnel at State Level in MSG

Position	Number of Posts
Assistant SPD	1 (Vacant)
Resource Persons	1
Consultants	1
Internal Auditor	1
Accounts Officer	1
Stenographer	2
Data Entry Operator	1
Lower Div. Clerk	1 (Vacant)
Assistant	1 (Vacant)
Peon	2
Driver	1

SPD is heavily loaded with routine administrative work. Whereas the position of Assistant SPD has been created but this is not the real requirement. SPD should be provided personal secretarial assistance so that her work can be better organized. It is suggested that the post of Assistant SPD should be changed to Executive Secretary to the SPD.

In case of some positions at the state level there is an overlap and lack of clarity in the respective roles. Overlapping Job descriptions of two positions may lend flexibility in the

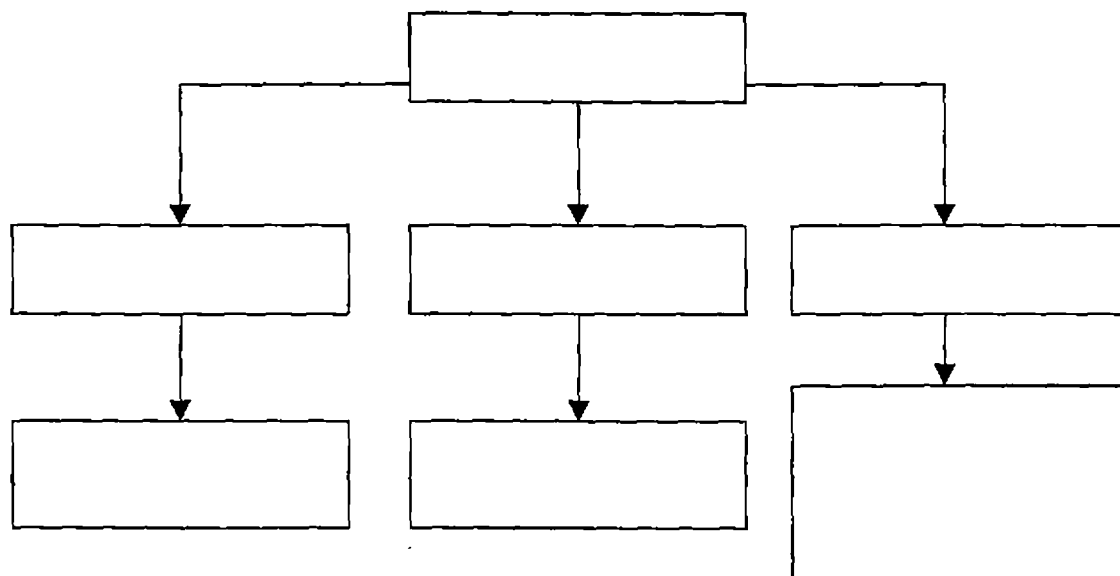
short term but could cause problems in the long term. There is a need to review and rationalize the job descriptions and roles.

State Resource Center: MS Program in Gujarat has been running for the last twelve years. While the program has performed well at some places and on some aspects (eg Nari Adalat) there is a need to provide fresh impetus especially in the direction of developing competencies and conceptual foundations of project functionaries. It would be useful for Gujarat to have its own State Resource Center in the long run, as this would accelerate and mainstream MS processes but this should be preceded by intensive action to develop competencies of functionaries on perspectives, key principles and strategies of the programme. This is all the more imperative in the context of the demands on MS to become a delivery mechanism for other programmes, without consideration to the processes that are the foundation of MS and essential for empowerment.

District

1. Exhibit 4 shows Organization Chart at the District level.

Exhibit 4: Organization Chart Of MSG – District Level



The DIU is headed by the District Project Coordinator who is supported by following staff:

Table 10: Staff at District level

Position	Number of Posts
Resource Person	Depends upon number of villages
Junior Resource Person	Depends upon number of villages
Accountant	1
Stenographer	1
Data Entry Operator	1
Lower Div. Clerk	1
Assistant	1
Peon	1
Driver	1
Sahayogini	Depends upon number of villages

Number of RP/ JRPs varies by the number of villages being covered in a district. It has been observed that DPC is overloaded with routine administrative tasks which leaves her with lesser time in her role as a coach and leader of the DIU. It is recommended that some provision for secretarial assistance should be made at this level also.

With the process gradual process of federation formation in the next phase there would be newer and higher expectations of Sahayoginis. It is proposed that in each district, positions for five 'Issue Based Coordinators' (IBCs) should be created. IBCs would be at the same level as RPs presently are in the organizational hierarchy and would be responsible for guiding and building capacity of sahayoginis and federations and providing support in the areas of their expertise. They would also be expected to work along with sahayoginis for federations.

7.HUMAN RESOURCES

Staff: MS has been able to carve a special position for itself and make its presence felt on the ground due to its dedicated personnel. However, there is a serious problem of staff turnover. Table 10 shows staff turnover in MSG at the State and district level. Problem of turnover is more acute at the State level as compared to District level. However, even small degree of staff turnover at senior supervisory levels in districts is extremely disturbing to the program as it is this level which provides critical leadership and direction to the program in the field.

Table 10: Staff turnover in MSG

Year	State Resignations as % of total Employees	Districts Resignations as % of total Employees
1997-98	7	1
1998-99	27	2
1999-00	20	5
2000-01	20	13
2001-02	13	8

Honoraria and travel allowance were fixed in 1997 (five years ago) and have since not been revised. This is leading to serious morale and retention issues. Program stands the risk of losing its momentum and jeopardizing its gains if this issue is not handled immediately. There is a need to benchmark MS compensation and employee benefit practices to other programs to be able to attract and retain proficient personnel. The recommended revisions should also incorporate provisions to account for general inflation as well as performance based incentives, which need not always be monetary.

The mission also found to its surprise that in Surendranagar, the DPC and four MS Sahayoginis are on Swa Shakti payroll and are housed in the MS DIU. There is no clear strategy how MS involvement would influence the strategy and functioning of the Swa Shakti programme, and nor has the process been adapted to changed to respond to women's needs. Swa Shakti as implemented by MS remains as target oriented and economic focussed as in other parts of the state. Besides this, the DPC being on the payroll of Swa

Shakti may compromise the MS programme objectives, given that there is likelihood of priority to targets of that programme at the cost of facilitation of the processes required for the MS programme. The mission is of the view that collaboration with other programmes and schemes must not be at the cost of Mahila Samakhya principles and objectives. Any collaboration should be analyzed for its programmatic implications and its potential to facilitate empowerment and the terms of such collaboration/ partnership should be negotiated and placed in writing, to reflect the adherence to the non violable principles of the programme.

Table11 shows Compensation of some of the positions in MS compared to similar projects.

Table11: MS Compensation compared to DPIP

	Mahila Samakhya Rs per month	DPIP Rs per month
State Program Director	10000	14000-20000
District Program Coordinator	6000	10000-15000

Vacancies: MSG has found it difficult to attract well-qualified people. This leads to positions lying vacant which has negative fallout on the program. There are numerous examples in Gujarat when key positions like DPCs have remained vacant or when positions have been filled on an adhoc basis without going through the laid down process of filling in vacancies.

Table 12 shows organization wide appointments as a percentage of total sanctioned posts on specific positions. Key positions like RP, Consultant and Auditor have remained vacant at the State Level for one or more years. Situation in districts has been worse. Appointments on the position of DPC has never increased beyond 67% in any of the years. Similarly there has been high level of vacancies for other positions in districts.

Table 12: Appointments as Percentage of Total Sanctioned Positions

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
State Level Positions					
SPD	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
ASPD	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
AO	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Auditor	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
RP	0%	0%	100%	100%	100%
Consultant	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%
Accountant	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Stenographer	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
DEO	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%
LDC	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Assistant	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Peon	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Driver	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

District Level Positions					
DPC	17%	50%	67%	67%	29%
RP	63%	63%	50%	63%	56%
JRP	20%	40%	40%	36%	42%
Accountant	33%	33%	50%	83%	71%
Stenographer	40%	40%	33%	40%	33%
DEO	0%	20%	40%	40%	33%
LDC	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Assistant	0%	33%	17%	33%	14%
Peon	43%	67%	43%	57%	50%
Driver	20%	50%	67%	67%	43%
Sahayogini	33%	58%	52%	59%	58%

Status as on April 1st of every year. This table does not capture variations within a year.

Vacancies at the field level of DPCs, RPs and JRPs are bound to have a qualitative impact on the programme and need to be addressed urgently. It is expected that improvement in compensation will serve to correct the situation. It is important that the processes prescribed for appointments are followed in letter and spirit. Ad hoc appointments should be limited to emergency situations and suitable arrangements should be made as soon as positions fall vacant.

Social Security: MSG personnel especially Sahayoginis work under extremely difficult conditions, which also raises concerns of their safety and security. These issues should be closely looked into and necessary organizational arrangements made, which could be in the form of insurance-cover, etc. Mission noted that some of the states like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have instituted medical benefits for their employees.

Employment Contract: One-year-contract system of employment leads to insecurity in employees. There is a need for permanency of tenure, however to address the issue of an eventuality when funding to MS may stop, the contract of employment should be restricted to the period of the program and also subject to availability of funds from the GOI. In certain instances Sahayoginis have not been given a proper appointment letter. It is advisable that appointment letters should be given to Sahayoginis.

Appraisal: Whereas there is regular interaction between levels of functionaries which is quite facilitative in achieving organizational objectives collaboratively, a formal personnel appraisal system should be put in place, on the basis of which further renewal of contract, promotions and all other personnel decisions should be based. Annual employee appraisal should also feed into the Training Needs Assessment, which should further feed into Annual Plan in accordance with State's strategic objectives. Wherever induction into the organization is through an on-the-job process, it has been found to be insufficient. It is felt that there is a need for formal induction and orientation program when new personnel are recruited or when a person is promoted.

Workload: There is a need to specially account for and make room for additional administrative resources to support the DPC and the PD in the administration of the programme. Additional admin resources are also necessary whenever additional projects like Swa Shakti are taken up.

Skill Upgradation: Considering the expansion of the program and the need to strengthen the programme a strategy for capacity development needs to be evolved for the new and old staff to systematically provide learning on the core principles and goals of the programme as well as on key strategic areas. The programme needs to invest in the capacities of State level and field staff as well as Sangha and Mahasangha leaders to bring about a more cohesive and visible shift in the gains of empowerment processes in the lives of women and girls through this programme. It would also be helpful if skills of MSG personnel are upgraded in following areas:

- Perspectives of Mahila Samakhya and key strategies to address the achievement of empowerment goals
- Designing and management of Educational programmes for women and girls within the MS framework.
- Building peoples institutions and processes to strengthen Sanghas and inter-Sangha networking
- *Documentation* – to enable personnel make their documentation more analytical in nature so that it notes hurdles, uncovers root causes to problems and shares lessons learnt.
- *Strategic planning including MIS:* to enable personnel align their activities with their strategy for achieving overall goals. MIS would be helpful in assessing how far they have achieved and analyze if the gaps are due to implementation or limitations in strategy.
- *Basic budgeting process & financial management skills:* Greater financial skills would not only enable informed management of program through greater understanding of finance-physical linkages but would also contribute in substantive terms as then better finance appreciation would also be transferred to sangha women.

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

8.1 Accounting

Accounting practices in MSG are professional and up to date. A national level workshop was convened for accountants of all states and these practices can be attributed to that process. Details about Accounting system are provided in Appendix II.

Payments: All payments above Rs 1000 in MSG are made through cheques, however payments for honoraria are made by cash. In keeping with overall recommendations it is advisable that MSG should make all payments above Rs 500 by cheques and it is also recommended that all the honoraria and stipends should be paid by bank transfer or cheques.

Bank Accounts: MSG keeps separate bank accounts for District and State offices. It also opens separate accounts whenever a new project, which has a separate funding source, is taken up.

Authorization of Vouchers: Authority for all routine vouchers such as utility payments are passed by the Accounts Officer directly. Accounts Officer also has power to purchase routine office supplies upto a limit of Rs 2000. For all other matters SPD and DPC are the final authorities.

It is felt that load of approving all the expense vouchers on SPD/ DPC can be further reduced. The authorization of expense vouchers should be delegated to the level of Resource Person depending on the person who has incurred the expense. Only a limited number of vouchers should come to the SPD/DPC. A limit could be fixed above which all the vouchers would need to necessarily be approved by the SPD at the State Office and the DPC at the District Office.

Community Contribution: Current accounting system does not report the contributions received from community, which become available to the program. The budgeting also does not keep in mind resources that would be available from this source. This also contributes to budget surpluses currently observed. Community contribution accounting would make the budgeting process more realistic.

8.2 Internal Controls

A strong system of internal control is maintained through proper distribution of workload right from the Sangha Level to the Executive Committee level. At the Sangha Level the internal control is exercised through checks at various stages by DPC/ DRP/ JRP/ Members of the Sanghas. For expense approval, actual payment handling, recording & authorization are all handled by different functionaries in the organization. Monthly internal audit exercise is carried out by the State Accountants who visit different districts by rotation and check all the vouchers at the DIU level. Accountants keep a check on items being spent and budgetary provisions.

There is however, no budgeted activity/amount v/s actual verification and analysis, which could show some variations, which need to be carefully analyzed. The same as given in the Budgeting section of the report.

8.3 Purchase Procedures

Purchase process adopted by MSG is similar to that being followed by government. Authority to purchase up to a specified amount limits has been delegated. Whenever a purchase decision exceeds an employee's limit then she has to take approval from the competent authority. The process of purchase is briefly given in Appendix III.

The purchase process in MSG is time consuming and imposes unnecessary burden on the program and needs to be simplified. It is recommended that simplified purchases procedures up to a limit of Rs. 20,000 should be instituted in MS Societies. The basic underlying principle for an effective purchase procedure is to be able to carry out all purchases under practical conditions of transparent system rather than be burdened by procedures and system followed by the Government. A feasible alternative has been provided in Appendix IV.

8.4 Funds Flow

Funds Flow: Funds have to flow from Center to MSG to finally the districts so that program activities can be implemented on ground in a time bound manner. The flow of funds from Center to MSG usually takes two months from the date of receipt of 'request for funds' to final issue of draft. Factors like the amount requested, utilization certificates, audited statements and rate of utilization are used by the center to determine the amount to be released. MSG send requests every quarter based on the projected quarterly expenditure that is submitted to the Center. Generally the National Office releases funds in 2 to 3 installments. The process of flow of funds is shown in detail in Appendix V.

None of the persons at any link in the chain at MSG expressed disconcert due to funds not being available at the right time.

Idle Funds: It was observed that MSG regularly invests idle funds in Fixed Deposits, whenever funds available are more than the projected expenses for the following month. However there is no fixed rule on the basis of which this decision is taken across Districts and State Office. Thus, there is a need to standardize this practice and idle funds should be invested at the State and district levels in Fixed Deposits of 46 / 60 / 90 days according to requirement of funds.

Budget Reappropriation: SPD has complete authority to reappropriate budget. However activity costs cannot be taken into management costs but the opposite is possible and valid. DPCs have to send the request to SPD for a reappropriation. This practice should continue the way it is.

Legal requirements: MSG is filing an Income Tax Return. It is a good practice and it should continue to do so.

Computerization: Patchy efforts have been done by MSG in computerization. For example it has computerized its accounts at the Vadodara district office. Given the large volume of data likely to be involved in planning, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting and accounts processes it is recommended that these processes should be gradually computerized in a phased manner. The process of computerization should not create a parallel substructure within the organization but should be adopted by the existing management towards professionalization of their work. Some of these require substantial capacity building inputs and it is an area, which can be explored for Technical Assistance.

9.

9.1 Disclosures

8.6 Payroll System

VIRAT PLS SEND 2 MISSING SECTIONS

8.7 Utilization of Funds

Table 13 provides an overview of utilization of funds by MSG during the 1997-2002 phase of Program. It also provides a comparison of budget with the actual expenses.

Table 13: Budget versus Actual Expenditure of Funds (Total) by MSG during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	285.2	101.9	36%
1998-99	175.4	134.4	77%
1999-00	212.5	146.7	69%
2000-01	185	125.4	68%
2001-02	202		

Utilization of budget was closest to budget in 1998-99 but overall there is a tendency to either under spend or plan rather ambitiously. There is scope for bringing down this gap.

Table 14 gives actual versus budget analysis for management cost. It can be seen that these ratios are better than total cost actual-budget ratios. However, considering that management cost can be estimated to a greater precision there is opportunity for improving these ratios.

Table 14: Budget versus Actual Expenditure (Management Cost) by MSG during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	95.73	42.67	45%
1998-99	73.44	54.52	74%
1999-00	97.42	71.05	73%
2000-01	86.19	62.54	73%
2001-02	88.32		

Table 15 gives actual versus budget analysis for activity cost. Expectedly these ratios are lower than total and management cost ratios to budgets. There is a need to make planning much more realistic.

Table 15: Budget versus Actual Expenditure (Activity Cost) by MSG during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	189.5	59.27	31%
1998-99	101.96	79.92	78%
1999-00	115.08	75.71	66%
2000-01	98.81	62.93	64%
2001-02	113.68		

Table 16 gives ratio of management cost to total cost over the last phase. Share of management cost has increased from 42% in 1997-98 to 50% in 2000-01. It is important to ensure that management costs share should not increase disproportionately. As per the original financial estimates for 1997-2002, this ratio for a state with five districts should have remained less than 38%.

Table 16: Management Cost, Activity Cost and Management Cost as ratio of Total Cost (Actual Expenditure) in MSG during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Management Cost	Activity Cost	Management Cost / Total Cost
1997-98	42.67	59.27	42%

1998-99	54.52	79.92	41%
1999-00	71.05	75.71	48%
2000-01	62.54	62.93	50%

D. NEXT PHASE

1. Structure And Programme Initiatives

The MS Programme in Gujarat has raised awareness regarding women and social change in the districts where the programme is implemented, although work in the Dangs has been initiated only recently. However, the programme implementation and geographical outreach needs urgent attention. Figures provided by MS for the period 1997- 2000 indicate that initiatives like the Nari Adalats, Mahila Kutirs and Yuvati Shibirs all need renewed effort in order to expand or (more often than not) just to retain their momentum. The performance of Panchmahal, Surendranagar, Banaskantha and Dangs district is of special concern in this respect where the progress of MS over a five-year period has been less than satisfactory.

Institutional Strengthening

Much work needs to be done with regard to strengthening Federations, beginning with the strengthening of Sanghas. Federation meetings that the Mission attended revealed little understanding among women assembled about federations.

The Mission found that while other states have been successful in building strong Sanghas and developing strong networks between Sanghas Gujarat's performance in building up and facilitating the emergence of Sanghas as agencies for social change remains poor. Evidence of the empowerment of women at the Sangha level is uneven.. The Annual Report 2000-01 itself classifies only 30% of Sanghas in Gujarat MS as strong, 36% as medium and 33% are optimistically defined as 'normal'. It is futile to proceed with other processes without strengthening the present Sanghas as this is fundamental to the success of all other initiatives. The Mission notes the commendable initiatives to establish a strong programme of Nari Adalat and the interface with Panchayati Raj which has been facilitated by MS in various pockets. Specific strategies and efforts are also needed to strengthen the Sangha processes to bring them at par with the strong processes of the Nari Adalats and the interface with Panchayati Raj processes. This would infuse a new energy into the programme and enable it to influence mainstream processes more effectively since the Sangha women are finally the ones who participate and represent their needs on multiple platforms. Rajkot district stands out as a shining example of what could be possible by focussing on strengthening of Sanghas, although the education component needs greater attention.

While MS Gujarat has gone through a troublesome period with a succession of staff changes at the State level, it must reinstate the BSKs and MSKs to continue and take forward its literacy programme. The Balika Shikshan Kendra is a good concept and the 1997 Mission recommended that BSK be established in each block, providing alternative models of schooling for drop-out girls (9-14 years) at village level which is yet to be implemented. This Mission recommends that MSG explore means for collaboration with DPEP on the

BSK, while assuring adherence to the MS perspectives. The same also applies to the two MSKs that have not been functioning for the past two years.

The Mission is of the opinion that the concept and practical implementation of Sangha Federations needs to be worked out systematically. The limited scope of the Varanasi society initiated by the Sahyoginis, the Banda group starting a separate NGO or the disillusionment of the Baroda group are instances which need to be kept in mind while dealing with this issue. The Mission recommends that the conceptual, practical and financial aspects of the Federation be elaborated in a proper document.

Mahila Kutirs built some times with extra money provided by the Panchayat or the Corporate Sector has strengthened the Sangha. The Mission recommends therefore that reasonable budgetary allocations be provided for Sangha huts whenever possible, while women maybe encouraged to raise funds from other sources in order to gain confidence in the bargaining and achievement process.

The Mission is of the view that maximum autonomy of the programme should be secured. At SPD and DPC level staff needs to be appointed who have managerial capacities and are firmly rooted in the women's movement in Gujarat.

2. Staff Capacities

The Mission is of the view that inappropriate selection and inadequate training of staff has led to a situation where the Sanghas in Gujarat are often the weakest instead of being the strongest part of the Programme. The lack of conceptual clarity among the staff at the DIU and State level was reflected in the quality of training and processes followed for forming and implementation of programme with MS Sanghas.

There is insufficient conceptual clarity or understanding of the key principles of the Programme amongst staff and visible effort needs to be made to address these issues. Training of DIU staff and Sanghas are an essential component of strengthening Sanghas. MS Gujarat requires a concerted effort to develop conceptual clarity and mobilize Sahayoginis, an area that has received far from adequate attention in this phase. Adequate in-house capacity needs to be developed for staff training at all levels in order to be able to strengthen the field processes and equip the programme to respond to emerging needs. Sahayoginis, Resource Person (RP) and DIU training needs to be strengthened to overcome the dearth of such opportunities in the past couple of years and to enhance the momentum and efficacy of the programme.

The availability of training facilities, kitchen facility and space for sitting together and exchanging ideas is crucial for the Programme. For Gujarat, the Mission recommends the establishment of an appropriate office where all the necessities like the library, the Resource persons, Consultants and Sahayoginis can come together. Facilities should be available for overnight stay (as in UP and Kamataka). Change of the office to a decent location in Ahmedabad (not Gandhinagar) is recommended.

The interaction of MS Gujarat with NRG members and womens organizations is poor and it is recommended that this be vitalized in order to affirm its feminist perspective. The National Resource Group needs to exercise greater influence on the State programme as resource persons and advisors either as part of a State Resource Group or in the EC. The NRG can

also play a significant role to strengthen the conceptual understanding of the key principles of MS with the State team including the director.

The National office should ensure the linkage of the MS programme to the women's movement and development agencies and facilitate dissemination and sharing of experiences between States. The Mission recommends the enhancement of professional capacities of staff in order to take the programme forward instead of letting it peter out in small pockets.

There is also a need to consider and reflect upon possible drawbacks or deterrents in taking the programme forward. This is necessary not only in terms of assessing MS progress but also for evolving and developing strategies in order to successfully take the programme forward.

3. Spatial Expansion/ Consolidation

While the MS Programme has been largely successful in raising and facilitating awareness of women's issues, the progress of MS Gujarat has been less than satisfactory. Gujarat has 1399 Sanghas with a collective strength of over 34,000 women. Despite the numerical achievements, progress of MS programmes remains uneven and at times difficult to assess. While a number of activities have been initiated, the patterns of such activities have been spread thin and hence their contribution to women's empowerment is sporadic. The programme needs to undertake a comprehensive exercise of planning by objectives to address specific needs and issues in a comprehensive way towards achievement of the programme goals. The strengthening of the programme is a necessary prerequisite to expansion in the next phase.

The coverage of villages per block by MS Gujarat remains low. There is a need for MS Gujarat to connect with women's groups and the wider women's movement in Gujarat. There is little information regarding the programme in the tribal Dangs district. The Mission recommends caution in the appropriate appointment of staff within a tribal setting, and appropriate training and exposure opportunities to other tribal areas where MS is being implemented such as in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala for greater learning on strategies and processes.

The recommendations of the 1995-1996 Indo Dutch Evaluation Mission have not been complied with at all. Constant shuffling of the State and District Personnel of the programme can be detrimental to the programme. An E:C comprising of mainly bureaucrats and few links with activists or development workers further impedes conceptual clarity and progress towards goals of empowerment. The mission therefore recommends that the programme should consolidate its autonomous nature and that local non-government representation at state levels is increased.

The Mission expresses deep concern at the programme in the Dangs district. The recently employed staff (6 months) for the Dangs district need appropriate orientation and sensitivity to tribal population and culture. The mission is of the opinion that appropriate Sayoginis be selected who are sensitive to the culture and special needs of tribal groups and in taking the programme forward in Dangs district. Educational levels for qualification may be relaxed in order to recruit appropriate Sahayoginis as has been done in other states provided women and girls from the tribal community are recruited.

4. Steps Forward

With reference to MS Gujarat, the Mission recommends consolidation of the programme before planning the next phase. Intensive initiatives are required to formulate a Plan of Action in order to strengthen the programme towards achievement of its objectives.

The Mission understands from the National Office that a Resource Team is to be fielded to facilitate a state level vision workshop in the next month. This Resource Team can be assigned the additional task of formulating a Plan of Action with the team in Gujarat and the National Project Office to strengthen the programme to meet its objectives. This Resource Team should visit the State and facilitate the formulation of such a Plan of Action within a three month period before March 2002, and should further be required to track and report on the progress of the Plan of Action and its achievement by the end of the year 2002. Based on the achievement of this PoA, the next phase may be planned and considered.

The Resource team may chalk out a training programme by engaging a training institute preferably in Gujarat itself or through competent trainers from Mumbai which is not too far away. A training group needs to be based at State and district level. The Mission should also monitor and report on the progress of operationalization of the Plan of Action and its achievement by the end of the year 2002 at which point consideration may be given to withdrawal of support to dysfunctional districts. A winding up may be suggested in such districts, providing two years NGO grant in aid funding after which Dutch support for the district is either terminated or functions on its own without the MS support.

Appendix I: Reporting Process in MS

The reports that are produced in the organization at each level are described in brief in this Appendix. These reports have more or less similar format and frequency across districts within the State.

- Sahayoginis prepare a daily report, which contains an account of the activities that they complete during the day. These reports are submitted to RPs on a monthly basis. RPs read these report and provides comments to Sahayoginis so that they can improve upon their work.
- RPs also maintain a daily report which she submits to DPC at the end of month. These reports contain information about the happenings of each day. DPC goes through these reports and provide feedback to RPs about her work in the monthly staff meeting.
- DPCs submit a quarterly progress report about the district's performance to SPD. This report contains a snapshot of district's position on date as well as description of activities that were performed during the last three months.
- DPCs send a monthly expense statement, which contains information about all the expenses incurred during the month to the State Office.
- All MS Societies have a system of documenting each and every event that is organized or participated in. These events can be workshops, exposure visits, visits by outsiders, melas, camps etc. Reports that explain whatever transpired on these 4accounts are diligently maintained.
- MS Societies also produce documents relating to their substantive area. Whenever a ground level process, which is innovative or has been proved to be extremely successful and popular is identified and documented for wider use.
- Besides reports, minutes of meeting and plans of action for the District are also sent by DPC to SPD.

MS Societies diligently monitor the activities performed by its employees and the inputs that have gone into these activities. These are adequately reflected in the current reporting system.

Center receives audited quarterly and annual financial statements from the State. It also receives quarterly progress reports, six monthly statistical reports and annual progress reports.

RNE receives Annual Reports and audited annual accounts.

Appendix II: Accounting System followed in MSG highlight distinct features as different from others

In MS Gujarat following books of accounts are generally maintained:

- Cash Book;
- General Ledger;
- Journal Voucher Register;
- Asset Register & Inventory register of consumables
- Advance Register

Usually separate books of accounts are maintained whenever an external funded project is taken up.

Expenses & income are recorded on accrual basis and a double entry system is followed.

All vouchers are properly receipted and revenue stamp is affixed for any cash payment of Rs.500/- and above.

Depreciation is charged on the assets as per the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Appendix III: Purchase Process

This Appendix presents key points of the purchase process followed in MS Gujarat.

- All purchases below Rs. 500.00 per item may be made directly from the market after making simple verbal inquiries regarding prices and quality.
- All purchases involving amounts above Rs 500 but below Rs. 75,000 shall be made on rate contract of State or Central Government or after inviting quotations or without inviting quotations from Hastkala board, Khadi and Gramodyog board, Panchayat Udyog or any other undertakings of state or central governments. In unavoidable circumstances if minimum quotation is to be overlooked or the above prescribed procedure is not followed the reasons should be recorded on file.
- Purchase of items involving more than Rs. 75,000.00 can be made under rate contract of the State or Central Government or after inviting tenders or without inviting tenders from Hastkala board, Khadi and Gramodyog board, Panchayat Udyog or undertakings of State and Central Government. But in case when the lowest tender is not to be accepted or the above mentioned purchase procedure is not followed the reasons should be recorded on files before placing the purchase orders. The purchase of vehicles for the project should be made from dealers who are authorized by the government.
- Procedure for purchase:
 - There should be a need of article to be purchased.
 - Sufficient provision in budget should be available.
 - Purchase should be sanctioned by competent authority.
 - Purchase should be made according to the procedure laid down.
 - Article should be recorded in Stock Register and issued / utilized.
- Competent Authority

Limit of Expenditure	Authority	Other Limitations
Upto Rs 10,000	District Program Coordinator	As per the availability of funds
Upto Rs 35,000	State Program Director	As per the availability of funds
More than Rs 35,000		On recommendation of following sub-committee: 1. SPD 2. Representative of EC 3. Representative of GOI 4. Representative of NRG

- Splitting of items of purchase is not permitted for the exercise of these delegated powers.

Appendix IV: Alternative Purchase Process

This Appendix present an alternative purchase process that is simpler compared to the existing process being followed. MSG can either use this or design their own taking help from this.

Whenever a purchase has to be made following step process should be followed:

- SPD appoints any one functionary to survey market and procure three quotations from reputed shops. She should then make a detailed report about her recommendations after discussion with the SPD.
- This note along with all the quotations and analysis of the same should then be handed over to the Accounts Officer who should through other sources confirm whether all the prices mentioned in the quotations are appropriate or not.
- After this the same note along with the process followed for verification and findings of the Accountant should be put in front of the SPD for approval.
- After the approval of the SPD, there should be a formal purchase order placed with the selected dealer in writing detailing all the terms and conditions agreed upon between the dealer and MS Society. On the basis of the above purchase order payments to the dealer should be released.

Appendix V: Funds Flow

This appendix explains in brief the process that is followed in transferring funds from Center to the State and then onwards to the Districts.

The flow of funds from Center to State follows following steps:

- After Center receives 'request for funds' it forwards it to the Ministry of Finance (MOF). In certain cases MOF may have queries which are answered either by Center or State depending upon to whom it has been addressed and who has an explanation on it.
- After the Financial Advisor clears the proposal, these papers go to the Internal Finance – 1 (IF-1) division in the MOF.
- The IF- 1 certifies that the funds are available. After this the approval goes to Pay and Accounts Office (PAO) who formal sends instruction to the bank for preparation of a demand draft in favor of the respective MS Societies.
- This draft is then released either by Registered Letter or Speed Post to the State. The whole process takes about 2 months.

The flow of funds from State to District follows following steps:

- As soon as funds are received at the State Office most of the said amount is transferred to Term Deposits of duration of 46,60 & 90 days of lots of Rs.50,000/- each, based on the requirement of the said funds.
- Amounts are released in advance by the State Office to District Implementation Unit. Every quarter the District Offices send in a request of funds to the State Office along with their proposed expenditure in the coming quarter.
- State Office verifies request with that district's past expenditure statements and plan for future.
- State Office then releases funds based on balance available with district office and as and when funds become available from Center.

MAHILA SAMAKHYA

INDO- DUTCH REVIEW MISSION 2001

MAHILA SAMAKHYA UTTAR PRADESH

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Fatima Alikhan

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CONTENTS

Preface

A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

B. MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME IN UTTAR PRADESH

C. PROGRESS AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

1. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- 1.1 *Impact on Women's Personal and Family Lives, Autonomy and Socio-Cultural Environment*
- 1.2 *Creating a Foundation for a Grass-Root Level Women's Movement*
- 1.3 *Women's political participation*
- 1.4 *Women's legal rights*
- 1.5 *Cutting Across Caste and Class*
- 1.6 *Growth, Pace And Emerging Trends*

2 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 2.1 *Women's Education*
- 2.2 *Girl's Education*
- 2.3 *Kishori Sanghas*
- 2.4 *Contribution to reduction of child labour*

3. LINKAGES WITH GOVERNMENT, NGOs, WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND RNE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 *Linkages with Government Departments and Agencies*
- 3.2 *Linkages with Panchayat Institutions*
- 3.3 *Linkages with NGOs and Women's Movement*
- 3.4 *Added Value and Linkages with RNE Sectoral Approach Priorities*

4. REPORTING AND MONITORING

5. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

6. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

7. HUMAN RESOURCES

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 *Funds Flow*
- 8.2 *Accounting*
- 8.3 *Purchase Procedure*
- 8.4 *Disclosures*
- 8.5 *Payroll System*
- 8.6 *Internal Controls*
- 8.7 *Utilization of Funds*

D. Future Strategy

Annexures, Mission Itinerary, Abbreviations, Glossary

Preface

Mahila Samakhya (MS), meaning "Education for Women's Equality" is a novel programme of the Government of India (GOI), Department of Education. The programme is sponsored by Dutch Development Co-operation under a bilateral agreement in 5 states. Conceptualised as a process rather than mere fulfilment of targets, the programme was initiated in 6 districts of U.P, Karnataka, and Gujarat. MS is registered as an autonomous society and is a national programme. Co-ordination of the MS programme through a National Office imparts a national identity. The programme was twelve years old in December 2001. Hence the Indo-Dutch Review Mission was fielded in December 2001 to undertake visits to the five states where the programme operates with RNE assistance to assess the gains and progress of the programme and to make suggestions for the next phase. Kerala joined the Mahila Samakhya programme under Dutch Assistance most recently and this review is the first external assessment of the programme in that state.

The Indo-Dutch Review Mission consisting of ten members (including 3 GOI representatives) worked in two teams to cover the 5 states for review. The first team comprising of Fatima Alikhan, Riet Turksma, Shushmita Dutt and Virat Divyakirti visited Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, the states where the programme was initiated in the first phase. The second team consisting of Hilde Janssen, Nishi Mehrotra, Soma Kishore Parthasarathy (mission leader) Vanita Mukherjee and Varun Anand covered the states included in the programme in the second and third phase ie Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Charu Sehgal also joined the team for two days in Kerala.

The task of the review mission as laid down in the Terms of reference was to:

- Review the progress of the programme since January 1998, and assess its impact in terms of empowerment of women.
- Recommend a strategy for the next phase (2003-2007) in the three concentration states, i.e. Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, consistent with the policy of the Government of India (GOI) and the policy of the Netherlands (GON)
- Provide an estimate of the total budget for the next phase.

The following mission report is one of three reports for the states visited by the first team.

The conclusions of the Programme in Uttar Pradesh are based on a two-day visit to the UP State Mahila Samakhya Society. The mission team held discussions with state and district staff available, government officials as well as with NGO and civil society organisation representatives Executive Committee members of the State Society. The itinerary of the mission's visit to the state is at Annex 1. The team has relied heavily on the documents that have emerged from the programme in the state in the preparation of this report. This report is therefore limited in its scope and seeks to highlight the significant results and to capture the trends for the future direction of the programme, rather than to present an indepth analysis of the programme in the state

MAHILA SAMAKHYA INDO- DUTCH REVIEW MISSION 2001

MAHILA SAMAKHYA UTTAR PRADESH

A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Mahila Samakhya Programme in Uttar Pradesh is implemented in 10 districts, viz., Varanasi, Tehri, Saharanpur, Banda, Allahabad, Pauri, Sitapur, Auraiya, Gorakhpur and Nainital. The MS programme has the active involvement of 32,755 women in 1470 Sanghas. Recently 6 new districts have been added to coincide with the World Bank sponsored DPEP programme for which a time schedule has been formulated to achieve horizontal spread of the programme culminating in strong Sanghas within a period of two years. The MS continues to be necessary based on the indicators in Table 1 below:

Indicators	UP 1991
Sex Ratio	879
Percentage S.C	21.0
Percentage S. T	0.2
Literate Male %	55.7
Literate Female%	25.3
Crude Birth Rate	36.2
Crude Death Rate	12.8
Total Fertility Rate	5.1
IMR	98
Life Expectancy (M)	54.1
Life Expectancy (F)	49.6

Source: (office of the Registrar General of India)

Table 2: Some Social Indicators of UP

Percentage of pop. Below poverty line	38.9%
Mean age at marriage	16.7 years
Differential school enrolment	587 girls/1000 boys

Unicef Annual Report, 1996

The Census 2001 has shown that female literacy levels in the MS districts in Uttaranchal¹ and Uttar Pradesh are very uneven – varying between a high of Nainital with 70.98% and a low of Sitapur with 35.08%. There are worrying dips among the SC Female Literacy Rates in MS districts; Among the women of ST population too there are some very low literacy indicators such as Allahabad – 4.02% and Sitapur – 8.42%. There are also some MS districts with a demographic sex ratio of less than 982:1000 such as Allahabad, Muzzaffarnagr, Chitrakoot, Sitapur, Banda, Auraiya and Mathura. These quantitative indicators clearly point the direction for MS work. The UP government

¹ Uttaranchal was established as a separate state in 2000 and comprises the hill districts of the erstwhile state of Uttar Pradesh

decentralized the administration of Basic education to Panchayat level thus making space for Sangha interface with education.

Table 3: Female Literacy Rates, Census 2001

DISTRICT	FEMALE LITERACY
India	54.16%
Uttar Pradesh	42.98%
Uttaranchal	60.26%
Uttarkashi	47.48%
Tehri Garhwal	49.76%
Nainital	70.98%
Saharanpur	51.42%
Muzaffarnagar	48.63%
Mathura	43.77%
Sitapur	35.08%
Auraiya	60.08%
Banda	37.10%
Chitrakoot	51.28%
Pratapgarh	42.63%
Allahabad	46.61%
Gorakhpur	44.48%
Mau	50.86%
Jaunpur	43.53%
Varanasi	48.59%

B: MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME IN THE STATE

MS UP have creatively negotiated contracts for implementation of other (Dutch) infrastructural projects like Water and Sanitation and a Training Women in an Agricultural Extension project.

Table 4: Coverage And Out reach 2000-2001

Phase	Year	District	Source of funding till Sept. 2000	Present source of funding
I	1989	Banda (Chitrakoot), Tehri, Saharanpur, Varansi	Royal Netherlands Embassy	Royal Netherlands Embassy
II	1995 -96	Allahabad, Pauri, Auraiya, Gorakhpur, Nainital., Sitapur	EFA, UP under BEP	Royal Netherlands Embassy
III	2000	Jaunpur, Mau, Mathura, Pratapgarh, Muzaffamagar, Uttarkashi	DPEP III, UP	DPEP III, UP

Table 5 : Achievements in Coverage in the 1st Phase

	Chitrakoot	Tehri	Saharanpur	Varanasi	Total
Block	2	4	3	3	12
Village	71	230	230	194	725
Strong Sangha	45	152	180	141	518
Strong Sangha in roll back	-	60	45	100	205
Medium Sangha	16	54	40	35	145
Weak Sangha	10	24	10	18	62
Emerging Sangha	-	-	-	-	-
Mahasangha	-	3	3	2	8
Kishori Sangha	5	34	42	22	103
Balkendra	-	-	-	18	18
Kishori Kendra	4	-	45	-	49
WLC	13	24	-	-	37
MS K	2	-	1	1	4
Library	5	-	60	18	83
Thikana	-	36	3	3	42
Saving Fund	15	-	168	170	353
Sangh Anudan	14	40	144	90	288
Sangha Ansdan	-	*171	-	-	171
Nari Adalat / Sahara Sangh	-	8	3	-	11
Health Center	-	4	3	3	10
HP Mechanic	-	-	-	-	-
Mason	-	-	-	-	-

*171 groups of Tehri, which till previous year were counted as saving groups are now counted under 'Sangha Ansdan' as all the groups decided to donate their savings for their fight against harassment of women and development of their village

IIInd Phase

	Allahabad	Pauri	Auraiya	Sitapur	Gorakhpur	Nainital	Total
Block	2	3	2	2	2	2	13
Village	155	180	130	120	140	130	755
Strong Sangha	104	102	54	42	53	63	418
Strong Sangha in roll back	-	45	-	-	-	-	45
Medium Sangha	29	40	38	22	42	51	222
Weak Sangha	22	18	13	6	15	7	81
Emerging Sangha	-	20	25	50	30	9	134
Mahasangha	-	1	1	-	1	1	4
Kishori Sangha	-	32	23	23	-	26	104
Balkendra	5	-	5	-	4	-	14
Kishori Kendra	7	-	2	2	22	-	33
WLC	4	-	-	3	-	-	7
MS K	-	-	1	1	1	-	3
Library	25	28	15	49	17	6	140
Thikana	-	3	1	1	1	4	10
Saving Fund	35	22	15	19	22	41	154
Sangh Anudan	33	19	28	35	28	41	184
Sangha Ansdan	-	-	35	30	16	-	81
Nari Adalat /	-	-	1	-	-	-	1

Sahara Sangha							
Health Center	-	-	-	-	-	-	
HP Mechanic	15	-	-	-	-	-	15
Mason	14	-	-	-	-	-	14
Vriksharopan/ Village	-	3000/1 03	/136	-	-	-	3000/ 239

IIIrd Phase

	Uttarkas bi	Muzaffar nagar	Jounpur	Pratapg arh	Mathura	Mau	Total
Block	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Village	50	60	70	50	50	50	330

** The Program has been expanded to these 6 new districts since Aug 2000*

Some significant achievements reported by the project include:

- A positive image and a program identity is clearly visible in government and private organizations, administration and police department as well as at the field level. They had been largely supportive.
- A constant effort by the DIU has enabled a supportive relationship between Sanghas and ANM and health department.
- Males participate generously in community mobilization and other activities.
- Women are developing strategies to deal with problems at village level.

C. PROGRESS AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

1. Women's Empowerment

1.1 Impact on Women's Autonomy and Socio-Cultural Environment

The MS Programme in Uttar Pradesh aims to empower women through education. The term "education" implies not just literacy but development of collective awareness and critical thinking which reaffirms the dignity and confidence of women. The Sangha is critical to the success and outreach of the programme. At a general level, all ten districts in UP have well developed Sanghas. It should be mentioned here that four districts are now in the State of Uttaranchal. The number of Sanghas ranges from a maximum of 230 in Tehri district and a minimum of 70 in Sitapur. A strong Sangha has a collective identity, takes initiatives in identifying a common cause, where women have developed leadership qualities, women have an ability to influence their own families and communities, are aware of their rights and have the ability to access information. (Annual Report 2000-2001 p.3) All ten districts in UP have well developed Sanghas. The number of Sanghas ranges from a maximum of 230 in Tehri district and a minimum of 70 in Sitapur. **The total Sanghas in U.P. is 1470 comprising 20-30 women per Sangha.**

More than 800 community women have been trained in the last couple of years with support from WHO on reproductive health issues who are functioning as voluntary health leaders, spreading health messages in the community and seeking men's participation in women's health promotion. This benefited over 5000 women. The Sanghas have facilitated women's discussion groups on health issues and in turn disseminated information on health issues to wider audiences. The Sanghas have also intervened in order to facilitate access to health services for women, with a large number of women

from Sanghas working as voluntary community health workers. Women have attempted to develop a resource base of traditional health culture, with promotion and growing of herbal medicines. MS UP has identified the following health indicators for health as empowering for women:

- start up of holistic health centres.
- setting accountability of government health functionaries
- changed health practices,
- focus on herbal and traditional medicine,
- capacity building of women healers and
- raised consciousness about preventive health.

Women and Health

Valuing the traditional knowledge system of women we trained sangha women on herbal and traditional medicinal system especially those who already had some knowledge about or were practicing herbal medicine. Impressed by their commitment and the usefulness in the village context 4 of these women are receiving CIDA fellowship to run the centre and more will receive in the next financial year. Their status and self esteem has increased tremendously as they are now called Gyanis. They have also been able to raise community consciousness towards preventive health care

Women have also discussed and adjudicated in cases of violence against women in the family, substituting the family for the protection of the Sangha. On the whole, the MS programme has successfully mobilized women around issues regarding gender, family, health, literacy, environment etc and laid the basic structure for a grassroots mobilization for change. Mahila Sanghas and Kishori Sanghas have played the role of motivator and act as pressure groups. They have motivated individuals and families to send their children to school.

Access to resources

Sangha women in 44 villages have started small economic activities like bidi making and farming to supplement their income.

Women in Agriculture

In 1999 MS UP started a project on women in agriculture and food security in collaboration with UNDP and G.O.I. At present 200 Sanghas of 9 blocks in 4 districts; Chitrakoot, Saharanpur, Tehri and Varansi have initiated collective farming towards sustainable agriculture. All the beneficiaries are landless agricultural women laborers. The collective approach of women with a sound mutual understanding and feminist approach has given a unique strength to the project. The women are collectively doing farming on rented land. Food security and health of women as well as of family are important components of the project. The project empowers women by providing them technical training and enhancing their skills of food production.

1.2 Creating a Foundation for a Grass-Root Level Women's Movement

Sanghas have increased their networking on issues like alcoholism in Nainital and Tehri and on land in Allahabad

The Mahila Samakhya Programme has facilitated the process of empowering rural marginalized women and created the foundation for a grassroot level women's movement. Without any tangible benefits or resources to offer the programme has enabled women to develop the capacity for critical thinking, analyses and learning and

contributed to their increased self-confidence and changed perception of themselves and society's perception of them and their roles and rights.

Women have come together in Sanghas and used their collective strength to create space for themselves and their daughters in the home and in the community. Sangha women have developed the capacity to address a wide range of issues and problems of concern to them related to gender, health, violence, law, education, land, economic resources and development programmes and the Panchayati Raj system and political power. Sanghas have begun federating into Mahasanghas at the level of village clusters, taluks and districts and have acquired visibility and presence and the ability to come together in ever larger numbers on issues of concern.

1.3 Women's Political Participation/Panchayats

The central objective of the MS programme has been to facilitate the process of the empowerment of women to enable them to participate in decision making processes. PRIs offer women the space to participate in the process of local self governance.

Gram Panchayat elections were held in UP in 2000 and prior to that in 1995. MS inputs to Sanghas ranged from capacity building of Sahayoginis and Sangha women through trainings for an understanding of political processes to motivating them to come forward and participate in elections. The inputs were mainly for Sangha women but were not exclusive to them and aimed to address other marginalized women and men as well. These included

- creating awareness in the districts through discussions, mock elections, information booths, street plays, songs, circulation of news letters, handbills, posters, and phads (themes painted on cloth scrolls),
- motivating Sangha women and others to come out and vote to prevent misuse of their votes
- Creating public awareness about the significance of the gram sabha khuli baithaks (open meetings of the village general body) where they could play a crucial role in village development plans.
- training Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) to participate effectively in the Panchayats/Committees

At a public level, Sangha women have also actively participated in the political arena as Panchayati Raj members and Sarpanches, reported greater success in gaining access to resources, developed the confidence to engage in economic activity and launch public collective action against alcoholism and violence against women. Women in the districts of Auraiya, Varanasi and Gorakhpur have discussed and analyzed social attitudes like social prejudice against widows and girl-children, disapproval of women's participation in religious ceremonies and made efforts to introduce positive changes within communities.

Women from MS have been actively involved as Panchayat members. Utilizing the medium of newsletters and Mahila Pradhans, women disseminated information on Gram Sabha meetings. MS women discussed and evolved strategies for effective implementation of PR. The forum of the Panchayat has been used by women to discuss and resolve issues concerning women. Sangha women have also actively participated in Panchayat administration as Pradhans and Panchayat members.

Women have intervened in PR schemes. They have also received training with reference to the structure and functioning of PR with the view of participation in the elections. Sangha women are well represented in positions as Pradhans, Panches, BDC and Zilla Parishad members. Women are able to confront and interact with district administration in order to demand and secure their rights.

At the gram Sabha meeting at Naugaun village the men raised the demand for a road while the women maintained that the problem of water was more acute— they had to go a long distance to fetch water and wanted a water tank(reservoir) to be constructed first. After lengthy deliberations the gram sabha ratified the women's resolution for a water tank first.

The capacity building efforts of MS UP have facilitated the process of the participation of Sangha women in the Panchayats and created political space for them. There are now 489 Panchayat members and 51 Pradhans (village chiefs). The Block Development Committees (BDC's) have 34 Sangha women as members while two Sangha women are members of the Zilla Parishads, (District Committees). Although Sangha women have come a long way from the Panchayat elections of 1995 which were dominated by diffidence and fear, ignorance and lack of information and resistance from men, the situation can sometimes still be grim for women who are beginning to enter the portals of political power as seen from some of the cases below.

In Parsia village, Gorakhpur district, the need for a permanent thikana (sangha hut) for sangha meetings was discussed many times. The matter was taken up in the gram sabha open meeting in May 2000. After an intense discussion the suggestion was accepted and a site allotted. All the villagers also volunteered their labour.

Table 6 : MS UP- Political Participation of Sangha Women by Districts

<i>District</i>	<i>Panchayat Member</i>	<i>Pradhan</i>	<i>BDC Member</i>	<i>Z P Member</i>
<i>Nainital</i>	75	9	7	
<i>Varanasi</i>	67	7	3	
<i>Pauri</i>	137	12	2	
<i>Sitapur</i>	47	24	4	
<i>Saharanpur</i>	36	6	3	
<i>Chitrakoot</i>	38	3	6	
<i>Allahabad</i>	6	4	4	
<i>Gorakhpur</i>	32	2	3	1
<i>Auraiya</i>	51	6	2	1
<i>Total</i>	489	51	34	2

MS UP has created a wealth of material for awareness generation in the form of phads, posters, streetplays, songs etc. These could be translated and the streetplays and songs recorded and shared with other states. MSUP has also conducted a study on "The Role of women in Panchayati Raj".

1.4 Women's Legal Rights

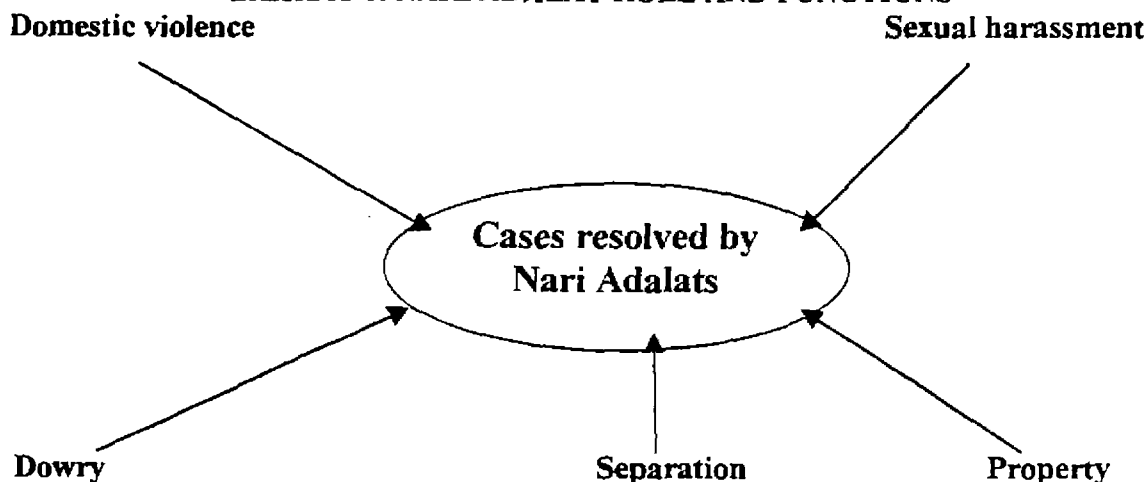
The Nari Adalats do not take up fire fighting but set in motion long term social reform processes. The Nari Adalats of the Mahila Samakhya have recorded impressive achievements with respect to women's legal rights. Village meetings have created space for women to discuss legal issues and public meetings have enabled women to

approach the Sanghas for help. The Nari Adalats disseminate legal information to women and function as alternative legal structures to analyse and resolve issues of violence against women within the family. While Nari Adalats remain independent in decision making and working, they also support the formal law agencies - police and judiciary - indirectly.

The Nari Adalats which are a medium to address women's rights in the family have reported success in terms of resolving disputes.(Annual Report 2000-2001).Nari Adalats started in 1999 in UP and function in 12 blocks of three districts. As in Gujarat they disseminate legal information to women and have the effect of mobilizing public opinion regarding women's rights and violence against women.

Nari Adalats have been effective as pressure groups within village communities and government agencies. They have the advantage of being economically viable and having the confidence of local people. ***There are no lawyer's fees, nor intimidating visits to police stations and courts.*** Nari Adalats function autonomously across villages and districts and have registered cases regarding violence, physical and verbal abuse, sexual violence and child abuse. Nari Adalats have also had the effect of mobilising public opinion regarding women's rights and violence against women. The success of Nari Adalats have in turn projected a positive image of Mahila Samakhya. During 2000-2001, 347 cases were dealt with by Nari Adalats ***of which 250 were resolved.***

EXHIBIT 1: NARI ADALAT ROLE AND FUNCTIONS



"We need legal literacy so that we can fight for our rights" "I have made my mother in law, sister and sister in law realize their rights. Now we can help each other and stand together."

In a situation where women rarely raised their voice against injustice and the power of money, class, caste and gender was too overwhelming and women lived with violence , physical and mental, domestic and public, MS UP has brought about a significant shift in attitudes and behavior towards women through the Nari Adalats. While Sanghas play an important role in dealing with local ,village level problems concerning women, the Nari

Adalats address the gap in lack of legal information and enable women to deal with legal as well as social aspects of problems. MS facilitated training in legal literacy to provide information and the capacity to analyze, resolve and assist cases through creating an understanding of these issues.

A jury of Sangha women and Sahayoginis and a few other women deal with the cases in a gender sensitive manner in a public place on a fixed date and time every month. A multi pronged approach is adopted in complex cases, drawing support from the families, Panchayat, police and administration. Cases are followed up even after they have been resolved.

On the death of her husband, Phoolvati of Sitapur district gave her brother her jewellery for safe keeping. After 15 years when her daughter was to be married her brother refused to give it back. The case was brought to the Nari Adalat. After 7 months of arbitration the case was resolved and the brother returned the jewellery with apologies. Phoolvati got back her jewellery and also has good relations with her brother, due to the attitudinal change brought about by the women jury.

Sangha women and the Nari Adalat of Kharoli village, supported later by the National Commission for Women, intervened to convert the case of 16 year old Mala's death from suicide to murder by her mother and the man she was living with. They took the initiative to search for Mala when she disappeared, lodged an FIR, and put pressure on the whole system that was obstructing justice from being done – the pradhan, SDM, police inspector and the hospital where the post mortem was done. They socially boycotted the duo, testified against them and organized a protest of 2000 women in the Tehsil. The two were arrested. The Nari Adalat collected money from all the villagers to fight the case which is going on.

In spite of their obvious success Nari Adalats are functioning in just three districts, Tehri (8), Saharanpur (3) and Sitapur(1). Nari Adalats need a lot of support from MS through training and exposure visits, documentation of the cases, participation of Sahayoginis in the Adalats and networking with the various institutions the Adalats interact with. MS itself should be equipped to provide this support through increased budget and personnel.

The highlight of these courts is that they dwell upon empathy towards women and their issues. Efforts towards arbitration are not just to create external pressure on the accused to accept and change but to make men and their families understand the issues with a more unbiased and just perspective and bring a cognitive change in them. Local Panchayats are also involved where necessary for greater social acceptance and to exert pressure to comply with the decisions. These courts have been accepted by international agencies like ICRW as one of the best ways to deal with domestic violence against women. ICRW is conducting a study with MS collaboration on processes initiated to deal with violence against women.

1.5 Federations and Future Autonomy/Mahasanghas

MS UP has had many discussions with Sangha members about the eventual withdrawal of the MS programme and the strategies for the way forward. The networking of Sanghas into Mahasanghas/Federations at the various levels—village cluster, blocks and district was seen as an important strategy for Sanghas to become self-reliant. **Sanghas see the Mahasangha/ Federations as forums that will give them a louder voice and greater visibility.** Each level of the Federation has issue based representation of Sangha members on important issues which may vary with the Mahasangha. Federations at the cluster level are formed of four to ten villages – there being a lesser number of villages and spaced further apart in the hill areas.

Sanghas meet at the cluster level to discuss village level problems, successes, failures, share information and knowledge, and plan strategies for critical issues. Issue-based Committees on Health, Violence, Savings, Panchayats and Education may receive inputs in the form of trainings. The Committees select representatives to the Mahasanghas on a rotation basis. The issues, on which the Committees are formed at the village, cluster or block level may vary as they are decided on the basis of their needs. However the Sanghas have decided that at least one Committee member is to be literate. Sangha Federations have been formed in seven of the ten MS districts of UP as shown in the Table below

Table 7- MS UP: Distribution of Mahasanghas by Districts

District	Cluster	Block	Mahasangha
Chitrakoot	16	2	-
Saharanpur	21	3	3
Tehri	20	3	3
Varanasi	12	3	2
Allahabad	5	2	-
Paun	10	3	1
Auraiya	8	2	1
Gorakhpur	11	2	1
Nainital	8	2	1
Sitapur	3	2	-

Source: Annual Report, 2000-01

At present the Mahasanghas are not formal registered bodies with rules and regulations but have informal systems of

- membership and codes of conduct
- dates and venues for meetings and agendas and reports
- generation of funds through village and cluster level sanghas for various expenses

The Mahasanghas are debating on the processes for registering, having discussions with resource persons and visiting collectives and federations to learn from best practices.

Issues raised in the Mahasanghas deal with

- alcoholism and social harassment of women
- campaign for school enrolment and monitoring of schools
- afforestation, environmental protection and eradication of use of plastic bags
- removal of traditional discriminatory practices towards women and girls
- action on issues of rape and violence against women
- land rights and wages
- women's health, public health, sanitation and immunization
- access to governmental development programmes
- interface and dialogue with Panchayats for village development

Sangha women use the Mahasangha meetings to buy, sell and exchange products, share new practices and successful strategies. They arrange and conduct marriages between the children of members, without dowries and with a minimum expenditure.

New Sanghas learn from older Sanghas Above all women have developed a larger space of their own and have a presence.

As the Mahasanghas mature it is envisaged that at the block and district level they will

- keep in touch with the feminist perspective of empowerment
- develop linkages with government programmes to access them for Sanghas
- act as a pressure group for issues that affect women
- network with like minded groups and NGOs
- have resource/information centres for Sanghas/women
- facilitate strong Sanghas in supporting new Sanghas through training and information inputs
- document all the processes

However, there are many challenges that Mahasanghas face in developing as strong federations, some of which are seen as

- the need for common issues that can sustain their initiatives
- the need to establish linkages with district and state level Federations
- lack of resources and mobility among women
- lack of social support to raise women's issues
- family , caste and social pressures ²

MS UP may benefit from visiting and studying the federation process in MS Karnataka where a core group of common issues have been identified and small committees formed at all levels—Sangha , cluster ,taluk/block and district-- and trainings and other inputs given on these issues. These are the common issues that can sustain the Federations

1.6 Cutting Across Caste and Class

Caste structures remain extremely complex and pervasive in Uttar Pradesh. While MS must have encountered problems in overcoming these, they have successfully upheld and secured lower-caste women's rights as testified in some of their case histories. Also, in formulating their syllabus, Mahila Samakhya ensured that it did not reflect any caste/class differentials. There might be a role for MS to install pride in women irrespective of their caste background.

Sonia was elected Pradhan of Nenki village, Chitrakoot district . An MS sahyogini, Sonia is a confident and empowered woman. At the block panchayat meeting of all the pradhans ,Sonia questioned the BDO for allowing husbands to represent women pradhans .She refused to let the meeting be conducted unless the elected women pradhans themselves participated. The BDO was forced to comply when other women pradhans present also joined to support her. Since then the accepted culture of pradhanpatis (village chief husbands) no longer prevails.

Nari Adalats run by Sangha women have provided space for women to access justice within a gender sensitive framework irrespective of caste and class. Sangha women elected to Panchayats have sought and extended support to other elected women representatives cutting across caste and class divides.

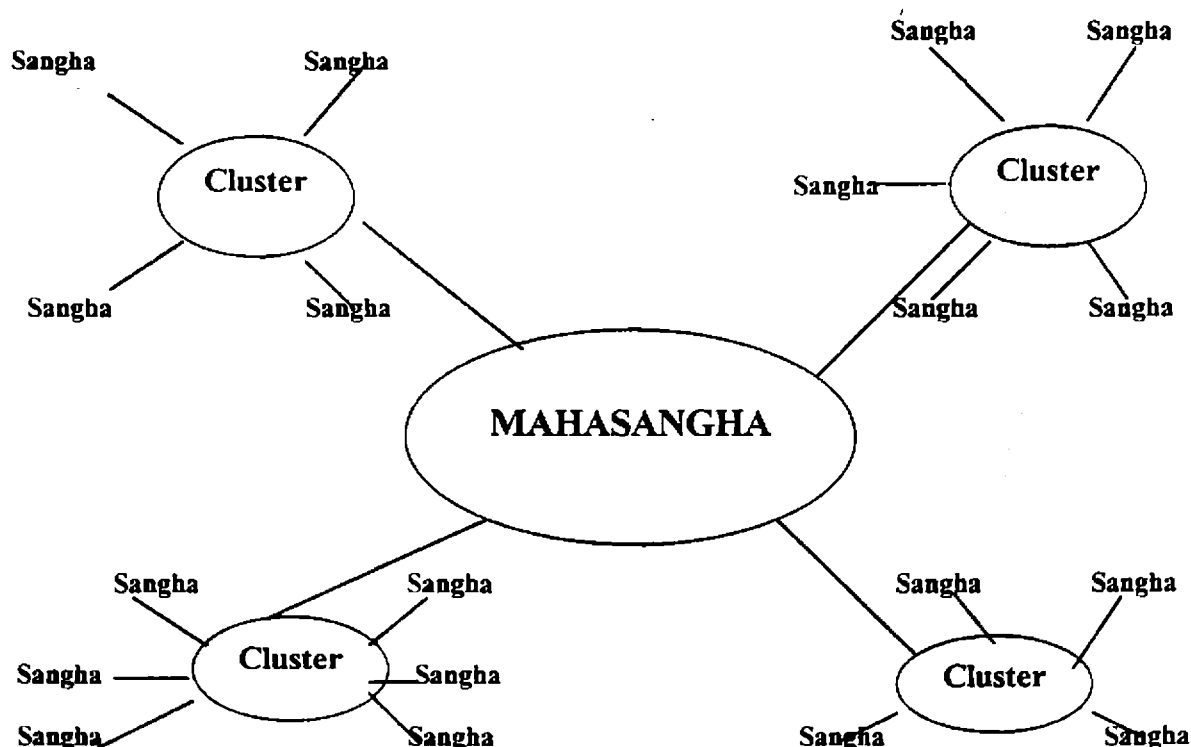
²(MS UP, Annual Report 2000-2001)

1.7 Emerging Trends

In recognition of the significance of the MS approach and its impact, The World Bank has advised extension of MS Programme in all District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) districts, with the expansion strategy derived and developed from previous experiences. Efforts towards convergence and strategic involvement of men are initiated from the very beginning. The operation strategy aims at expansion through the existing strong Sanghas and grass root workers of old districts. All grass root workers will be selected simultaneously and the work in 50 villages would start together. The Resource Teams from old districts would provide support and technical assistance and the location of the District Office would be in the operation block for better outreach. The community mobilization started in connection with the school enrolment drive which helped people and particularly women to come forward and take initiatives. The house to house contacts and PRA exercises drew women from their home. Women look forward to attend the weekly meeting and discuss their problems with workload, discrimination of girls, domestic violence, irregularity of teachers, social customs and prejudices and other village events/happenings. This is most probably the best practice contribution UP is bringing into the programme to be shared with the Other States.

It is not practically feasible for UP Lucknow office to be involved in running the districts now in Uttaranchal. They should soon be handed over to the new Government with a full-fledged running programme of DIUs in 3 districts and strength of 60 Sahyoginis.

EXHIBIT 2: MAHASANGHA LINKAGES



2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Women's Education

The Sangha women did not identify education as a need in the first instance. As they evolved and their vision of themselves developed, they began to articulate a need for education. They wanted education not only for themselves but also for their children specially girls. MS has responded to this need in a number of ways, especially by bringing women's needs and linking it to empowerment.

MS links the education programme to women's daily lives. Literacy is an integral part of the Sangha network. Literacy camps for women and adolescent girls have been organized in each district. Women developed the ability to read and sign their names. **Bal Kendras** were set up to provide education to children at the village level. **Kishori Kendras** catered to the needs of female school dropouts who could not receive formal schooling. **Mahila Shikshan Kendras** has allowed women to continue their education despite household chores and responsibilities. The literacy programme of Saksharti Kendras and camps have been successful in equipping girls with literacy skills

A study was undertaken to analyze needs of adolescent girls. Kishori Sanghas undertook education for adolescent girls. Women have set up mobile and permanent libraries in rural areas. Women in 10 districts have undertaken Writings on local issues in the local languages. MS established and runs mobile and stationary libraries, which sustain the interest of borrowers, particularly of the neo-literates. The general library and the organization of the libraries are run from the State Office, but if expanded will need professional services of librarians. Alternatively girls may be provided the requisite training.

MS produces materials like handbills, posters, magazines, newsletters, training modules, reports/studies in Hindi and English. They are inventive and creative. Other projects programmes recognize their strength and commission or use MS material as their own. MS has successfully generated simple materials for awareness to effectively deliver the message, thereby increasing visibility and horizontal spread of issues.

MS strengthened Sanghas to work as pressure groups for girls' and women's education. The impact of MS educational initiatives is visible from the fact that in 755 MS villages all children of all Sangha women attend school. The educational awareness campaigns have led to 100% literacy in 165 villages. MS runs mobile libraries have reached out to over 10,000 men and women and helped sustain their literacy skills.

UP is running 44 **Mahila Saksharta Kendras**. The courses here are mainly for 18 months with the aim of imparting basic skills of reading and writing. The Mahila Saksharta Kendras have short contact time, which helps the participants learn without causing interruption to their normal lives. Short duration camps are held to help dropout girls to rejoin school. MS regards these education initiatives as necessary empowerment inputs for women and girls.

With the DPEP opening additional schools and access to primary education under EFA initiatives, the requirement of Bal Kendras is reducing.

Table 8: Current status of UPMS Educational Interventions

Initiatives	Number	Participants
Balkendras	32	675 children of whom 75% are girls.
Kishori Kendras	82	1289 kishoris
Mahila Saksharta Kendras	44	502 women
Literacy Camps	98	605 women, 1402 kishoris
Mahila Shikshan Kendras	7	365 students

Source: Report for the Mission 2001

The Govt. of UP has advised the District Administration that MS Sangha members should be inducted as VEC members wherever possible. MS Sangha women are members of 108 VECs and are active in monitoring teacher and student attendance. They are vigilant and prevent children from dropping out. They are active in enrolment drives and follow up non-enrolled children to persuade parents to allow the children to come to school. Sangha members in 331 additional Sanghas have taken up similar activities in habitations where VECs do not exist.

MS has shared its training modules with the DPEP and has been the nodal agency in preparing the State Mahila Niti (State Policy for Women). Women discussed and developed appropriate syllabi for girls and women which adopted a flexible approach to teaching and was more functional in nature in order to sustain the interest of the students and relate it to their daily lives. Writings by women were disseminated to a wider audience and served as important reading material for neo literates.

MS could also network more closely with the NLM initiatives of Post and Continuing Education Programmes in order to influence the development of reading material by the NLM. This is imperative as the women who are achieve literacy through MS initiatives require post literacy material so that they may not relapse into illiteracy.

2.2 Girls' Education

Girls' education is assuming greater importance within MS initiatives everywhere. Adolescent girls have always been present on the peripheries of the Sanghas and helped with documentation and record keeping. The demand from the Sanghas for more targeted girls' education initiatives is now very clear. The MS response has also been successful and innovative.

Kishori Literacy Centres (Kishori Kendras) were started, where adolescent girls are helped to continue their education and rejoin mainstream schools. The Kishori Kendras not only provide academic inputs but also provide a range of life skills. Many graduates of the Kishori Kendras opt to join the MSKs, the residential girls' educational institution.

New Mahila Shikshan Kendras were established in different districts where it was felt that these could incorporate the experience of older MSKs and present needs of women.

Table 9: Expansion of Mahila Shikshan Kendras in UPMS districts

Year	No. of MSK	District
1998	4	Banda (2), Varansi(1), Saharanpur(1)
1999	8	Banda (2), Varansi(1), Saharanpur(1), Sitapur(1), Allahabad(1), Gorakhpur(1), Auraiya(1)
2000	8	Banda (2), Varansi(1), Saharanpur(1), Sitapur(1), Allahabad(1), Gorakhpur(1), Auraiya(1)
2001	7	Banda (2), Varanasi(1), Saharanpur(1), Sitapur(1), Gorakhpur(1), Auraiya(1)

MS and Nirantar documented the Impact of MSKs in an Action Research Study³. These highlighted that parents do want their daughters to attain education and girls themselves have started to reflect and analyse their situation and that of their mothers to take action through dialogue and negotiations. The Mission is of the opinion that the shift within the MS programme to include adolescent girls is a desirable one.

Adolescent girls and young women are provided a safe environment for residential teaching courses of upto 8 months. Besides academic content, the MSK curriculum includes life skills, creates awareness of socio-economic realities, and prepares the participants to analyse, question and understand. According to reports available, the MSK curriculum stresses teaching through the feminist perspective and in the local context. The learning environment is participatory and exploratory and emphasizes understanding, analyzing and questioning. The course includes important and relevant information about health, anatomy and basic hygiene. There are also the academic inputs that prepare the participants for appearing in the Class V examination. 201 of the 365 adolescent girls who attend the MSKs have appeared for Class V.

MS introduces the girls to practical and useful skills like cycling, judo and sewing examinations. The MSK curriculum is developed through the interaction with grassroots women, teachers and specialists in various fields. MSK also holds short residential literacy training courses for women participating in programmes on health, economic activities and PRI. The details of all residential educational or literacy programmes such as duration, timings and selection of the teacher are made with the involvement of the Sangha women, thus strengthening ownership and decision making among women

There are also motivational activities by the field functionaries by way of specially composed songs, street plays, slogans, melas, jathas, surveys and PRA activities. These things help the community and the women to value education. Some of the students at the MSKs move on to regular schools and adjust well.

MS UP also introduced a small token payment from the parents for the MSK. This was done with the aim of helping the families value education. The MSK has also refused to close the institution down during the harvest season. MSK has reasoned that if the families can allow boys to continue with their education during this time of need on family agricultural fields then they should be equally willing to allow girls to continue their education undisturbed. These initiatives reinforce the principle of equal opportunity and gender equity.

MS felt a need to gather additional information on the education of adolescent girls from the field. In response to this need MS initiated a research programme. Additionally MS

³ *Nirantar* is a Delhi based feminist resource group that works on Gender and Education issues and facilitates strengthening of gender perspectives in curriculum etc.

also collaborated with Nirantar in which a study in three phases is ongoing in Auraiya and Sitapur districts. The research attempts to assess the impact of MSKs tracking the status of Kishoris before they joined the Sangha and the inputs from the programme and finally the changes wrought by the residential course at MSK. The study further looks at how sustainable these changes are and how the MSK graduate impacts her surroundings. The study so far has shown that the majority of the girls came from socially disadvantaged groups where their mothers were not educated and some fathers had a level of education. There were also a number of physically challenged girls. But it was clear that the families wanted the girls to participate at the MSKs. The study also found that the girls had become more vocal, understood and voiced opinions about the facets of the overall environment that affected their lives.

2.3 Kishori Sanghas

These educational initiatives are logically connected to the instituting of the Kishori Sanghas. Kishori Sanghas were formed in response to a felt need for providing a space for adolescent girls, they not only are associated with education and literacy but also serve as a forum for school going girls. Kishori Sanghas have provided girls with a safe space to discuss their problems. Through the Kishori Kendras, the Sanghas attempt to bring the girl back to mainstream education and equip her with everyday knowledge and life skills. The Mission felt it appropriate MS to include attention to adolescent girls as they are usually married at an early age and soon become mother without any knowledge of how their body functions and how conception takes place (or can be prevented). The horizontal spread of the programme should be encouraged through the adolescents who will soon leave the village.

The demand came from the adolescent girls themselves, who voiced a need for relevant knowledge and information. In the last three years the concept of Kishori Sanghas have gained popularity and presently there are 207 such Sanghas in 7 districts. The Kishori Sanghas provide inputs on literacy, help girls reflect and gain a gender perspective in understanding social issues. The activities at the Kishori Sanghas centre around regular meetings, refresher camps, study tours, documentation training, operating libraries, environmental conservation, theatre workshops and training. The attempt has been to take the adolescents towards areas where few girls have ventured before and thus break gender stereotypes. The Kishori Sanghas in Pauri have emerged as local resource groups for training in stove and pressure cooker repair, compost pit preparation, fruit preservation, screen-printing, bio-diversity and conservation. The Kishori Sanghas initiated the innovative strategy of prevention of environmental pollution through plastic bag collection and their reuse as mats.

MS could also network more closely with the NLM initiatives of Post and Continuing Education Programmes in order to influence the development of reading material by the NLM. This is imperative as the women who are achieve literacy through MS initiatives require post literacy material so that they may not relapse into illiteracy.

3. LINKAGES WITH GOVERNMENT, NGOs, WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND RNE PRIORITIES

3.1 Interface Of MSUP With Government And Non-Government Programmes

MS collaborated with government and non-government agencies in implementing the programme. 720 women across five districts were trained under WHO auspices and currently work as community based Voluntary Health Workers. Women have

successfully intervened with male Panchayat members to secure their access to resources and mobilised district health services to avail of their facilities. Under the UNDP programme 200 villages across four districts worked on co-operative farming. MS is closely integrated with DPEP programmes and has extended this collaboration to six new districts. It has also participated in UNICEF workshops on gender. The Mission was informed that a dish antenna installed by IGNOU is used for the dissemination of information to Village Sanghs. However this could not be verified. Women have received regular training and have co-ordinated closely with DPEP and NIRANTAR in its literacy and education programme. There have been a good number of national level trainings and workshops where MS members have participated or received training on Health, communication skills and curriculum development

MS has been invited by the Department of Women and Child Development to develop the State Policy for Women. It has taken a great deal of effort to include the interests of women across all levels and sectors. In the Tehri district, women have actively worked with govt. agencies in protecting and conserving the environment through the establishment of "Van Panchayats". Banda MS, now autonomous as NGO, undertook contracts as waterpump mechanics. Sangha women were involved in water and sanitation projects. Initiatives were also taken by groups in support of the victims of the earthquake that struck Gujarat in 2001.

Trainings and Capacity building has been much in emphasis both of the program and support staff. Training of Trainers (TOTs) for MS staff were conducted on a range of issues

- Legal literacy
- Thrift and credit and financial management systems
- Reproductive and general health
- Needs assessment and Training techniques
- PRA and PLA
- PRI, mobilization and long term planning of convergence
- Needs assessment, joyful learning and monitoring of educational initiatives (new districts)
- Joyful teaching techniques, curriculum development, needs assessment (MSK teachers)
- Several capacity building exercises are carried out at every level as per the need

Besides MS has also been invited to provide training inputs to government and other NGO programme functionaries:

- Reproductive Health training for Laxmi, PSS
- Gender training and its application in the field for GDS
- Gender sensitization of MA HRD students in Lucknow University
- Gender sensitization trainings and workshops of teachers and Pradhans at district and state level
- Workshops with police on attitudinal change and gender perspective
- Gender sensitization and community mobilization sessions for several NGOs
- Sharing of MS processes at different forums
- Sahyoginis and JRPs are trainers for training of women Pradhans under Hunger project
- ICDS and EFA are likely to enter into a contract with us for large scale training initiatives.

Networking and Convergence

Extensive networking is being done both at village, block, district and state levels. Village and block level networking is initiated by *Sangha* women

- With govt. departments of health and education, schools and colleges, BDOs, CDOs
- Social development program functionaries e.g. ANMs, School teachers, *Pradhans*, *Anganwadi* workers and PRI functionaries
- District NGOs
- National and international agencies e.g. WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, IGNOU, ICRW, HUNGER, EFA, JAGORI AND CIDA, Institute of Entrepreneurship development. UNIFEM too wants to collaborate with MS for some research and other projects
- Large scale efforts to involve men in the program. A very high percentage of males are supporting and taking responsibilities in programs
- NRG members and people associated with women's movement regularly interact and give inputs
- MS has large local support group in every district as well as at state level.
- MS is a member of advisory and executive committees of several government and voluntary organizations

3.2 Contribution to the Women's Movement.

MS UP has had strong linkages with the women's movement within the state with which it interacts in various ways. Through its linkages with the women's movement in New Delhi, MS UP has also had a window to the international women's movement. MS' contribution to the Women's Movement has to be viewed in the context of the existing position of women in UP, the poverty and violence, the caste, class and political divides and patriarchy, gender discrimination and heavy hand of tradition which over time have led to the shrinking of space for women in all spheres.

The Mahila Samakhya Programme has facilitated the process of bringing rural, poor, illiterate and marginalized women from the isolation of their homes into Sanghas. There is change in their perception of themselves and society's perception of them and their roles and rights and laid the foundation for an alternative women's movement. The MS concept of empowerment of women through collectives taken up by Sangha women has enabled them to use their collective strength to create space for themselves and their daughters. Through Sanghas and Kishori Sanghas, Panchayats and Nari Adalats and now through the Federation of Sanghas into Mahasanghas women have acquired visibility and presence and are not shying of asking for their rights. They have articulated their needs and concerns and through collective action have taken the initiative to address them.

In the course of activities and programmes women wrote many songs and slogans in the districts which have been given wide publicity through simple yet innovative means that would earlier have been inaccessible. MS negotiated with the UP Pradesh Co-operative Dairy federation (PCDF) to print slogans on milk packets for gender sensitisation as their contribution to the National Year of Women's Empowerment 2001, literally taking the message into every home every day.

A State level Women's Empowerment Mahotsava was organized in Lucknow in March

2001, in which 600 women from the 16 districts of MS participated. The objective was to enable poor rural women from the Sanghas to interact with Government and Non-government departments on one platform and to develop a common understanding for women's issues. Sangha women from UP participated in the *Sanghamitra Mela* in New Delhi in March together with women from all the MS states where they shared experiences, successes and failures, and laughed, cried and sang together.

"We are the women's movement " say Sangha women. They feel a strong sense of affinity among themselves and a sense of belonging to a movement through the programme. Through Nari Adalats women have created their own alternative justice system that incredibly works in a traditional patriarchal environment thus establishing the credibility of Sanghas and the MS teams in Tehri district. A mood and momentum has been generated through the Mahila Samakhya Programme for a grassroots movement for women's equality and empowerment in its present areas of existence, although the forces that challenge it and the notions that it represent loom large as ever. A densification of the MS presence in the state would make its contribution more significant.

3. Interface with RNE Sectoral Approach Priorities

RNE support for the programme has enabled the programme to emerge as a significant platform to promote the empowerment of women and creation of an environment for women's education, albeit in sporadic pockets due to spread of the programme. The programme needs to intensify and consolidate and promote greater inter district transfer of learning towards education and empowerment, given the diversity of experiences available within the programme

Although the programme does not fall within the states of concentration, the mission is of the view that support is required for the programme to consolidate its gains and evolve into a resource facility to support women's empowerment in the state. This is even more critical at this juncture when DPDP and other EFA processes are likely to recognize the utility of MS as a means to promote their own agenda. MS would require support towards establishing strong Mahasanghas on the one hand, and towards facilitating the emergence of the Resource Centres at the State and District levels. It would need to maintain the focus on strategic gender issues towards women's empowerment, and work in collaboration with women's groups and organizations, while strengthening educational opportunities and processes for women.

MSUP has laid a foundation for women to address their development and empowerment needs in the state, and is recognized as a quality process by the DPEP as well as the Agriculture sector. It has the potential, with greater intensification and increased density in coverage, to establish alternative and sustainable means for women's empowerment and development initiatives in the state. With the advent of numerous programmes in the areas of agriculture, health, development of women it is all the more important that the MSUP programme receive sustained support to demonstrate viable alternatives. The programme also needs to be intensified with greater spatial coverage to more blocks and villages in the current districts to impact mainstream processes to establish its strategic viability.

4. REPORTING AND MONITORING

Details of the following sections on Reporting monitoring management and financial systems are enunciated in the general report, since practices are by and large common across all the Dutch Assisted MS state Programmes. However, the state specific variances and good practices are highlighted as part of this report, along with areas that need attention by the State office.

MSUP like other State Societies has been producing a fairly high volume of monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual reports. The strength of this reporting is that these capture all the activities being performed within the program. MSUP has taken initiatives to develop MIS formats, which would further systematize information collection and simplify its collation. They have also made efforts to define measures of empowerment. A mid term evaluation has been conducted of Nainital, Auraiya and Gorakhpur in the last three years and of other districts was carried out before that. In the last year there has been a rigorous procedure of evaluating Sanghas in all the districts except Tehri. These evaluations are useful in formulating program strategies.

Savings & Credit component requires professional attention because of the financial stakes involved of the Sangha women. MSUP has made special efforts for monitoring savings and credit activities of the Sanghas.

There is a need to add greater analytical depth so that reporting captures not only the itinerary of events but assesses problems, hurdles and learning. There is a need to support efforts being made by MSUP in developing MIS to turn in more and more output based. Recommendations to this effect have been made later in this report. Follow up on previous reports is not integral to the reporting process. It is also advised to include action taken component as a standard feature. The process of feedback on reports needs to be formalized. Incorporating these recommendations would help shift program planning from operational level to strategic level.

Besides regular reports, documentation in MSUP covers a wide spectrum, which includes process documentation, research reports workshop reports, exchange visit reports special event reports like Melas etc. Some of these have immediate use and therefore have shorter shelf life whereas others have potential of long term use and would benefit a wider community. Annexure1 has more details of some of these documentation efforts. There is a need for greater systematization, analysis, indexing and utilization of these for future planning as well as for wider dissemination.

5. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

MSUP follows the guidelines issued by the GOI in the Green Book⁴ to prepare its annual plans and budgets. An outline of this process is represented in Exhibit 3. The process is also described in brief below:

The annual planning and budgeting exercise in MSUP is an exhaustive exercise, which builds up on the expectations of the Sangha women in conformity with project principles.

⁴ MAHILA SAMAKHYA (Education For Women's Equality) (Ninth Plan Document 1997-2002) 1997, Ministry of HRD, (Deptt. Of Education) Govt of India, New Delhi.

An extremely detailed annual activity plan is drawn up which feeds into the annual budgeting process:

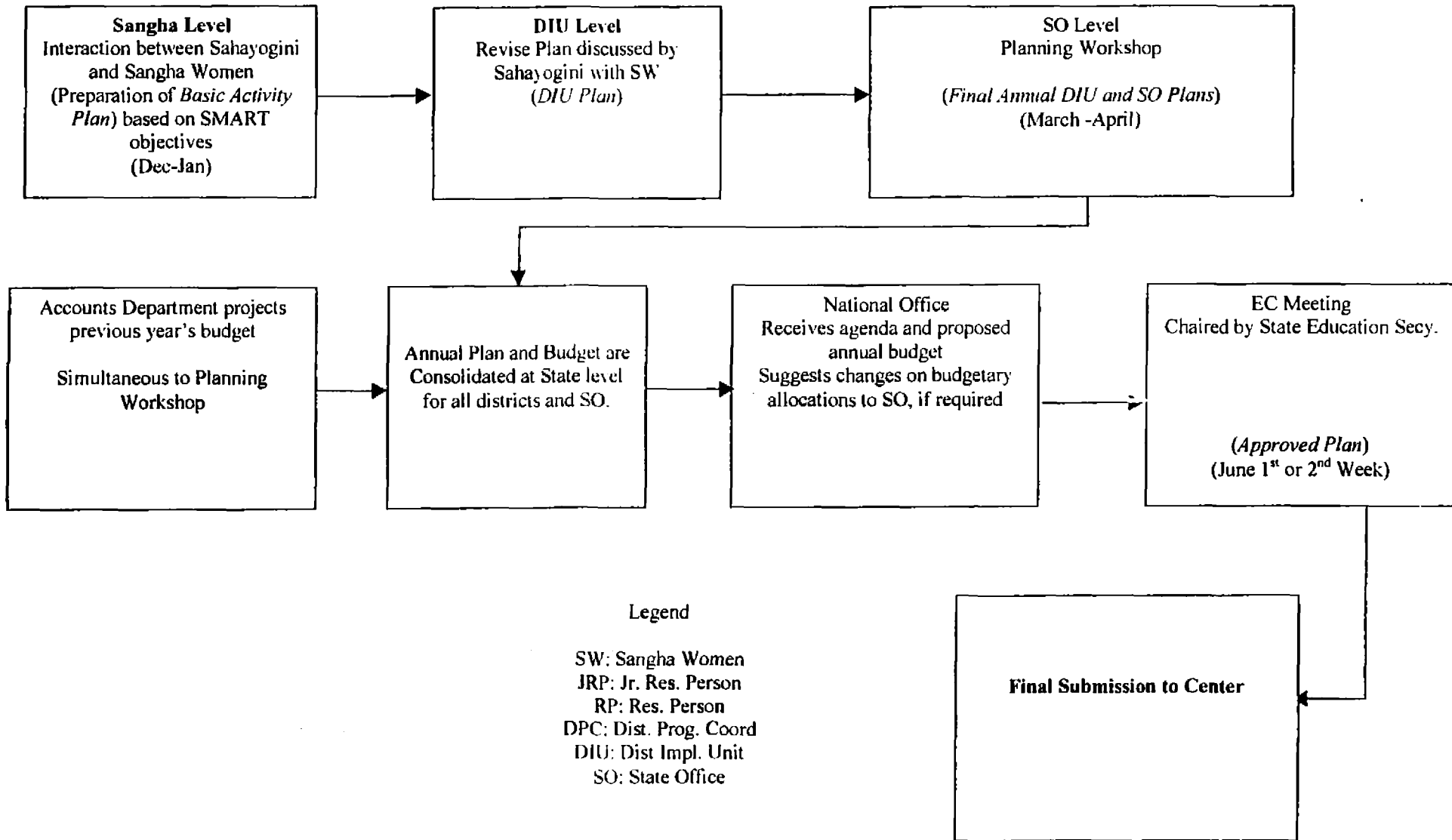
- Sahayoginis carry out discussions with their Sanghas to assess members' expectations and priorities in the coming year. Based on these discussions Sahayoginis prepare plans based on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound) principles and discuss these with the DPC.
- After assessing expectations of Sanghas through the Sahayogini, DPCs meet at State to share these with SPD/ RPs/ Consultants and consolidate their plans in the light of MS inviolable principles and resource availability.
- In parallel accounts department at state level projects budget for the next year based on previous year's budget, making broad adjustments for changes in activity suggested by SPD as per the annual plan.
- District and State annual plans and budgets are consolidated into a 'State Program Annual Plan and Budget' and sent for an informal feedback to the Center. The GOI MoE studies the budget and sends it back to SPD along with their comments. Annual plan and the budget is revised to incorporate Center's comments and placed before the EC for their approval.
- After the budget has been approved by the EC it is finally submitted to Center. Center receives an annual budget statement, which has been approved by the EC.
- RNE works on the principle of reimbursing the costs that have been incurred by the supported States for implementing MSUP.

MSUP is the only state which has taken initiatives to relate activities to SMART objectives. Planning by objectives is a recent development and it has not been firmly institutionalized as yet. However, a beginning has been made in the right direction.

The following measures are recommended to strengthen the process.

- > Uttar Pradesh at present follows the national guidelines (objectives) for the preparation of their budgets. It is recommended that they should frame their own state level and district level objectives, which would then become the basis for planning activities, budgeting, analyzing progress and variances. The progress as well as the monitoring can then become more focussed and more state specific.
- > ***Annual planning exercise should be preceded with a budget variance and activity variance analyses. Reasons for cancellation and delay of activities in previous year should be assessed and special measures to be taken in the next year should be noted. It is also recommended that for more realistic budgeting, budget should take activities in the annual plan as the basis to arrive at costs and not through projecting previous year's budget and making broad adjustments to it.***

Exhibit 3: Annual Planning & Budgeting Process in MS UP



5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

Exhibit 4 shows organizational set up of MSUP Program at the State level. MSUP is headed by a State Project Director. She is guided by the Executive Committee, which in turn is responsible to the Governing Council. The Governing Council is the highest body in the Society. It is the final authority at the State level which provides policy support, considers annual budget, audited accounts, forms bye laws and rules and delegates powers to EC so that it can discharge its duties effectively. The Governing Council cannot add and amend any rules. It cannot form any bye-laws without the approval of GOI. **The Governing Council should be given greater autonomy and powers. It should not have to refer to GOI for making and amending rules.**

The State Executive Committee is an empowered body that takes decisions relating to governance and program direction. It is accountable to the Governing Council. The EC puts its plans into action through the State Program Director (SPD). SPD is responsible for overall execution and smooth running of the program within the State. Currently the majority of representatives on the EC are either Government ex-officio members or their nominees. **It would be in the best interest of the program that its autonomous nature is fortified by making its representation broad-based by including greater representation of local NGOs and public figures that have credentials in these areas.**

Unlike the National level NRG, there is no State Resource Group (SRG) at the State level. MSUP have forged their own linkages with other NGOs and like-minded individuals whose resources and expertise are drawn upon from time to time.

An SRG would be able to give much greater context specific advice because of its proximity to MSUP and state specific expertise. At certain points they might also be able to help MS negotiate on an operational level by making their networks and contacts available to them. A more formal status is recommended for the SRG, either through the induction of some members into the EC or through their regular interface with the programme as advisors to the programme to strengthen the informal network of the MSUP together. Advisory committees of experts can be drawn from these informal linkages by amending society's Memorandum of Association. MSUP has constituted state level and district level advisory committees consisting of their own employees and persons from Women's Movement. These advisory committees meet every six months to provide programmatic and administrative inputs. There is a need to broad base these advisory committees to strengthen various linkages within the state before formalizing them.

SPD has a team of following personnel at State and district level to assist in programme management:

Table 10: Staffing at State and District level

Position	Number of Posts
Assistant SPD	1 (Vacant)
Resource Persons	3
Consultants	4(1 Vacant)
District Project Coordinator	10 (3 Vacant)
Resource Person (DIU)	17
Junior Resource Person (DIU)	28
Accounts Officer	1
Accountant	18 (1 Vacant)
Stenographer	12
Data Entry Operator	11

EXHIBIT 4

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE – STATE LEVEL

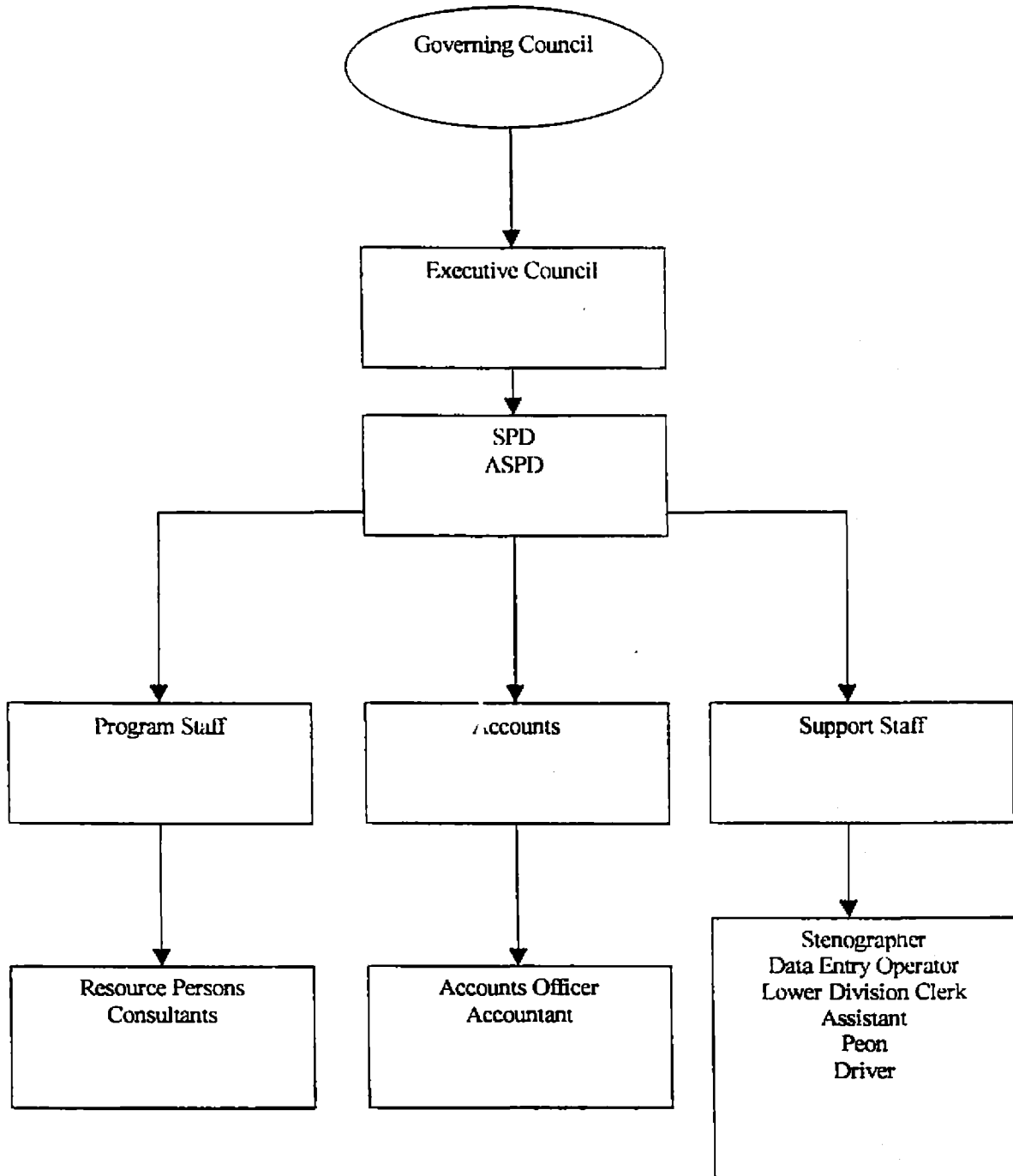
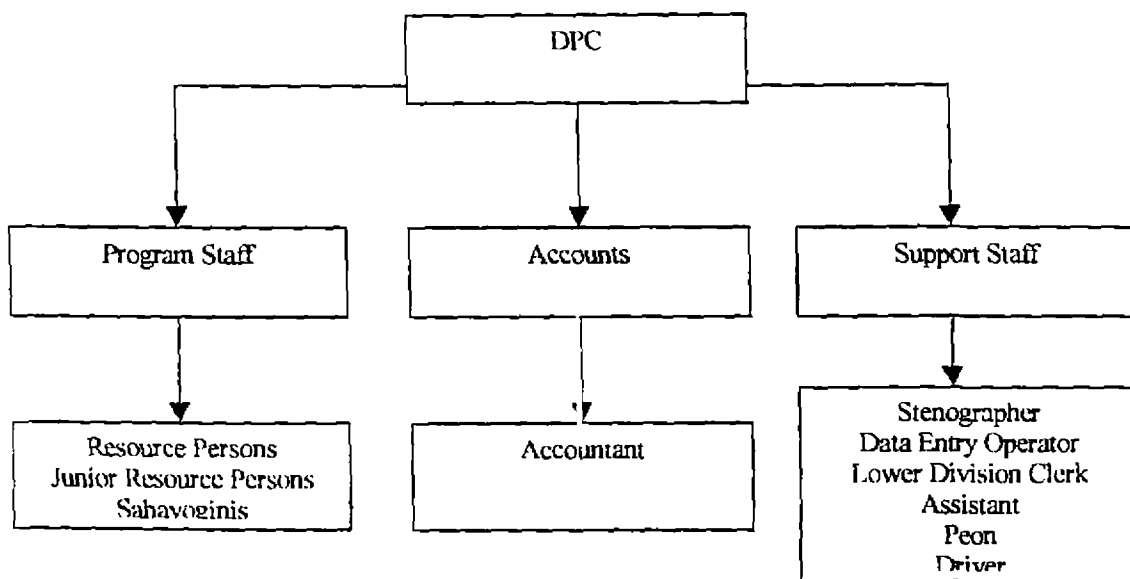


Exhibit 4: Organization Chart of MSUP – District Level



With the process of issue based federation formation initiated in this phase and expected to intensify in the next, there would be newer and higher expectations of Sahayogini. It is proposed that in each district, positions for five 'Issue Based Coordinators' (IBCs) should be created. IBCs would be at the same level as RPs in organizational structure and would be responsible for guiding and building capacity of federation in their areas of their expertise.

Provision is suggested for the next phase at the national level to also support the federations as they emerge, towards sustainability and self-reliance. The federations that emerge in UP could also be supported through the same resource provision based on plans of action and proposals being drawn up to the limit defined. States should also be encouraged to raise resources for federations through their involvement as resource teams on various issues based on their levels of skills and expertise.

7. Human Resources

Staff: MS has been able to carve a special position for itself and make its presence felt on the ground due to its dedicated personnel. MS has had to build capacity of functionaries across levels in all sectors of MS intervention, with limited resource availability as compared to many programmes and organizations that focus on a single sector but have much larger infrastructure and budget at their disposal. MS thus invests immense resources in building capacities but the pressure of work is high. This is however not factored into the salary and compensation package, due to which Ms personnel are often compelled to look for alternative opportunities. This results in immense loss of returns on investment and momentum for MSUP.

Lower Div. Clerk	1)
Assistant	16
Peon	29
Driver	18

The SPD is heavily loaded with routine administrative work. Whereas the position of Assistant SPD has been created but this is not the real requirement. SPD should be provided personal administrative assistance so that her work can be better organized. It is suggested that the post of Assistant SPD should be changed to Executive Secretary to the SPD.

In case of some positions at the state level there is an overlap and lack of clarity in the respective roles. There is a need to review and rationalize the job descriptions and roles, since overlapping Job Descriptions of Consultants and Resource Person positions may lend flexibility in the short term but could cause problems in the long term. The positions of Stenographer, Office Assistant, Data Entry Operator and Accountant are at almost the same level but reflect a different salary structure. Since most of these positions deploy skill sets of the same level, it may be prudent remove distinctions between these positions by the way of salary and designations.

State Resource Center: MS Program in Uttar Pradesh has been running for the last twelve years. MSUP has besides implementing its own program in the field has been providing inputs to other programs in the past year as mentioned previously. MSUP has also produced significant amount of IEC material that it distributes widely towards gender sensitization. This has the potential to develop into a critical input of the programme towards gender integration and institutional space to promote the empowerment of women in the state and the region. Details of this are given in Section D of the report on the next phase

The DIU is headed by the District Project Coordinator who in turn is supported by Program, accounts and other support staff. Each DIU has following personnel:

Table 11 :PERSONNEL AT DIU LEVEL

Position	Number of Posts
DPC	1
Resource Person	Depends upon number of villages (1 per 100 villages)
Junior Resource Person	Depends upon number of villages (2 per 100 villages)
Accountant	1
Stenographer	1
Data Entry Operator	1
Assistant	1
Peon	1
Driver	1
Sahayogini	Depends upon number of villages (1 per 10 villages)

Number of RP/ JRPs varies by the number of villages covered in a district. It has been observed that DPC is overloaded with routine administrative tasks, which leaves her with little time to fulfill her role as the programme team leader of the DIU. It is recommended that some provision for secretarial assistance should be made at this level also. Exhibit 6 shows Organization Chart at the District level.

Improvements in compensation would enable MSUP to reduce turnover and to fill in positions more efficiently.

There are numerous examples in Uttar Pradesh when key positions like DPCs have remained vacant or when positions have been filled on an ad hoc basis without going through the laid down process of filling in vacancies. It is important that the processes laid down for appointments are followed in word and spirit. Ad hoc appointments should be limited to emergency situations and suitable arrangements should be made as soon as positions fall vacant.

Social Security: MSUP personnel especially Sahayoginis work under extremely difficult conditions, which also raises safety and security concerns. These issues should be closely looked into and organizational arrangements, which could be in the form of insurance-cover, etc. be provided to prevent development of any kind of confrontation witnessed in other states. Mission noted that some of the states like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have instituted medical benefits for their employees.

Employment Contract: One-year-contract system of employment leads to insecurity among employees. There is a need for permanency of tenure, however to address the issue of an eventuality when funding to MS may stop, the contract of employment should be restricted to the period of the program and also subject to availability of funds from the GOI.

Appraisal: Whereas there is regular interaction between levels of functionaries which is quite facilitative in achieving organizational objectives collaboratively, a formal personnel appraisal system should be put in place, on the basis of which further renewal of contract, promotions and all other personnel decisions should be based. Annual employee appraisal should also feed into the Training Needs Assessment, which should further feed into Annual Plan in accordance with State's strategic objectives. Wherever induction into the organization is through an on-the-job process, it has been found to be insufficient. It is felt that there is a need for formal induction and orientation program when new personnel are recruited or when a person is promoted.

Workload: MSUP devotes considerable time in producing quality documentation. There is no position in the organization for documentation and library management. Consequently this load falls on regular program staff. It is believed that suggestions made for State Resource Center should take care of this problem.

Skill Upgradation: MSUP frequently conducts training to build staff capacities. These needs are usually assessed during monthly staff meetings. However expansion of the program towards the process of federation formation brings new complexities with it. Skills of MSUP personnel need to be further upgraded in following areas:

Conceptual clarity: to enable sahayoginis to function as change agents and install these capabilities in Sangha women. Training skills should be based on good practices in all other states.

Documentation – to enable personnel make their documentation more analytical in nature so that it notes hurdles, uncovers root causes to problems and shares lessons learnt.

Strategic planning including MIS: to enable personnel align their activities with their strategy for achieving overall goals. MIS would be helpful in assessing how far they have achieved and analyze if the gaps are due to implementation or limitations in strategy.

Basic budgeting process & financial management skills: These skills need to be imparted across all the levels of the organization. Greater financial skills would not only enable informed management of program through greater understanding of finance-physical

Table 12 shows a list of MSUP employees who have left MS for other organizations during the recent years. A major motivating factor behind their decision to move to other organizations seems to have been the higher compensation.

Table 12: Employment Details of Ex-MSUP Functionaries

Position	Moved Organization	Compensation MSUP (Rs. p.m.)	Compensation in Next Organization (Rs. p.m.)
SPD	GTZ	10,000	50,000
DPC	Uttaranchal DASP	5,000 – 7,000	18,000
RPs/ DPC	DPEP	5,000 – 7,000	9,000 – 10,000
Sahayogini	Sarvodaya	1,500 – 2,000	2,500

Honoraria and travel allowance in MSUP as elsewhere is comparatively very low. These were fixed in 1997 (five years ago) and have since not been revised. This is leading to serious morale and retention issues. Program stands the risk of losing its momentum and jeopardizing its gains if this issue is not handled immediately. There is a need to benchmark MS compensation and employee benefit practices to other programs to be able to attract and retain proficient personnel. The recommended revisions should also incorporate provisions to account for general inflation as well as performance based incentives, which need not always be monetary.

Vacancies: MSUP sometimes find it difficult to attract well-qualified people. This leads to positions lying vacant which has negative fallout on the program. In Uttar Pradesh fortuitously key positions like SPD and DPCs have not remained vacant for long. Other program positions however, like RP and Consultant positions at State level have remained vacant for long periods. Some of these have been filled in during 2001-02, which should have been done much earlier.

At the district level there has been a serious problem of RP positions lying vacant. However Mission was informed that most of these have now been filled. Table 13 shows organization wide appointments as a percentage of total sanctioned posts on specific positions.

Table 13: Appointments as Percentage of Total Sanctioned Positions

Position	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
SPD	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sr. RP.	0%	0%	0%	100%
RP (SO)	50%	50%	50%	100%
Consultant	25%	25%	75%	75%
Acct t. Off.	100%	100%	100%	100%
Accountant.	100%	92%	100%	94%
DPC	100%	100%	90%	90%
RP DIU	57%	57%	79%	DNA
JRP	22%	22%	94%	DNA
Office Assistant.	100%	100%	100%	100%
Steno	100%	100%	100%	100%
DEO	100%	100%	100%	100%
LDC	100%	100%	100%	100%
Driver	100%	100%	100%	100%
Messenger	100%	100%	100%	100%

Status as on April 1st of every year. This table does not capture variations within a year.

Purchase: Purchase process adopted by MSUP is similar to that being followed by government based on directions received in July 1992 from the National Project Director. Authority to purchase upto a specified amount limit has been delegated in the rules of the Society. Whenever a purchase decision exceeds an employee's limit then she has to take approval from the competent authority. The process of purchase can be documented systematically in a booklet.

The purchase process in MSUP is time consuming and imposes unnecessary burden on the program and should be simplified. **It is recommended that simplified purchase procedures upto a limit of Rs. 20,000 should be adopted in all MS Societies.** The basic underlying principle for an effective purchase procedure is to be able to carry out all purchases under practical conditions of transparency rather than be burdened by procedures that are unnecessary. A feasible alternative has been provided in Appendix IV.

Funds Flow: Funds have to flow from Center to MSUP to finally the districts so that program activities can be implemented on ground in a time bound manner. The flow of funds from Center to MSUP is supposed to take two months from the date of receipt of 'request for funds' to final issue of draft. Factors like the amount requested, utilization certificates, audited statements and rate of utilization are used by the center to determine the amount to be released. MSUP send requests every quarter based on the projected quarterly expenditure that is submitted to the Center. Generally the National Office releases funds in 2 to 3 installments. The process of flow of funds is shown in detail in Appendix V.

Table 14 shows that time lag between request of funds by MSUP and receipt of funds has varied between 25 days to 174 days. On an average this time lag has been around 2 months. However this variation in time lag in release of funds in response to request for funds would make it difficult to plan activities realistically.

Ratio of amount requested to amount received has also varied between 350% to 30%. Clearly there is mismatch between expectations of state and what the center thinks should be given. They should work collaboratively to bring this disparity down.

Table 14: Sample of Funds Flow between Center and State

Amount Requested Rs Lakhs ⁵	Amount Received Rs Lakhs	Amount Received as percentage of amount Requested	Date of Request	Date of Receipt	Time lag in funds Transfer in Days
100	35	35%	9-Aug-97	27-Sep-97	49
90	35	39%	20-Dec-97	2-Mar-98	72
40	30	75%	7-Mar-98	15-Apr-98	39
10	35	350%	1-Aug-98	22-Jan-99	174
74	35	47%	19-Jan-99	9-Mar-99	49
120	40	33%	1-Jun-99	7-Jul-99	36
118	50	42%	26-Jul-99	29-Sep-99	65
55	40	73%	9-Mar-00	3-Apr-00	25
150	45	30%	18-Jul-00	30-Oct-00	104
100	60	60%	20-Nov-00	29-Jan-01	70
60	60	100%	26-Feb-01	31-Mar-01	33
80	50	63%	19-Mar-01	17-Apr-01	29
100	50	50%	25-Apr-01	21-Jul-01	87
86	60	70%	16-Jul-01	4-Sep-01	50

This table does not list all transactions between MSUP and Center.

⁵ 1 Million = 10 Lakh

Idle Funds: It was observed that MSUP generally invests idle funds in Fixed Deposits, whenever funds available are more than the projected expenses for the following month. However there is no fixed rule on the basis of which this decision is taken across Districts and State Office. There is a need to standardize this practice and idle funds should be invested at the State and district levels in Fixed Deposits of 46 / 60 / 90 days according to requirement of funds.

Budget Re-appropriation: SPD has complete authority to re-appropriate budget. However activity costs cannot be taken into management costs but the opposite is possible and valid. DPCs have to send the request to SPD for a re-appropriation. This practice should continue the way it is.

Computerization: Computers are generally used for desk jobs and communication. There has been no computerization of organizational processes. Given the large volume of data likely to be involved in planning, budgeting, monitoring, reporting and accounts processes it is recommended that these processes should be gradually computerized in a phased manner. The process of computerization should not create a parallel substructure within the organization but should be adopted by the existing management towards professionalization of work. Some of these require substantial capacity building inputs and it is an area which can be explored for Technical Assistance.

Utilization of Funds

Table 15 provides an overview of utilization of funds by MSUP during the 1997-2002 phase of Program. It also provides a comparison of budget with the actual expenses.

Table 15: Budget versus Actual Expenditure of Funds (Total) by MSUP during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	191.29	139.48	73%
1998-99	190.48	146.12	77%
1999-00	231.04	151.69	66%
2000-01	252.48	236.93	94%

It is observed that ratio of budget to actual expenditure has improved significantly during the 2000-01. While the good ratio in itself is laudable, this is not because of any concerted effort to improve the budgeting process.

Table 16 gives actual versus budget analysis for management cost. It can be seen that these ratios are better than 'total cost' actual-budget ratios. It is expected that these ratios would continue in future also.

Table 16: Budget versus Actual Expenditure of Funds (Management Cost) by MSUP during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	55.60	48.41	87%
1998-99	54.56	47.53	87%
1999-00	64.76	53.87	83%
2000-01	92.14	90.07	98%

Table 17 gives actual versus budget analysis for activity cost. Expectedly these ratios are lower than total and management cost ratios to budgets. There is a need to make planning much more realistic.

linkages but would also contribute in substantive terms as then better finance appreciation would also be transferred to sangha women. Sangha women are expected to manage the accounts and finances of their sanghas as well as that of their individual enterprises and households. Presently Sahayoginis are not able to help sangha women in this area.

An analysis of the proportion of days that an individual spends in training, as against time spent in the field would reveal trends that can be used to plan and rationalize training inputs in relation to the expected roles of individuals.

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Accounts: Accounting practices in MSU² are professional and satisfactory. A national level workshop was convened for accountants of all states and these practices can be attributed to that process. Details about Accounting system are provided in Appendix II.

Payments: All payments above Rs 500 in MSUP are made through cheque, however payments for honoraria are made in cash. It is advisable that all the honoraria and stipends should be paid by bank transfer or cheque.

Bank Accounts: MSUP keeps separate bank accounts for District and State offices. It also opens separate accounts whenever a new project, which has a separate funding source, is taken up. Books of accounts for State, districts for each project are separate.

Authorization of Vouchers: Authority for passing vouchers rests with SPD and DPCs.

It is felt that load of approving all the expense vouchers on SPD/ DPC can be reduced. The authorization of expense vouchers should be delegated to the level of Resource Person depending on the person who has incurred the expense. Routine utility bills within budgetary provision at state level and district level could be automatically cleared for payment by the accounts officer/ accountant. Only a limited number of vouchers should come to the SPD/DPC. A limit could be fixed above which all the vouchers would need to necessarily be approved by the SPD at the State Office and the DPC at the District Office.

Community Contribution: Current accounting system does not take into account the contributions received from community, which become available to the program. The budgeting also does not keep in mind resources that would be available from this source. This also contributes to budget surpluses currently observed. Community contribution accounting would make the budgeting process more realistic. Sanghas and federations generate resources from alternative sources such as government and funding agencies. A system should be devised which tracks these funds.

Internal Controls: A strong system of internal control is maintained through proper distribution of workload right from the Sangha Level to the Executive Committee level. At the Sangha Level the internal control is exercised through checks at various stages by DPC/ DRP/ JRP/ Members of the Sanghas. Expense approval, actual payment handling, recording & authorizations are handled by different functionaries in the organization. The State Accountants who visit different districts by rotation carried out Quarterly internal audit and check all the vouchers at the DIU level. Accountants keep a check on items spent and budgetary provisions.

- It is recommended that the internal control exercise should be a continuous monthly feature. Districts can be covered by turn so that all of them get covered once every quarter. This would decrease the workload accumulation. Budgeted activity amount v/s actual verification and analysis is carried out in an informal way in day to day interaction. It is recommended that this should be a formal process and accountant should prepare a district wise statement to submit to SPD, this should be used by SPD in focussing in areas where variations are shown.

- As soon as funds are received at the State Office most of the said amount is transferred to Term Deposits of duration of 46,60 & 90 days of lots of Rs.50,000/- each, based on the requirement of the said funds.
- Amounts are released in advance by the State Office to District Implementation Unit. Every quarter the District Offices send in a request of funds to the State Office along with their proposed expenditure in the coming quarter.
- State Office verifies request with that district's past expenditure statements and plan for future.
- State Office then releases funds based on balance available with district office and as and when funds become available from Center.

Annexure 1 : Travel Itinerary to MSUP

ANNEXURE 2: RESEARCH STUDIES/ REPORTS PRODUCED BY MSUP

Reports

- Status and Needs of Rural Adolescent Girls
- Women in grassroots democracy.
- Impact study of residential literacy centers.
- Process study of women community courts
- Post withdrawal sustainability study.
- Male female stereotypes and meaning of empowerment.
- Mujhe jawaab do* (answer me).

Manuals have been prepared on the following issues:

- Gender sensitization and feminist approach (for sangha women)
- "Sakhi" - Better quality of life for adolescent girls
- Savings and financial management (for trainers of animators)
- Legal literacy
- Effective communication

Research Studies

- *"Status and Needs of Rural Adolescent Girls"*
- *"Women in Grassroot democracy"*
- *"Impact Study of Residential Literacy Centres (MSK) for Rural Adolescent Girls and women"*
- *Process study of women community courts in collaboration with International Council for Research on Women (ICRW)*
- *Sustainability Study of Sewapuri block, Varanasi*
- *Myths related to gender issues*
- *Exploration language in relation to gender concepts.*

IEC materials

- *"Pitrasatta ke Ghare Main Purush Bh "*
- *"Gender asamanta aur samajik samasyayein"*
- *"Ankrey bolte hain"*
- *"Kahavaton ke ghare main stree"*
- *"Sugana" : story book with gender perspective*
- *"Sanjeevni"*

News and gender perspective

- *Handbills –12*
- *Posters – 30*
- *Phar – 3 (gender, education and Panchayat)*
- *Flash cards and stickers*
- *Training charts*
- *Newsletters – 9*
- *Magazines – 3*

Appendix I: Reporting Process in MSUP

The reports that are produced in the organization at each level are described here in brief. These reports have more or less a uniform format and frequency across the MSUP districts.

Field to District Level Reports:

- Sahayoginis prepare a daily report, which contains an account of the activities that they complete during the day. These reports are submitted to RPs on a monthly basis. RPs read these report and provides comments to Sahayoginis so that they can improve upon their work.
- RPs also maintain a daily report which she submits to DPC at the end of month. These reports contain information about the happenings of each day. DPC goes through these reports and provide feedback to RPs about her work in the monthly staff meeting.
- RPs document each and every event that is organized or participated in. These events can be workshops, exposure visits, visits by outsiders, melas, camps etc. Reports that explain whatever transpired on these 4accounts are diligently maintained.
- DPCs frequently visits the field and provide their inputs to field level staff.

District Level Reports

- DPCs submit documentation related to various issues and activities prepared by RP after adding her inputs to these to SPD.
- DPCs submit a quarterly progress report about the district's performance to SPD. This report contains a snapshot of district's position on date as well as description of activities that were performed during the last three months.
- DPCs send a monthly expense statement, which contains information about all the expenses incurred during the month to the State Office.
- DPCs submit quarterly plan of action and funds requirements to SPD.
- DPCs also send a detailed account of monthly and quarterly staff meetings held at District to SPD.

State Level Reports

- SPD submits expense account and request for funds to National Office every quarter.
- SPD submits quarterly, biannual (statistical abstract) and annual reports to National Office.
- SPD also presents annual activity plan and budget to EC and is forwarded to National Office.
- MS Societies also produce documents relating to their substantive area, which are indicated as miscellaneous materials and booklets. Whenever a ground level process, which is innovative or has been proved to be extremely successful and popular is identified and documented for wider use.

Appendix II: Accounting System followed in MSUP

In MS Uttar Pradesh following books of accounts are generally maintained: Cash Book;

- General Ledger;
- Journal Voucher Register;
- Asset Register & Inventory register of consumables
- Advance Register

Usually separate books of accounts are maintained whenever an external funded project is taken up.

Expenses & income are recorded on accrual basis and a double entry system is followed.

All vouchers are properly receipted and revenue stamp is affixed for any cash payment of Rs.500/- and above.

Depreciation is charged on the assets as per the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Appendix 111: Alternative Purchase Process

This Appendix presents an alternative purchase process which is simpler (without compromising on transparency) compared to the existing process being followed. MSUP can either use this or design their own taking help from this.

Whenever a purchase has to be made following step process should be followed:

SPD appoints any one functionary to survey market and procure three quotations from reputed shops. She should then make a detailed report about her recommendations after discussion with the SPD.

This note along with all the quotations and analysis of the same should then be handed over to the Accounts Officer who should through other sources confirm whether all the prices mentioned in the quotations are appropriate or not.

After this the same note along with the process followed for verification and findings of the Accountant should be put in front of the SPD for approval.

After the approval of the SPD, there should be a formal purchase order placed with the selected dealer in writing detailing all the terms and conditions agreed upon between the dealer and MS Society. On the basis of the above purchase order payments to the dealer should be released.

Appendix V: Funds Flow

This appendix explains in brief the process that is followed in transferring funds from Center to the State and then onwards to the Districts.

The flow of funds from Center to State follows following steps:

- After Center receives 'request for funds' it forwards it to the Ministry of Finance (MOF). In certain cases MOF may have queries which are answered either by Center or State depending upon to whom it has been addressed and who has an explanation on it.
- After the Financial Advisor clears the proposal, these papers go to the Internal Finance – 1(IF-1) division in the MOF.
- The IF- 1 certifies that the funds are available. After this the approval goes to Pay and Accounts Office (PAO) who formal sends instruction to the bank for preparation of a demand draft in favor of the respective MS Societies.
- This draft is then released either by Registered Letter or Speed Post to the State. The whole process takes about 2 months.

The flow of funds from State to District follows following steps:

Table 17: Budget versus Actual Expenditure of Funds (Activity Cost) by MSUP during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	135.69	91.07	67%
1998-99	135.92	98.59	73%
1999-00	166.28	97.83	59%
2000-01	160.35	146.86	92%

Table 18 gives ratio of management cost to total cost over the last phase. Share of management cost has remained between 35% to 38% of total cost, which is quite close to the original financial estimates for 1997-2002.

Table 18: Management Cost, Activity Cost and Management Cost as ratio of Total Cost (Actual Spends) in MSUP during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Management Cost	Activity Cost	Management Cost / Total Cost
1997-98	48.41	91.07	35%
1998-99	47.53	98.59	33%
1999-00	53.87	97.83	36%
2000-01	90.07	146.86	38%

D. THE NEXT PHASE

Support from Government has been forthcoming for the project for Six districts of UP through the non-plan budget of UP govt under the sustainability plan of EFA and is planned for the next two years. The National office has also proposed an allocation towards the programme in the 10th Plan Period. Thus while RNE does not consider UP as a priority state for its cocentrated activities, it may consider programmatic support to the UP programme through a national programme that draws upon the strengths and learning of the programme, and provides inputs for sustaining the gains made hitherto.

MSUP seeks to play a pivotal role of providing training and technical assistance to other organizations in understanding inter-sectoral linkages of gender issues towards gender mainstreaming in sectoral programs. It plans to do this by providing the following services:

- Consultancy Services and Technical Support Network and alliance building
- Documentation, Information database and IEC Material
- Training Services
- Action Research, Field placements of students and fellows and exposure trips

MSUP is not one of the priority States for Dutch funding. However, the Mission is of the view that it would be beneficial to extend support for a State Resource Center as part of the withdrawal strategy for a period of 3 years, in order to consolidate the gains of the program. Creating mechanisms for mainstreaming MS processes and providing assistance to other organizations on Gender perspective is critical in the context of the socio cultural environment for women in the state. It is therefore recommended that support for a State Resource Center for a three year period should be provided as part of the consolidation and withdrawal of

Dutch Assistance. For other activities the programme could link up with the National level programme and be supported thereof.

With the process of issue based federation formation there would be newer and higher expectations of Sahayoginis in the next phase. In each such district that proceeds towards federation formation, 'Issue Based Coordinators' (IBCs) could be appointed and old sahayoginis should be prepared for this role. IBCs would be at the same level as RPs in organizational structure and would be responsible for guiding and building capacity of federation in the areas of their expertise.

MAHILA SAMAKHYA

INDO-DUTCH REVIEW MISSION 2001

MAHILA SAMAKHYA KARNATAKA

Team Members:

**Fatima Ali Khan,
Riet Turksma,
Shushmita Dutt
Virat Divyakirti**

CONTENTS

Preface

A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

B. MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME IN KARNATAKA

C. PROGRESS AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

1. Women's Empowerment

1.1 Impact on Women's Personal and Family Lives, Autonomy and Socio-Cultural Environment

1.1.1 Creating a Foundation for a Grass-Root Level Women's Movement

1.1.2 Women's political participation

1.1.3 Women's legal rights

1.1.4 Cutting Across Caste and Class

1.1.5 Growth, Pace And Emerging Trends

2 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Women's Education and Governance Of Education

2.2 Girls Education

2.3 Contribution to reduction of child labour

3. LINKAGES WITH GOVERNMENT, NGOs, WOMEN'S MOVEMENT & RNE PRIORITIES

3.1 Linkages with Government Departments and Agencies

3.2 Linkages with Panchayat Institutions

3.3 Linkages with NGOs and Women's Movement

3.4 Added Value and Linkages with RNE Sectoral Approach Priorities

4. REPORTING AND MONITORING

5. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

6. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

7. HUMAN RESOURCES

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

8.1 Funds Flow

8.2 Accounting

8.3 Purchase Procedure

8.4 Disclosures

8.5 Payroll System

8.6 Internal Controls

8.7 Utilization of Funds

D. NEXT PHASE

Annexures, Mission Itinerary, Abbreviations, Glossary

Preface

Mahila Samakhya (MS), meaning "Education for Women's Equality" is a novel programme of the Government of India (GOI), Department of Education. The programme is sponsored by Dutch Development Co-operation under a bilateral agreement in 5 states. Conceptualized as a process rather than mere fulfillment of targets, the programme was initiated in 6 districts of U.P, Kamataka, and Gujarat. MS is registered as an autonomous society and is a national programme. Co-ordination of the MS programme through a National Office imparts a national identity. The programme was twelve years old in December 2001. Hence the Indo-Dutch Review Mission was fielded in December 2001 to undertake visits to the five states where the programme operates with RNE assistance to assess the gains and progress of the programme and to make suggestions for the next phase. Kerala joined the Mahila Samakhya programme under Dutch Assistance most recently and this review is the first external assessment of the programme in that state.

The Indo-Dutch Review Mission consisting of ten members (including 3 GOI representatives) worked in two teams to cover the 5 states for review. The first team comprising of Fatima Ali Khan, Riet Turksma, Shushmita Dutt and Virat Divyakirti visited Gujarat, Kamataka and Uttar Pradesh, the states where the programme was initiated in the first phase. The second team consisting of Hilde Janssen, Nishi Mehrotra, Soma Kishore Parthasarathy (Mission Leader) Vanita Mukherjee and Varun Anand covered the states included in the programme in the second and third phase ie Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Charu Sehgal also joined the team for two days in Kerala.

The task of the review mission as laid down in the Terms of reference was to:

- Review the progress of the programme since January 1998, and assess its impact in terms of empowerment of women.
- Recommend a strategy for the next phase (2003-2007) in the three concentration states, i.e. Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, consistent with the policy of the Government of India (GOI) and the policy of the Netherlands (GON)
- Provide an estimate of the total budget for the next phase.

The following Mission Report is one of three reports for the states visited by the first team. It is based on

- a two day visit to the state office where the mission held discussions with the State Programme Director (SPD) and her team at the State Office including Resource Persons (RPs), Consultants, Accounts Officer, external resource persons, the office staff and the DIU teams from all the districts including the DPCs, RPs, Junior RPs and Sahayoginis. The Mission team also held discussions with a few members of the Governing Council (GC) and the Executive Committee (EC) including the Secretary to Govt of Kamataka, Dept of Women and Child Welfare and Director DPEP.
- Documents made available to the Mission team including issue based and Annual reports etc

This report is not exhaustive, and only the most salient features are highlighted as Kamataka is not an Indo Dutch concentration area and since little time was allocated to the visit to this state. Nevertheless the report seeks to point to those features and trends in the programme which need to be the focus for a consolidation strategy in the state as part of the withdrawal phase for Dutch assistance. The report also seeks to highlight the strengths of the programme in the state that may provide significant learning for other MS states and initiatives for the empowerment of women towards equality.

The Itinerary of the Mission team's visit to the State is at Annex 1.

INDO-DUTCH REVIEW MISSION 2001 MAHILA SAMAKHYA KARNATAKA

A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Mahila Samakhya Programme in Karnataka was initiated in 1983 and is implemented in the seven districts of Bellary, Bidar, Bijapur, Gulbarga, Koppal, Mysore and Raichur. In the 20th century, women activists and scholars brought to light the oppression, marginalization and exploitation of Indian women in all spheres of activity.¹ The report on The Status of Women in India, "*Towards Equality*" in 1974, critically examined the role of economic, cultural, political and social institutions in the subordination of Indian women. Since then the women's movement in the country has brought pressure on the government and on political parties to implement legislation and programmes that will help raise women's condition and position in society.

Women's powerlessness stems among other things from their lack of access to and shared control in resources for production. Naila Kabeer and Ramya Subramanian² have identified these resources as human, material and intangible. The Human Rights Framework provides an appropriate context within which change may occur towards a situation where women may equally access and control resources. The principle of social justice is the basis for gender equality. *The recent report on the Status of Rural Women in Karnataka*³ has postulated "*In operational terms the transformation of gender equality based on human rights framework requires the redistribution of power for promoting women's strategic gender interests.*" The study has further stated that this process of empowerment may be two fold; through the creation of conditions that enable women to exercise their autonomy and also through the process of self-empowerment. A major element in both processes is education.

Conditions that ensure the enrolment, retention and learning achievement of girls in schools and the opportunity for adult women to pick up literacy and numeracy skills are essential to the process of empowerment of women. **However, more important and beyond mere literacy and numeracy competency is the ability of the individual women and adolescent girls to critically examine their own status of powerlessness, understand what causes it and take steps to address it. The ability of an individual to do this would constitute education.** Mahila Samakhya Karnataka understands education in this perspective.

Women's Status in Karnataka

The **demographic sex ratio** in the MS districts though not as alarming as in some northern states, is nevertheless largely below 964/1000 which is the state average.

¹ There have been sporadic efforts to bring the issue of women's low position in Indian society in the public eye from the early nineteenth century. The writings of Kandukuri Veerasalingam, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Rammohan Roy continue to be of relevance.

² Naila Kabeer and Ramya Subramanian. (1996) *Institutions, Relations and Outcomes: Framework and Tools for Gender Aware Planning*. Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.

³ National Institute of Advanced Studies.(1998)*The Status of Rural Women in Karnataka*. Bangalore.

Three of the MS districts have a sex ratio equal or lower than the state average, which is likely to negatively affect women's freedom of mobility and empowerment processes.

Table 1: Sex Ratio -Karnataka 2001

India	933
Karnataka	964
Koppal	982
Raichur	980
Bellary	969
Mysore	965
Gulbarga	964
Bidar	948
Bijapur	948

MS works in 7 of the 27 districts and in 33 of the 175 Taluks of Karnataka. MS Sanghas have been constituted in 1082 villages of the state. MSK is working in Bellary, Bidar, Bijapur, Gulbarga, Koppal, Raichur and Mysore. *Six of these districts are in the north-eastern part of the state, which is drier, poorer, relatively resource poor and educationally very backward.* Recently the state government has taken a decision to channelize 50% of its non-salary budget for education to these 7 northeastern districts and has also opened a regional education office with a director level officer at Gulbarga. As is evident from the table below only the southern district of Mysore has a Female Literacy Rate above the national average. All the others are below the national average. Gulbarga and Raichur also have very low ST Female Literacy Rates (Gulbarga – 9.37% and Raichur – 8.23%).

Table 2: Karnataka -Female Literacy in MS Districts

Region	1991	2001
India	39.29%	54.16%
Karnataka	44.34%	57.45%
MS Districts		
Bellary	32.24%	46.16%
Bijapur	41.81%	46.19% (Lower rate of increase)
Gulbarga	24.49%	40%
Raichur	21.70%	36.84%
Bidar	30.53%	50.01% High rate of increase
Koppal	22.78%	40.76% High rate of increase
Mysore	41.60%	55.81%

B. MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME IN THE STATE

Mahila Samakhya has gradually increased its coverage and currently covers 1082 Sanghas in the 7 districts

Table 3: Distribution Of Sanghas In MSK Districts 2001

District	Year of inclusion in MS	No of taluks covered	No. of Sanghas
Bellary		3	101
Bidar		5	246

Bijapur		6	214
Gulbarga		6	167
Koppal		4	140
Mysore		6	139
Raichur		3	75
TOTAL	7	33	1082

Source: MS Karnataka Annual Report 2000-2001

The Mahila Samakhya Programme in Karnataka has actively sought to strengthen its Sanghas and to link them through the formation of Clusters by organizing Ghataka (cluster) level Melas in the project area on the following themes: Sangha self reliance, Gender, Legal literacy and Panchayati Raj.

Since 1999 the Sanghas have moved steadily towards forming Federations or Okkuttas, first at the village cluster or Ghataka level, then at the taluk and finally at the district level. Sangha women meet every month at the Ghataka level and every three or four months at the taluk level. Issue based Federations /Okkuttas are functioning at the taluk level in all the seven districts in ten taluks at present.

Formation of issue based Sangha committees has also been adopted as a strategy to enhance sustained involvement of Sanghas on issues related to the empowerment of women. Sangha Committees have been formed on the following issues: Sangha Self Reliance (SSR), Panchayati Raj (PR), Gender (G), Health (H), Literacy (L), Legal Literacy (LL), Economic Development Programmes (EDP). In addition the formation of Kishori Sanghas (KS) focuses on the adolescent girls as a significant concern of the MS programme.

Besides these strategies, the programme has been intensively involved in enhancing capacities on issues of governance and political participation and has initiated the formation of Nari Adalats to provide an alternative institutional framework for justice delivery within a gender sensitive framework.

C. PROGRESS AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

1. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

1.1 Impact on Women's Personal and Family Lives, Autonomy and Socio-Cultural Environment

Identity and the Collective

Formation of and participation in Sanghas was felt to be the critical focal point for women. Women in Sanghas, through discussion and dialogue were able to arrive at an understanding of the nature and interplay of power in their lives. Initial suspicion towards the MS programme by men who presumed it would bring no tangible benefits to women's lives, subsequently transformed into acceptance and collaboration.

The sense of "a collective" was felt to be a completely novel experience and in complete contrast to a previous identity based on an extension of the identity of the

husband/father, caste, family or political party. Women participated as equals and not as representatives or appendages of their husbands, families or communities.

Women have reported some success in sending girls to school, postponing the age of marriage and allowing a daughter to remain in her maternal home. They have used the Sangha as an arena to discuss issues like violence against women, problems of single women and sexuality.

MSKk staff overcame the possible stagnation in mobilization of Sanghas in the process of empowerment by giving **action points to Sangha women to pursue specific agenda. For instance Sanghas were encouraged to meet the police officials, to locate teachers, to know the work of an anganwadi worker etc. and report.** This enabled Sanghas to evolve creatively into proactive forums. This initiative at a time when groups were at a critical threshold stimulated the Sanghas and the experience needs to be shared with other States.

In Mysore district, women from stronger Sanghas took the initiative to form new Sanghas. They were asked as was usual, as to what would be given to join a Sangha. They replied '**We are going to show you how you can change your life yourself, how we can by coming together as women have more strength and resources and create a better world for ourselves and our children'**

" Nagamma from Raichur district joined the Sangha and found that in organizing women against atrocities she was herself growing from a helpless person into a strong woman. She was a member of the Panchayat but could not read and write. She realized that to be completely empowered she had to be literate and determined to acquire literacy skills"⁴

Federations/Okkuttas

As the collectives grow from an individual unit at the village level into Federations at the village cluster/ghataka, taluk, and district level, they take on larger responsibilities and play a more strategic role in working for a just social order.

"—We shall go step by step to become self reliant
Sangha to Ghataka
Ghataka to taluk
And taluk to district
We shall strengthen ourselves
And finally form a Mahasangha
Issue wise Committees will be formed
To stand on our feet.

We shall get all the women together
More and more new sanghas will be formed
A new society shall be formed——"⁵

⁴ MS Karnataka Annual Report 1997- 98

⁵ MS Karnataka Sangha women's song at Sanghamitra Mela⁵ 2000

"Problems that we could not solve we are now able to take up at the Okkutta level"
 Say Sangha women

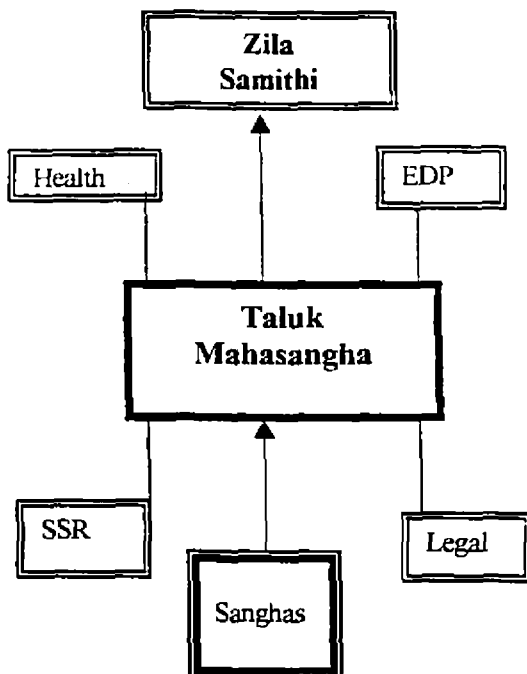
The MS team had often discussed the issue of self-reliance of Sanghas with the Sangha women and the formation of Sangha Federations was seen as the way forward. Through the Sangha Committees System the programme has added focus and increased participation and initiative taken by 50 to 70 % of the Sangha members in Sangha processes, creating a feeling of ownership and developing initiative and leadership skills.

"In the old days only one or two of us used to go for meetings outside the village---now each of us has some important work to do." Sangha women on the formation of issue wise committees at Sangha level.

With the increasing confidence and maturity of the Sanghas MS interventions are undergoing a change. Sangha women are taking over the processes at the village level and MS interventions are more at the Ghataka, taluk and district level. Sanghas have networked with the various village institutions and with other Sanghas at the Ghataka level. Issue based Federations /Okkuttas are functioning at the taluk level in all the seven districts in only ten taluks at present focus on issues of particular local concern like education or health. In Bijapur district they are working with Suman Kolhar and the Singamma Srinivasan Foundation⁶, Bangalore. The formation of Sangha Federations reflects the change of MS Karnataka 's role to that of supporting and strengthening of Federations

The Okkutta is the tree that gives us shelter, the Sanghas are the roots

EXHIBIT 1



FEDERATION STRUCTURE

Sangha - informal structures

Taluk mahasangha - individual membership, formal structure (Regd. Under 1960 society Act)

Zilla Samithi - informal structure
 Membership - EC members of all Taluk

Mahasanghas.
 Executive committee -Only at Taluk level for day to day functioning and implementation of programmes.

EC is elected body
Issue-wise Committees - at Cluster Level -two members for each committee from each sangha)
 Sangha Self Reliance Education , Health, Governance and Panchayat Raj, Legal Issues
 Economic Development & Gender

Women are very conscious that for a strong Okkutta the member Sanghas have to be strong and have a clear perspective on gender issues. In turn the federation processes help to strengthen the Sanghas and identify the ones where more work is required or different approaches need to be tried out.

Mahila Samakhya has participated in a training programme of health workers sponsored by the WHO. This provided Mahila Samakhya with the opportunity to impart health information inputs to Sangha Health Committee members. *431 women from 164 Sanghas in Bellary, Bidar and Koppal received information and training in health care.* This programme was extended to Sangha members in the districts of Gulbarga, Raichur and Mysore. An important aspect of training was the range of issues covered and its gender perspective. Activities of the Sangha Health Committees have included women and nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, community participation, adolescence, childbirth, family planning etc.

Access To Resources

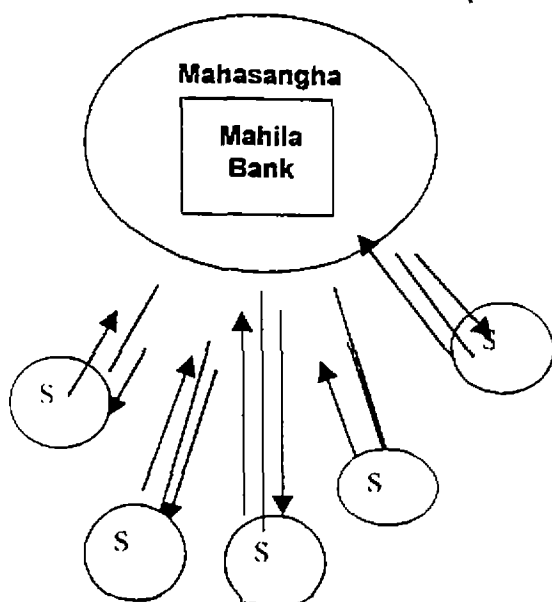
The MS Karnataka entry point to the debate on economic empowerment has been from the perspective of gender and patriarchy. There is a realization that social change cannot occur only through formation of collectives around economic issues. While economic self-sufficiency was important, it was felt this could only serve as temporary relief within the larger picture of women's subordination. With this viewpoint, MS Karnataka initiated savings groups only after the Sanghas had matured and developed a deeper understanding of social issues from a gender perspective.

Women themselves determined the guidelines for lending or borrowing and the kind of economic activities they felt were most feasible. Yet, despite collective decision-making, the Sanghas also experienced problems regarding money and finance. Special efforts have been made to ensure that the Sangha focuses on social issues and is not hijacked by "money issues".

With various government schemes, NGOs and financial institutions vying with each other to set up self-help groups, MS reports increased problems in adhering to its own process oriented approach. The challenge, according to MSKK, has been to strike a balance between social and economic issues. Sanghas activities include savings groups and facilitating women to open bank accounts as well as collaboration with DWCRA, SJSY, SHG, DIC and others.

Women's economic power has often enabled them to transgress social custom viz., a widowed woman took a loan to buy gold and now has the confidence to engage in discussions with men; women's relationship with men was altered to some extent. Such changes have evoked changes in women's own perceptions of selfhood and identity.

EXHIBIT 2 : Mobilising Internal resource for Self-sustenance (Informal Mahila Bank)



Contribution to Mahasangha -

Rs. 5000/- to Rs. 10,000/- from each Sangha

Revolving fund for Sangha

Repayment to Mahasangha at the end of the year with service charge of 2%.

Service charges collected from Sanghas used for supporting services to Sanghas- Payment for worker, to meet expenses, Maintenance of Mahasangha etc.

Eg. Rs 10,000 from each sangha -
20 sangha → 2,00,000/-

Service charges of 2% per year : 40,000/-

Factors considered significant to the viability of such a bank identified by the team would be:

- > Capacity/Capability of Sanghas to raise/contribute these funds
- > Ability to pay the service charges levied
- > Interest earnings from the corpus adequate to substitute the resources currently provided by MS.
- > Sangha women will need to develop the relevant competence to maintain books of accounts, prioritize agenda in a transparent, democratic way.

1.2 Women in Political Participation and Governance

MSKK has reported active interest of Sangha women on the issue of women and governance. Sangha women have discussed the roles they can play in securing the entry of women into structures of governance as a means to tackle women's social subordination. One of the ways this has been achieved by Sangha women is through political presence and involvement in active roles in the Gram Panchayats.

Gram Panchayat Elections were held in Karnataka in Feb 2000. MS learning inputs to Sanghas on issues relating to gender and governance included contesting elections and highlighting the role that Sangha women could play as solidarity network during and after elections - as active citizens and members of civil society. Sangha women have taken significant initiatives since the elections almost a year ago such as:

- demanding that the Gram Sabha be held regularly and in accordance with rules and procedures;
- attending Gram Sabha Meetings in large numbers and raising issues of concern to women and poor families in the villages;
- placing women's concerns on the Panchayat agenda through the Sanghas and the EWRs (Elected Women Representatives) and

- Insisting on the formation of Standing Committees which were seldom constituted previously, especially on Social Justice.
- Co-opting women from local Sanghas onto these SCs, in accordance with the PR Act.

An All-Women Panchayat, Athnoor village Afzalpur taluk Gulbarga district.

At the Gulbarga Ghataka Mela Sangha women learnt of the all - women Panchayats in Maharashtra and were enthusiastic about adopting the idea. Athnoor and Madbol were selected for the experiment and they were successful at Athnoor where a 16 member all women Panchayat were elected unopposed. It is a far cry from Athnoor's previous Panchayat when the three women members had not even stepped in the Panchayat office during their tenure and were required only to sign the register when sought to complete formalities. The idea of an all-women Panchayat was promoted by MS and people responded with high enthusiasm. The team persuaded the community to nominate women candidates and requested men to withdraw their nominations to enable women to stand for office instead. They informed the Zilla Parishad and the Election Officer of the taluk, collected the gazette notification on seat allocation and talked to prominent personalities in the area. As a consequence they were able to facilitate women being elected. Their efforts paid off.

MS training inputs lay emphasis on the Social Justice Committee as the ideal forum to raise issues like alcoholism and related violence on women and girls. By making inroads into these formal forums of governance Sangha women have activated the defunct committees and are able to ensure that issues of concern to them are addressed.

'Our work cannot be accomplished simply by forming Committees. These Committees should do the work they are supposed to do, they should solve the problems of the people in the villages', Bhemavva, Sangha member, Bijapur district.

Table 4: Number of Sangha Women who contested / won Gram Panchayat Elections, 2000

District	Women Contestants	Women Elected
Bellary	11	1
Bidar	75	45
Bijapur	90	63
Gulbarga	92	43
Koppal	53	30
Mysore	50	26
Raichur	30	17
TOTAL	401	225

Source: MS Karnataka, Annual Report, 1999-2000

Sangha women have learnt that elections are only one part of the political process and that those who do not contest or lose the election also have an important role to play in the effective functioning of the Panchayat. Sangha women have established good rapport with the Panchayats even when they have lost the election. They attend meetings and act as pressure groups and give support to other women members to gain their objectives across caste and class divides.

"Huligemma, Bellary District had all the Sangha women working for her during the Elections but lost by a small margin of four votes. However she has established a good rapport with the Panchayat and is usually invited to attend the meetings. Huligemma is vocal on behalf of the Sangha and the poor of the village and has been able to get a site for the Sangha hut and an Anganwadi Centre in their area, and to address the issue of poor drainage. Villagers who had earlier taunted her now compliment her"

Numerous examples were shared of how Sangha women are making efforts to solve women's problems and using PRI's through Gram Sabha and Standing Committees to effectively address issues of concern to women like alcoholism and domestic violence and access to resources.

The MS programme has built the capacity of Sanghas to act as community resource and pressure groups to monitor the functioning of the Gram Panchayat. The Sangha women have brought social justice issues to the fore, reinforcing the belief that poor women can change their status by influencing larger decision making processes.

Sangha women have also set up their own candidates for Panchayat elections, and the Elected Women Representatives (EWR) now put forward and include the concerns of poor women in the Panchayat agenda. There are 72 EWRs from Sanghas and seventeen other Sangha members in Standing Committees. Sangha women have also reported relative success in contesting from SC and ST reserved seats- 96 SC and 17 ST Sangha women were elected in 2000. Sangha initiatives have thus facilitated the inclusion of a gender perspective to governance. While the number of Sangha women elected to the Panchayat has not risen dramatically, there is a marked improvement in the quality of their participation in the electoral process.

"In Bidar District Vanchala Bai won the elections in 2000 but Saraswati (who had won in 1993) lost. Saraswati helps and guides the newly elected Sangha member. During the Gram Sabha meeting they found that the beneficiary list for the Ashraya Housing Scheme included people who already had houses, informed the Secretary and ensured that these were deleted and instead a young widow was sanctioned a house. Later the man who had bribed the Secretary demanded his money back. "

The political arena and lobbying for good governance are viewed as interwoven issues and remain a challenge for women despite the gains achieved. Sangha need to devise effective strategies to counter the trends of mainstream politics.

1.3 Women's legal rights

Sangha women have used the Sangha forum to address violence within the family and community. They however view knowledge of the legal framework and it's implementation as a critical means of empowerment to address problems related to bigamy, desertion, child marriage, the devadasi system, caste, gender and even disputes related to property.

MS Karnataka has provided systematic inputs on legal literacy for all Sanghas at the district level Melas of Feb- March 1999. The process became more broad based with Ghataka (cluster) level Melas where greater sharing and solidarity around issues emerged. The Melas provided a rare opportunity for women representatives from all Sanghas to come together for learning and sharing. In these sessions on legal literacy women empathized so much with the issues being discussed that they would break in tears. "...as if a mirror has been held up to our own lives" Sangha women, Bidar. Women's own experiences were used at the basis for training. Interaction with legal and paralegal agencies was initiated and led to the resolution of difficult cases and to a taste of empowerment.

'Chinnamma a member of the Sangha Legal Committee was under pressure from her rich neighbouring landlord to sell him her two acres of land. He had already acquired the other adjacent land from its alcoholic owner. Chinnamma had put in years of effort to convert the barren land to a paddy field and discussed the problem with the Sangha. When the Sangha women came to help her with the harvest the landlord stopped them, waving a piece of paper, which he said, was a court order. The harvest was lost. This was discussed with the Free Legal Aid Board at the Legal Literacy training. The matter was followed up and it was found that the court injunction had given a status quo. Chinnamma filed a case in the Taluk Court and won. She won the appeal in the High Court also.'

Sangha women use many strategies to solve problems themselves, the Sangha itself acting as a pressure group to prevent violence and harassment. Sangha Legal Committees were set up and the women took up various action points. Details of violence against women were collected and women visited the nearest Police Stations to get acquainted with Police officials. Women have complained about violence against women and received assistance. **Women have made a significant transition as they now recognize and question violence against themselves.** The Sangha federations and clusters have made it possible for women to work in solidarity across the taluk for resolution of problems, particularly where they involve problems of harassment, bigamy and desertion faced by girls married into other villages.

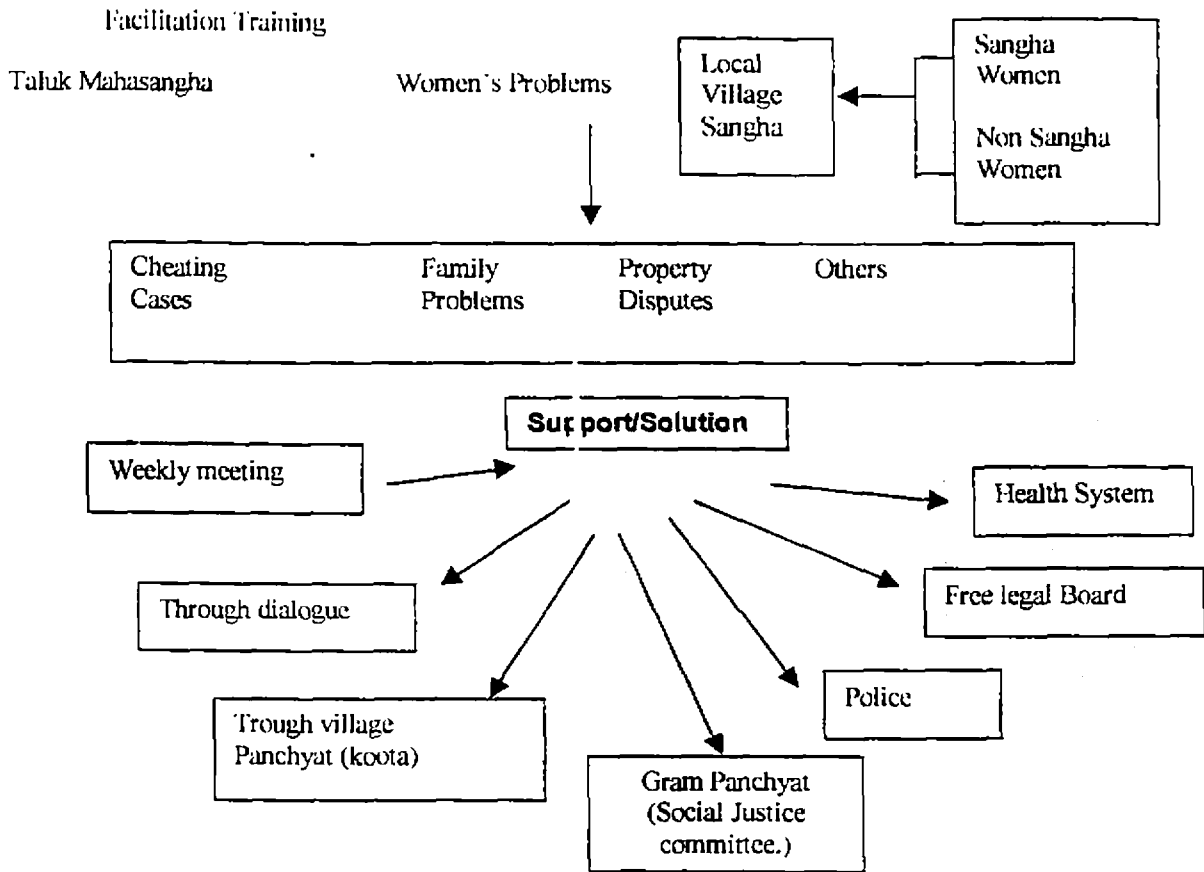
Sangha Women gathered from all the MS states at the Sanghamitra Mela in New Delhi in March 2000. It was a joyful sharing and learning experience. The successful experiment of MS Gujarat with the informal Women's Courts or Nari Adalat made the MS Karnataka group decide to adopt the Nari Adalat. Nari Adalats are in the process of being set up in all the seven MS districts of Karnataka and legal training for the Sahayoginis and Sangha women.

Some Sanghas have been relatively successful in tackling these issues while others have been hampered due to poor knowledge and information and gender bias in the legal system. Training has been a source of gaining information and the forum of the Ghataka Melas have provided an opportunity for women to gain information on legal literacy.

The Nari Adalats are public forum, which have acted as community dispute resolution mechanisms. Nari Adalats have opened up a space for women where their problems are heard with understanding and sympathy and at a nominal fee. Nari Adalats are new initiative and are therefore not as developed in Karnataka as in Gujarat and UP. While the Sanghas and the Okkuttas (federations) have been dealing quite efficiently with women's problems, the concept of Nari Adalats are viewed as more formalized and effective and are in the process of being set up in all the districts. They may also provide a more sustainable forum for such issues as well as facilitate a broader outreach.

Apart from the increased levels of awareness facilitated by the Melas, women are reported to have overcome their fear of interacting with legal systems to a great extent. Women in Mysore district are willing to take up their cases to the High court if necessary. **The Nari Adalats have in turn, highlighted the Sanghas social and political importance.**

EXHIBIT 3 STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE NARI ADALATS



Apart from the above, a women's helpline, Santhvana, has been started with the support of the state government. This could complement the work of the Nari Adalats. *Santhavana is also a new initiative and has just started but the concept seems sound.*

1.4 Cutting Across Caste and Class

The formation of multi-caste Sanghas is an example of the systematic strategy adopted by MS Kamataka in the formation and Strengthening of women's grassroots forums. MS Kamataka found that problem such as bigamy, alcoholism, exploitation, migration and lack of industrialization were common across castes. There was a need to address these issues at a wider level and to establish multi-caste Sanghas.. At the same time, women from upper castes who saw that Sangha women of lower castes were interfacing successfully with the domain outside the household, came of their own accord to join the Sanghas. Thus the MSKk Sanghas have gradually broadened their membership to allow women from upper castes to become members but remain vigilant against caste discrimination. Initial resistance to eating with lower castes etc by upper caste women wore down gradually after some residential camps were held. As a result of the multi-caste Sanghas women began to visit women of other castes.

Involvement of women from different communities in Sangha discussion and activities has mobilized women to take action against the exclusion of poor women from electoral rolls.

Significant changes are reported in the new All- Women Panchayat. Caste barriers have weakened, as all sixteen women are keen to work effectively. The community says 'We were so taken up by this novel idea that arrack(liquor) did not flow.' Athnoor village, Afzalpur taluk, Gulbarga District

Association with the DPEP enrollment drives and micro-planning exercises has also required that MS engage with families across caste groups. The multi-caste initiatives have helped women function together as a group and brought a vision of women's solidarity.

There is an acknowledgement that women from weaker sections remain marginalized and inadequately represented in structures of governance. Women have also reported instances where they have been intimidated or cheated into withdrawing their nominations for local elections on caste basis.

"Sharadamma, Raichur district withdrew her nomination when the village Gowdas threatened to burn down her small tea stall. Hanumakka was pressurized by her son-in-law to withdraw. Sangha women have discussed this and other cases and are better prepared to deal with them the next time."

1.5 Growth, Pace And Emerging Trends

The processes in MS activities actually safeguard quality. The logical sequence of initiatives as they are planned ensures the achievement of goals if steps of each process are not circumvented. The bottom-up planning process practiced in MS Karnataka ensures that grassroots women and workers identify problems and articulate strategies to address them. Needs for inputs and training and learning interventions are also identified through such a process

The MS Programme in Karnataka has successfully facilitated social change although the gains made remain modest. A number of poor women have developed the space, confidence and ability to question and demand accountability from mainstream institutions. Though the importance of education, including literacy has been communicated and accepted by local communities, rural poverty remains a major impediment towards realizing the goals of this programme. Poverty, practices of child labour and sibling care is major impediments to enrolment and retention. The programme acknowledges that women's economic status constitutes a major challenge towards women's empowerment and seeks to address by linking Sanghas with SCG approaches and linkages with ongoing programmes for rural poverty alleviation and women's empowerment. Efforts to establish a Mahila Bank may also prove to be a support for women's economic empowerment provided that the processes are adequately supported in the initial phase and the scale of the initiative is adequate to prove sustainable. This would imply provision of services to a client base larger than the MS Sanghas, the implications of which would need to be appropriately articulated. Skills would need to be developed to cater to the demands of such a task. Inputs for management of such an institution and determine its strategy are also critical elements towards its success. Simultaneously, however efforts to negotiate with the mainstream banking system would enable women to have access to resources and financial support

strategy for education, as well as use the findings to lobby for gender responsive educational opportunities.

In the area of research MS Karnataka developed a very effective research methodology for tackling personal questions by using a 'polling booth' method that protects the interviewee's identity. Personal questions that are used during research are usually very difficult to handle unless the researcher is highly skilled. Interviewees may refuse to answer or refuse to give complete answers. MSKk has developed the system of putting the interviewees in curtained polling booth- like structures and verbally asking the questions. The interviewee would answer by dropping the written answer into the polling booth. Other interviewees would use the same collection box. At the end of the exercise while individual identities would be safeguarded, the answer slips would be available for analysis.

2.2 Girls' Education

Young girls have always been on the peripheries of the Sanghas. These girls would sometimes help the Sangha women with their official correspondence and Sangha documentation. There had been some amount of informal learning by young girls from the Sangha activities. The girls would pick up relevant information in this way and their awareness level was high. MS Karnataka realized that it was necessary to start work with young adolescent girls so as to be able to influence the choices they make in adult life. Sangha women themselves recall "We never got a decent chance for education. We want our daughters' lives to be different."

MS runs two Mahila Shikshan Kendras in Gulbarga and Bijapur. These MSKs offer adolescent girls a residential course and a chance to complete their tenth class examination in a secure environment. There are also a number of need based variations in the courses run at the MSKs such as

- a two month residential initiative after which girls are admitted to mainstream formal schools. Many of these girls continue to use the MSK hostel facilities as this offers a safe environment.
- Additional courses in life skills and knowledge. Some income earning skills such as typing and tailoring are also provided.
- 8 month residential Bridge Course to help girls re-enter the mainstream education system.

However, MS found that the poor quality and gender insensitive education system prevents girls from getting a meaningful education and that girls who went regularly to school until class 7 were not even able to read or write. They had finally been withdrawn from school, as their guardians saw no benefit from such an education. This indicates an imperative need to engage with the official education system to improve the quality of education and make it more meaningful for girls.

MSKk also runs Non-Formal Education (NFE) classes for both boys and girls who have dropped out of the mainstream schools in all districts in 115 villages. Altogether 64 children from NFE centers have been mainstreamed. 67 girls and 54 boys from MS crèche/anganwadi have joined mainstream schools.

MSKk needs to strengthen its curriculum to cater to at least two sets of clientele. There are

- girls who for various reasons have either never enrolled or dropped out but are young enough to rejoin primary school if afforded a little focused support.
- those young girls and young adults who again may either have never completed or never enrolled but who are now old enough to take on adult roles in their rural society and who would be unlikely to rejoin a regular educational institute.

The first group may require mainly academic inputs so that they may rejoin a formal educational institution; while the second group may be looking for a wider information and life skill base that will help improve the quality of their and their family's life. MSK should also be examining innovative models that answer the need of the learning group and that can be successfully scaled up for greater outreach. Learning exchanges with the DPEP in other states would be beneficial and exposure visits could be organized. At a later date the MSKk may link up with the planned State and National Resource/Training Centers so that field experiences enrich the State Resource Centre's work and the Centre may provide vision and conceptual clarity to MSKk development.

In 1999 MS started to work with these groups of young girls to form Kishori Sanghas. There are at present 151 Kishori Sanghas in Bidar, Bijapur, Gulbarga, Raichur and Koppal with about 1800 members. Two Kishori Melas were organized and gave the girls an opportunity to interact with other girls their age and travel out of their village. Like the adult Sanghas, the Kishori Sanghas have also formed issue based committees including education. Some Kishori Sanghas have started to demand education for themselves. Some Kishori Sanghas have started savings groups and have lent to the Mahila Sanghas. These young girls may form the seeds of new Sanghas when they move to new villages after marriage.

MS has undertaken a battle with the traditional system of dedicating young girls as *Devadasis*. An aggressive campaign brought the issue into the public eye and also grabbed media attention. MS interacted with 14 such girls and stopped the dedication of 72 other girls whose hair was cut at Neer Manavi temple⁷ in partnership with organization of ex Devdasis – Mahila Abhivrudhi Mathu Samrakshan Samasthe. The campaign has been run over the last two years with remarkable success. MS Sanghas have also been making efforts to change the rural mindset towards child marriage through advocacy efforts. Additionally, in order to free girls from sibling-care for education, MSKk runs child care centers where no ICDS Anganwadis exist, apparently through Sangha payment of crèche/anganwadi caretaker. These are all efforts to ensure an equitable life opportunity with education for girls.

2.3 Reduction of child labour

The importance of education, including literacy has been communicated and accepted by local communities. Despite this rural poverty remains a major impediment towards meeting the educational goals of MSKk. Poverty, the practice of child labour and sibling care are major reasons behind poor enrolment and retention.

⁷ The Devadasi system is an ancient system of dedicating a woman/young girl, sometimes of a scheduled caste, through rituals, to the service of God at some identified temples mainly in South India. Originally the Devadasis had only religious duties at temples, but gradually they began to be used sexually by priests, landlords and powerful families of the village. The Devadasis have also been associated with being the custodians of classical music and dance which led to public performances of music and dance by women and girls from other families being made taboo. The Deccan Herald (March 10, 2000) mentions that today this system is linked to the regular brothel system in Mumbai.

Child labour exists as work undertaken by the child in the family's own fields or within the house as a proxy mother. The child may also be working for regular wages either on a seasonal basis or more or less permanently. Under any of these variations the child would be working at the expense of her opportunity to study.

While MS has not undertaken specific campaigns or advocacy targeted at working children, MS has addressed this problem through its work with the Sanghas and Kishori Sanghas. The MSKk has created a greater appreciation of the value of girls and the need to invest in their future. While poverty has been a key constraint to the education of girls, the recognition of their worth has enabled Sanghas to address girl child labour by ensuring their enrolment and retention.

School Enrolment of Girls catalysed by MS – 1999-2000.

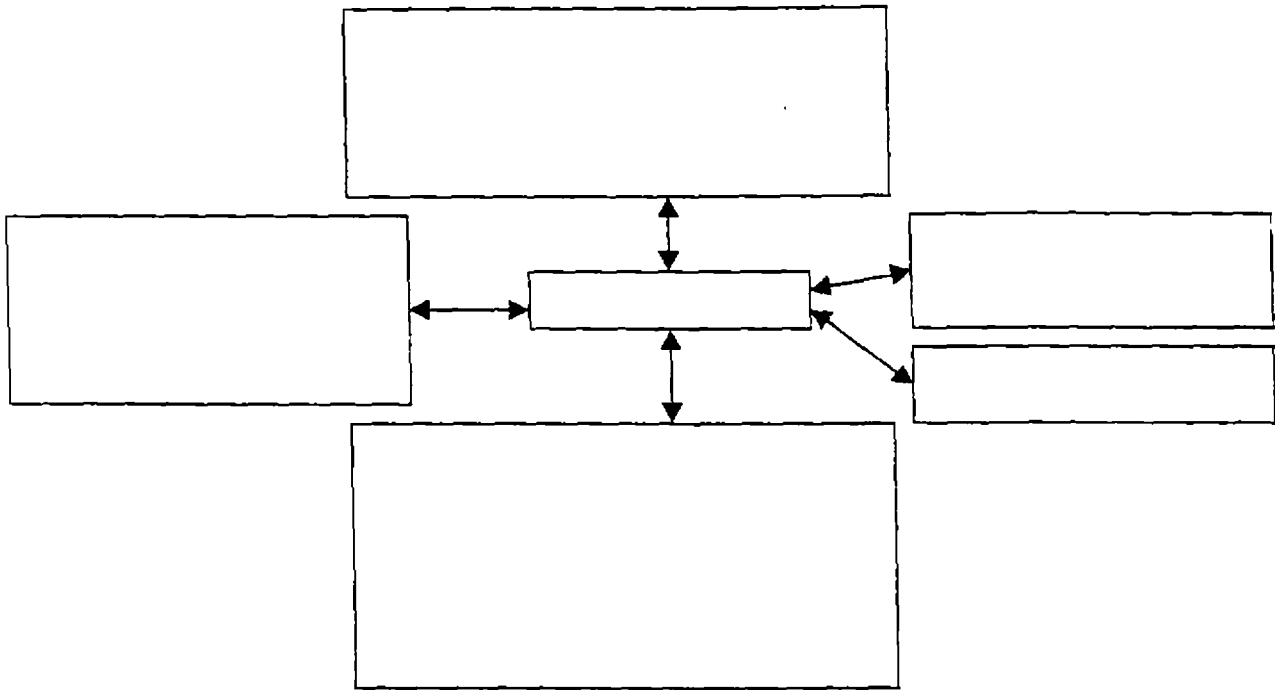
District	No of Villages.	Enrolled from NFE	Enrolled from Creche	Enrolled from Community	Total
Bellary	-	-	-	-	-
Bidar	18	8	-	20	46
Bijapur	12	5	33	-	50
Gulbarga	13	7	20	10	50
Koppal	34	-	-	654	688
Mysore	16	12	14	-	42
Raichur	22	-	-	33	55
Total	115	32	37	717	931

3. INTERLINKAGES WITH NATIONAL STATE LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS

MS Karnataka has established good inter-linkages with NGO's and women's autonomous groups, which are further reinforced through the engagement of consultants and State Resource persons. The women's bank is functional though its success has been modest.

There are structural linkages between the National Literacy Mission (NLM), DPEP and MSKk whereby MSKk representatives at district and taluk level are members of various NLM and DPEP selection, coordination and management committees. MSKk should use this linkage with DPEP to influence curriculum and material development. MSKk is already working with NLM in material development for neo-literates.

MS has also worked with the State Resource Center for Adult Literacy in production of material for neo-literate learners. The MSKk Gender Training Manual has been extensively used by DPEP. MS Karnataka has partnered the National Institute of



Advanced Studies in a study on rural women in Karnataka.

4. REPORTING AND MONITORING

Information flow in Mahila Samakhya Kamataka (MSKk) has been captured in a flow chart in Exhibit 5. Appendix 1 has more details on reporting.

Reports and Documentation: MSKk like other State Societies, has been producing a fairly high volume of monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual reports. These reporting processes capture all the activities performed within the program. Reflection, analysis and feedback on these reports are carried out in day to day interaction among functionaries who submit reports and those who receive the reports. This day to day interaction is quite useful in providing direction at the operational level.

There is a need to add greater analytical depth so that reporting captures not only the itinerary of events but assesses problems, hurdles and learning. Follow up on previous reports should be integral to the reporting process and the action taken component needs to be included as a standard feature. The process of feedback on reports needs

to be formalized. Incorporation of these recommendations would help shift program planning from operational to strategic levels.

Besides regular reports, documentation in MSKk covers a wide spectrum, which includes process documentation, workshop reports, exchange visit reports, special events reports like Melas etc. Some of these have immediate use and therefore have shorter shelf life whereas others have potential of long term use and would benefit a wider community. MSKk brings out a monthly newsletter "Sanchari" which carries field experiences and other developments. MSKk has taken the initiative to carry out a detailed appraisal of Sanghas through focussed group discussion methodology. A sample of 100 Sanghas was selected for the study. The study sought to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of Sangha members (and non-members) with respect to MS processes. The report is yet to be completed. There is a need for greater systematization, analysis, indexing and utilization of documents and reports for future planning as well as for wider dissemination.

5. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

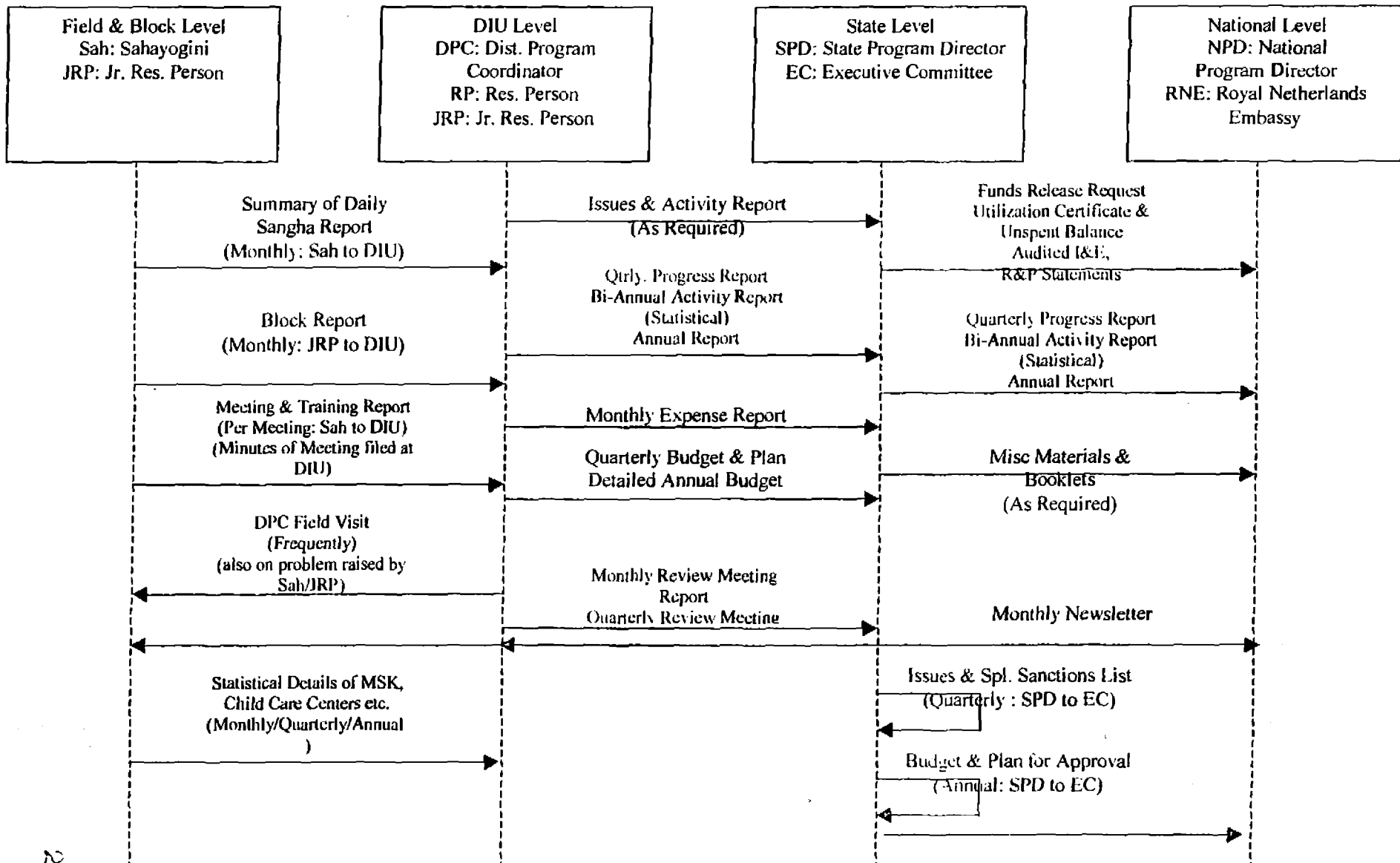
MSK follows the guidelines issued by Center in the Green Book to prepare its annual plans and budgets. The process is described in brief below:

- The district program teams and Sahayoginis conduct feeder meetings at Sangha, cluster and taluk level to assess members' expectations and priorities in the coming year.
- Based on these discussions Sahayoginis prepare plans and these are discussed with the DPC.
- In a parallel process, the State Office program team, consisting of SPD and state level RP's and Consultants prepare a draft strategy plan based on overall program. The State and District program teams including Accounts Officer, Internal Auditor and district accountants develop a detailed Annual Plan and budget.
- DPCs finalize and submit their plans to the SPD after contextualizing them in the light of MS inviolable principles and resource availability.
- After the submission of annual plans by the districts, activity wise costs are established and plan is consolidated for the State Program.
- Accountants at the district level as well as State level prepare Management Budget based on guidelines that are provided in the Green Book⁸ and number of villages in which the program is being implemented within each district.
- District wise budget is consolidated into a State budget and sent for an informal feedback to the Center.
- Center studies the budget and sends it back to SPD along with their comments. This stage is useful to the effect that State does not submit something which later might be rejected by Center.
- Annual plan or the budget is revised to incorporate Center's comments and placed before the EC for their approval.
- After the budget has been approved by the EC it is finally submitted to Center.
- Center receives an annual budget statement, which has been approved by the EC.
- RNE works on the principle of reimbursement of the costs incurred by the supported States for implementing MSKk.

The annual planning and budgeting exercise in MSKk is an exhaustive exercise, which builds up on the expectations of the Sangha women in conformity with project principles. An extremely detailed annual activity plan is drawn up which feeds into the annual budgeting process.

There is need to further strengthen this process. Karnataka at present follows the national guidelines (objectives) for the preparation of their budgets. It is recommended that they should frame their own objectives, which would then become the basis for planning activities, budgeting, analyzing progress and variances. The progress as well as the monitoring can become more focussed and more specific to Karnataka. While MSKk Annual budget document does mention previous year's budget versus actual expenditure, continued high levels of variances indicate that variances do not feed into preparation of following years planning and budgeting exercise. Physical and financial variances from last year's plans should be formally reviewed before preparation of next year's plan.

Exhibit 5: Information Flow in MS Karnataka

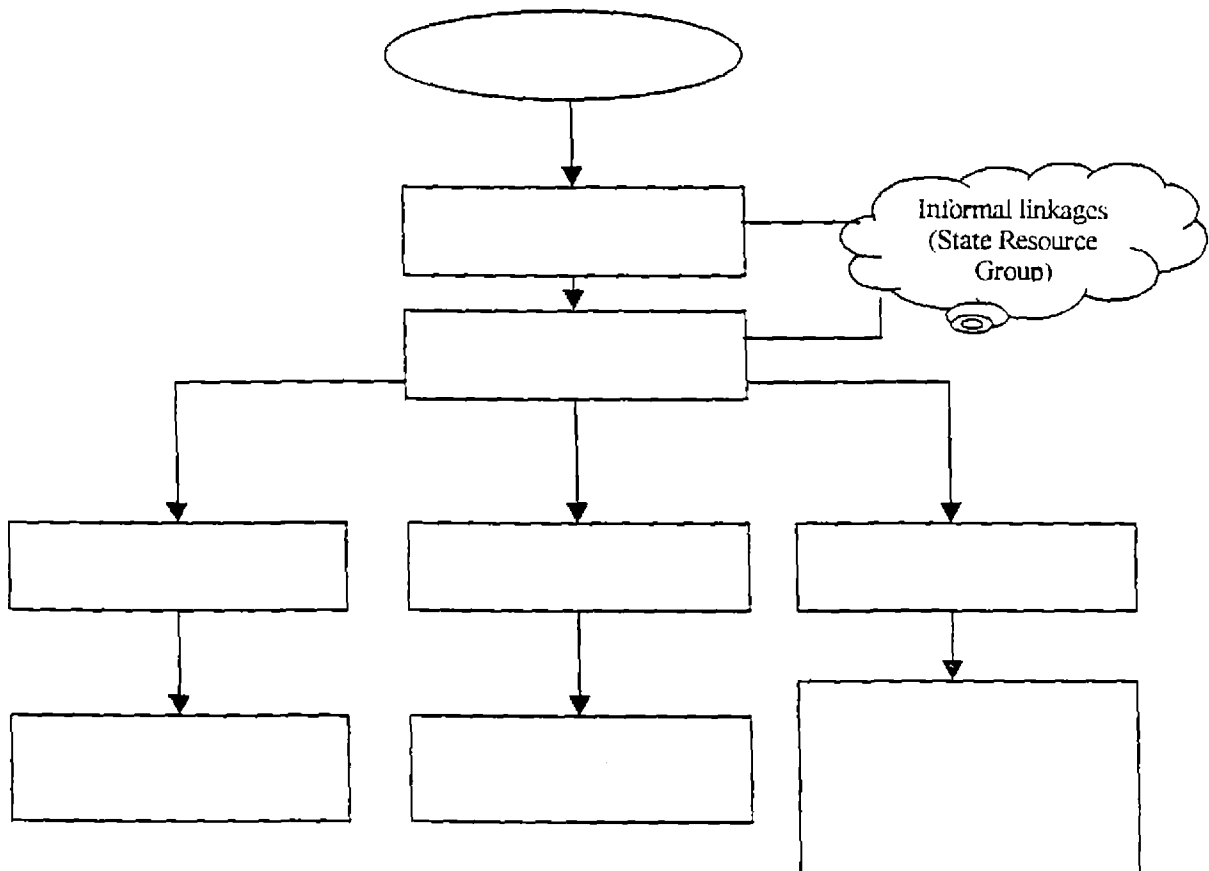


6. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

State

Exhibit 6 shows organizational set up of MSKk upto district level. Program at the State level is headed by a State Project Director who is guided by Executive Committee, which in turn is responsible to the Governing Council.

Exhibit 6 : Organization Chart of MSKk – State Level



The Governing Council is the apex body in the Society. It is the final authority at the State level which provides policy support, considers annual budget, audited accounts, forms bye laws and rules and delegates powers to EC so that it can discharge its duties effectively. The Governing Council cannot add and amend any rules. It cannot form any bye-laws without the approval of GOI. The Governing Council in Karnataka is convened annually. Given its active and facilitative nature the Governing Council should be given greater powers. It should not have to refer to GOI for making and amending rules.

The State Executive Committee is an empowered body that takes decisions relating to governance and program direction. It is responsible to the Governing Council. Executive committee puts its plans into action through the State Program Director (SPD). SPD is responsible for overall execution and smooth running of the program within the State. Majority of the representation in EC is either Government's ex-officio members or their nominees. As informed by MSKk functionaries there are sometimes unrealistic and erratic expectations from government, and MS is seen as

convenient implementation vehicle of government schemes. It would be in the best interest of the program that its autonomous nature be fortified by making its representation even broader by including greater representation of local NGOs and representatives of women's groups/ organizations that have credentials in these areas.

Unlike the NRG, there is no **State Resource Group (SRG)** at the State level. A formal status for the SRG is recommended, as this would be useful in binding the current informal network of the MSKk together. SRG because of its proximity to MSKk and state specific expertise would be able to give much greater context specific advice. At certain points they might also be able to help MSKk negotiate on an operational level by making their networks and contacts available to them.

SRG may be formalized either through constituting it as an 'Advisory Body on Implementation' and / or having greater representation on the EC.

SPD has a team of following personnel to assist her at the state level:

Table 5 : Staff at State level

Position	Number of Posts
Associate SPD	1 (Vacant)
Resource Persons	1
Consultants	2
Internal Auditor	1
Accounts Officer	1
Accountant	1
Stenographer	2
Data Entry Operator	1
Lower Div. Clerk	1
Peon	2
Driver	1

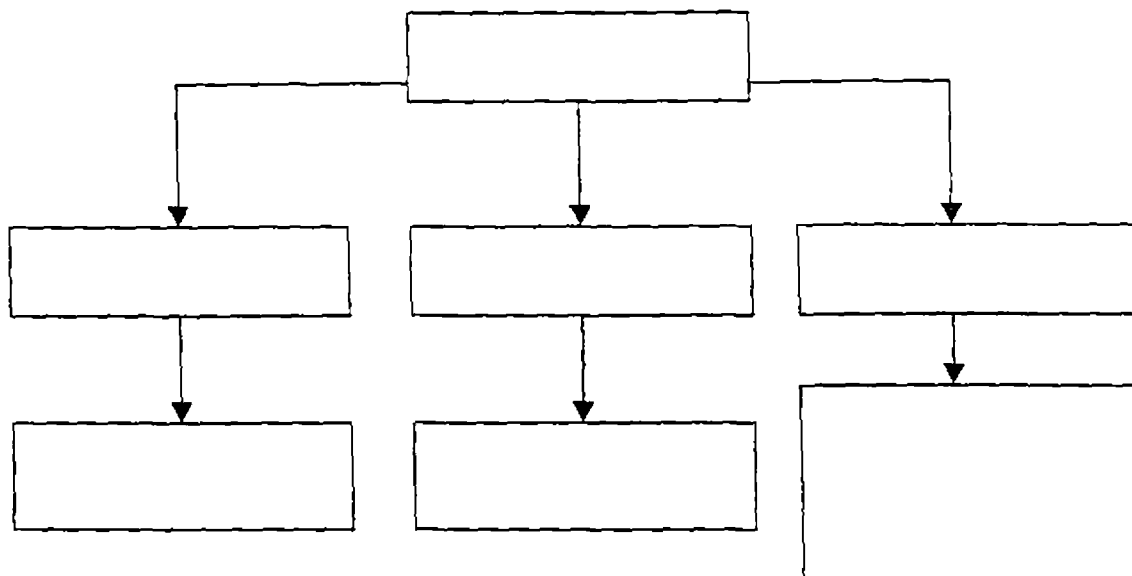
SPD is heavily loaded with routine administrative work. Whereas the position of Associate SPD has been created but this is not the real requirement. SPD should be provided personal administrative assistance so that her work can be better organized. **It is suggested that the post of Assistant SPD should be changed to Executive Assistant to the SPD.**

In case of some positions at the state level there is an overlap and lack of clarity in the respective roles. Overlapping job descriptions of Consultants and Resource Person positions may lend flexibility in the short term but could cause problems in the long term. There is a need to review and rationalize the job descriptions and roles.

State Resource Center: MS Program in Karnataka has been running for the last twelve years. The program has performed well with the Sanghas; it is now carrying the work forward through supporting the next level structure of Sangha federations. MSKk has also been involved in training/ capacity building support and collaborative research with other organizations.

District

EXHIBIT 6: ORGANIZATION CHART OF MS KARNATAKA- DISTRICT LEVEL



A DIU is headed by the District Project Coordinator who in turn is supported by following personnel:

Table 6: Personnel at DIU level

Position	Number of Posts
Resource Person	Depends upon number of villages (1 per 100 villages)
Junior Resource Person	Depends upon number of villages (2 per 100 villages)
Accountant	1
Stenographer	1
Data Entry Operator	1
Assistant	1
Peon	2
Driver	1
Sahayogini	Depends upon number of villages (1 per 10 villages)

Number of RP/ JRPs varies by the number of villages being covered in a district. It has been observed that DPC is overloaded with routine administrative tasks, which leaves her with lesser time in her role as a coach and leader of the DIU. It is recommended that some provision for secretarial assistance should be made at this level also.

6. HUMAN RESOURCES

Staff: MS has been able to carve a special position for itself and make its presence felt on the ground due to its dedicated personnel. Table 7 shows staff turnover in MSK at the State and district level. Problem of turnover was more during the earlier years but has receded during the later years. However, even small degree of staff turnover at senior supervisory levels in districts is extremely disturbing to the

program, as it is this level which provides critical leadership and direction to the program in the field.

Table 7: Staff Turnover in MS Karnataka

Year	State:Resignations as % of total Employees	Districts:Resignations as % of total Employees
1997-98	20	2
1998-99	21	10
1999-00	0	15
2000-01	0	5

Honoraria and travel allowance were fixed in 1997 (five years ago) and have since not been revised. Since remuneration is low, MS will face a severe problem if the present senior level leave for better prospects. For instance, the World Bank aided *Swashakti and Jalasamvardhan programs*⁹ of pay in the region of Rs.10,000/- per month at district level and Rs.15,000/- per month at state level. Research Associates at Gender Studies Unit, National Institute of Advanced Studies and at Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore are paid Rs.15,000/- per month. In contrast, in MSKk, the DPC and SPD get 6,000/- per month and 10,000/- per month respectively. MS skills are very much in demand.

The programme stands the risk of loosing its momentum and jeopardizing its gains if this issue is not handled immediately. There is a need to benchmark MS compensation and employee benefit practices to other programs to be able to attract and retain proficient personnel. The recommended revisions should also incorporate provisions to account for general inflation as well as performance based incentives, which need not be monetary.

Vacancies: Although, at present, the number of vacancies in MSKk low, many posts have been filled up through internal promotions. This is especially true at Junior Resource Person level where close to 90% of the posts have been filled up by promoting *sahayoginis*. MSK has also lowered formal education requirements for certain posts. Educational requirements have been substituted for experience to fill up vacancy from available pool.

Table 8 shows organization wide appointments as a percentage of total sanctioned posts on specific positions.

Table 8: Appointments as Percentage of Total Sanctioned Positions

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
State Level Positions				
State Program Director	100%	100%	100%	100%
Assistant Program Director	0%	0%	0%	0%
Accounts Officer	0%	100%	100%	100%
Auditor	0%	100%	100%	100%
Resource Person	0%	100%	100%	100%
Consultant	100%	100%	100%	100%
Accountant	100%	100%	100%	100%
Stenographer	100%	100%	100%	100%
Data Entry Operator	0%	100%	100%	100%

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
Lower Division Clerk	100%	100%	100%	100%
Peon	100%	100%	100%	100%
Driver	100%	100%	100%	100%
District Level Positions				
District Program Coordinator	83%	57%	71%	100%
Resource Person	55%	50%	50%	83%
Junior Resource Person	133%	114%	79%	93%
Accountant	83%	71%	83%	100%
Stenographer	83%	71%	83%	83%
Data Entry Operator	67%	57%	100%	100%
Assistant	50%	43%	0%	100%
Peon	83%	71%	92%	92%
Driver	83%	57%	86%	86%
Sahayogini	94%	91%	102%	88%

Status as on April 1st of every year. This table does not capture variations within a year.

It has been most difficult to appoint appropriate people at the District and State RP level. This is a crucial position since this is the level where a high amount of programmatic input is expected. Despite repeated efforts, MSK has not been able to fill the senior RP vacancies. Many of these positions have been converted (through an EC resolution) into JRP positions. This has affected work in the field. While many of the JRPs are very good in the field, they find it hard to cope with the kind of program input level expected of a senior RP. This becomes an added burden on the DPCs, SPD and few senior level program staff.

Appointments on the position of DPC have reached 100% only during the previous year, prior to which it was between 83% to 71%. At the RP level cent percent appointments have never been achieved, these have remained between 55% to 83%. It is expected that improvement in compensation would tackle most of the vacancy related issues.

Social Security: MSK personnel especially Sahayoginis work under extremely difficult conditions, which also raises safety and security concerns. Despite being a programme for the empowerment of women, MS has shown little consideration for women's needs to fulfill other necessary roles such as child care, and education of children. There is an informal union of the Sahayoginis but it has not been assertive as yet. These issues should be closely looked examined and organizational arrangements instituted, in the form of insurance-cover, etc. to forestall any kind of confrontation. The Mission noted that Karnataka has instituted some employee benefits like insurance and provident fund but these need to be further reinforced.

Employment Contract: One-year-contract system of employment leads to insecurity in employees. There is a need for permanency of tenure. However, to address the issue of an eventuality when funding to MS may stop, the contract of employment should be restricted to the period of the program and also subject to availability of funds from the GOI.

Appointment letters do not have job descriptions annexed. In all fairness to the incumbent a brief job description should be included. Sahayoginis appointment letter is worded such that it implies that Sahayoginis have approached MSK with a desire to carry out social work. It is doubtful if all the Sahayoginis in fact express a desire to carry out social work. The contract letter should acknowledge that the Sahayogini is

Bank Accounts: MSK keeps separate bank accounts for District and State offices. However it does not always open separate accounts whenever a new project, which has a separate funding source, is taken up. It is recommended that bank accounts and books of accounts for State, districts for each project should be separately maintained.

Authorization of Vouchers: Authority for authorizing all vouchers rests with SPD and DPC.

It is felt that load of approving all the expense vouchers on SPD/ DPC should be reduced. The authorization of expense vouchers should be delegated to the level of Resource Person depending on the person who has incurred the expense. The account officer at state level and accountant at district level could automatically clear routine utility bills within budgetary provision for payment. Only a limited number of vouchers should come to the SPD/DPC. A limit could be fixed above which all the vouchers would need to necessarily be approved by the SPD at the State Office and the DPC at the District Office.

Community Contribution: Current accounting system does not take into account the contributions received from community, which become available to the program. The budgeting also does not keep in mind resources that would be available from this source. This also contributes to budget surpluses currently observed. Community contribution accounting would make the budgeting process more realistic. Sanghas and federations generate resources from alternative sources such as government and funding agencies. A system should be devised which tracks these funds.

Internal Controls: A strong system of internal control is maintained through proper distribution of workload right from the Sangha Level to the Executive Committee level. At the Sangha Level the internal control is exercised through checks at various stages by DPC/ DRP/ JRP/ Members of the Sanghas. For expense approval, actual payment handling, recording & authorization are all handled by different functionaries in the organization. Internal audit exercise is carried out by the State Internal Auditors who visits all districts on quarterly basis and check all the vouchers at the DIU level. Accountants keep a check on items being spent and budgetary provisions. There is however no budgeted activity/amount v/s actual verification and analysis, which could show some variations, which need to be carefully analyzed. The same is provided in the Budgeting section of the report.

Purchase: Purchase process adopted by MSK is similar to that being followed by government. It is based on a July 1992 letter from National Project Director. Authority to purchase up to a specified amount limits has been delegated in the rules of the Society. Whenever a purchase decision exceeds an employee's limit then she has to take approval from the competent authority. The process of purchase has not been documented neatly into a booklet. The purchase process in MSK is time consuming and imposes unnecessary burden on the program it should be simplified. It is recommended that simplified purchases procedures up to a limit of Rs. 20,000 should be suggested to all MS Societies. The basic underlying principle for an effective purchase procedure is to be able to carry out all purchases under practical conditions of transparent system rather than be burdened by procedures and system followed by the Government. A feasible alternative has been provided in Appendix III.

Funds Flow: Funds have to flow from Center to MSK to finally the districts so that program activities can be implemented on ground in a time bound manner. The flow of funds from Center to MSK usually takes two months from the date of receipt of 'request for funds' to final issue of draft. Factors like the amount requested, utilization certificates, audited statements and rate of utilization are used by the center to

determine the amount to be released. MSK send requests every quarter based on the projected quarterly expenditure that is submitted to the Center. Generally the National Office releases funds in 2 to 3 installments. The process of flow of funds is shown in detail in Appendix 1V,

There have been instances when MSK has not been able to carry out exercises due to cuts and delays in releases from National Office

Idle Funds: It was observed that MSK regularly invests idle funds in Fixed Deposits whenever funds available at state level are more than 5 lakhs and at district level, more than 1 Lakh..

The amounts at which fixed deposits are taken are kept flexible. Idle funds are invested at the State and district levels in Fixed Deposits of 45 / 60 / 90 days according to total fund availability and requirement of funds within 45/ 60 / 90 days.

Budget Reappropriation: SPD has complete authority to reappropriate budget. However activity costs cannot be taken into management costs but the opposite is possible and valid. DPCs have to send the request to SPD for a reappropriation. This practice should continue the way it is.

Legal requirements: MSK is neither filing an Income Tax Return nor has it obtained the required exemption. It is recommended that it should file Tax Returns as required by law.

Computerization: All accounting in MSK has been computerized. It is quite ahead of other states in this regard. It is recommended that planning, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting processes should also be gradually computerized in a phased manner. The process of computerization should not create a parallel substructure within the organization but should be adopted by the existing management towards professionalization of their work. Some of these require substantial capacity building inputs and it is an area, which can be explored for Technical Assistance.

8. UTILIZATION OF FUNDS

Table 10 provides an overview of utilization of funds by MSK during the 1997-2002 phase of Program. It also provides a comparison of budget with the actual expenses.

Table 10: Budget versus Actual Expenditure of Funds (Total) by MSK during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	173.21	154.10	89%
1998-99	221.06	201.77	91%
1999-00	290.15	167.59	58%
2000-01	326.79	167.85	51%

Table 11 indicates that utilization of budget has been quite low compared to budget during 1999-00 and 2000-01. The actual to budget expense ratio for Total Costs has decreased by 38% points from 89% in 1997-98 to 51% in 2000-01. Table 11 gives actual versus budget analysis for management cost. It can be seen that these ratios are better than total cost actual-budget ratios. However, considering that management cost can be estimated to a greater precision there is opportunity for improving these ratios.

Table 11: Budget versus Actual Expenditure of Funds (Management Cost) by MSK during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	68.21	68.09	100%
1998-99	83.06	103.23	124%
1999-00	499.28	79.66	80%
2000-01	102.93	84.32	82%

Actual to budget expense ratio for Management Cost have also decreased from 100% in 1997-98 to 82% in 2000-01, although to a lesser degree than actual to budget ratio for Total Cost.

Table 12 gives actual versus budget analysis for activity cost. Expectedly these ratios are lower than total and management cost ratios to budgets.

Table 12: Budget versus Actual Expenditure of Funds (Activity Cost) by MSK during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	105.00	86.01	82%
1998-99	138.00	98.54	71%
1999-00	190.87	87.93	46%
2000-01	223.86	83.53	37%

The point of concern here is that budget to actual expense ratio for Activity Cost has steadily decreased during 1997-2001 period from 82% to 37%, a fall by 45% points.

There was a delay and cuts in release of Grants-in-Aid which had badly affected the programs and schedules. Funds amounting to Rs.29 lakhs in 1999-2000 and 28.65 in 2000-01 which would work out to 8-10% of the total budget could not be released to the sanghas due to paucity of funds. This has resulted in reduction in activity cost. During this period MSK had to borrow from DPEP to pay honorarium to staff. This has been brought to the notice of EC and National Office by MSKk.

Table 13 gives ratio of management cost to total cost over the last phase. Share of management cost has increased from 44% in 1997-98 to 50% in 2000-01. It is important to ensure that management costs share should not increase disproportionately. As per the original financial estimates for 1997-2002, this ratio for a state with five districts should have remained less than 38%.

Table 13: Management Cost, Activity Cost and Management Cost as ratio of Total Cost (Actual Spends) in MSK during 1997-2002

Financial Year	Management Cost	Activity Cost	Management Cost / Total Cost
1997-98	68.09	86.01	44%
1998-99	103.23	98.54	51%
1999-00	79.66	87.93	48%
2000-01	84.32	83.53	50%

Over the 1997-2001 period whereas Management Cost has increased from 68 to 84 Activity Cost has come down from 86 to 83 Lakhs. A part of this is explained by following

- MSK initiated Employees Provident Fund in 1997-98. Rupees 22 Lakhs were paid towards contribution of Employees Provident Fund scheme covering the period from 1992-93 to 1997-98.
- Procurement of assets like vehicle and computer components upto Rupees 5 lakhs.

D. NEXT PHASE

Appendix I: Reporting Process in MS Karnataka

The reports that are produced in the organization at each level are described in brief in this Appendix. These reports have more or less similar format and frequency across districts within the State.

Field to District Level Reports:

- Sahayoginis prepare a daily report, which contains an account of the activities that they complete during the day. These reports are submitted to RPs on a monthly basis. RPs read these report and provides comments to Sahayoginis so that they can improve upon their work.
- RPs also maintain daily reports which are submitted to DPCs at the end of each month. These reports contain information about the happenings of each day. DPCs go through these reports and provide feedback to RPs about their work in the monthly staff meeting.
- RPs document each and every event that is organized or that they have participated in. These events can be workshops, exposure visits, visits by outsiders, Melas, camps etc. Reports that explain whatever transpired on these 4 accounts are diligently maintained.
- DPCs frequently visits the field and provide their inputs to field level staff.

District Level Reports

- DPCs submit documentation related to various issues and activities prepared by RP after adding her inputs to these to SPD.
- DPCs submit a quarterly progress report about the district's performance to SPD. This report contains a snapshot of district's position on date as well as description of activities that were performed during the last three months.
- DPCs send a monthly expense statement, which contains information about all the expenses incurred during the month to the State Office.
- DPCs submit quarterly plan of action and funds requirements to SPD.
- DPCs also send a detailed account of monthly and quarterly staff meetings held at District to SPD.

State Level Reports

- SPD submits expense account and request for funds to National Office every quarter.
- SPD submits quarterly, biannual (statistical abstract) and annual reports to National Office.
- SPD also presents annual activity plan and budget to EC and is forwarded to National Office.
- MSKk also produces documents relating to substantive issues, which are indicated as miscellaneous materials and booklets. Whenever a ground level process is innovative and has proven to be successful and popular is identified, it is documented for wider use.

Appendix II: Accounting and Control System followed in MSK

In MS Karnataka accounts have been computerized completely based on Tally package. It maintains following paper based records:

- A rough cashbook is maintained which records amount received, expenditures, and advances. It is updated every day;
- All payment vouchers and receipts are prepared ;
- All vouchers are properly receipted and revenue stamp is affixed for any cash payment of Rs.500/- and above.
- Depreciation is charged on the assets as per the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Appendix 11: Alternative Purchase Process

This Appendix presents an alternative purchase process which is simpler (without compromising on transparency) compared to the existing process being followed. MSK can either use this or design them based on the following suggestions:

Whenever a purchase has to be made following step process should be followed:

- SPD appoints any one functionary to survey market and procure three quotations from reputed shops. She should then make a detailed report about her recommendations after discussion with the SPD.
- This note along with all the quotations and analysis of the same should then be handed over to the Accounts Officer who should through other sources confirm whether all the prices mentioned in the quotations are appropriate or not.
- After this the same note along with the process followed for verification and findings of the Accountant should be put in front of the SPD for approval.
- After the approval of the SPD, there should be a formal purchase order placed with the selected dealer in writing detailing all the terms and conditions agreed upon between the dealer and MS Society. On the basis of the above purchase order payments to the dealer should be released.

Appendix IV: Funds Flow

This appendix explains in brief the process that is followed in transferring funds from Center to the State and then onwards to the Districts.

The flow of funds from Center to State follows the following steps:

- After Center receives 'request for funds' it forwards it to the Ministry of Finance (MOF). In certain cases MOF may have queries which are answered either by Center or State depending upon to whom it has been addressed and who has an explanation on it.
- After the Financial Advisor clears the proposal, these papers go to the Internal Finance – 1 (IF-1) division in the MOF.
- The IF- 1 certifies that the funds are available. After this the approval goes to Pay and Accounts Office (PAO) who formal sends instruction to the bank for preparation of a demand draft in favor of the respective MS Societies.
- This draft is then released either by Registered Letter or Speed Post to the State. The whole process takes about 2 months.

The flow of funds from State to District follows the following steps:

- As soon as funds are received at the State Office most of the said amount is transferred to Term Deposits of duration of 46,60 & 90 days of lots of Rs.50,000/- each, based on the requirement of the said funds.
 - Amounts are released in advance by the State Office to District Implementation Unit. Every quarter the District Offices send in a request of funds to the State Office along with their proposed expenditure in the coming quarter.
 - State Office verifies request with that district's past expenditure statements and plan for future.
 - State Office then release funds based on balance available with district office and as and when funds become available from Center.
-

Abbreviations

CDPO	Community Development Project Officers Of The ICDS PROJECT
DIC	District Industries Centre
DIU	District Implementation Unit Of MS
DPC	District Proramme Coordinator of Mahila Samakhya
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
DWCRA	Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas(scheme of Govt of India)
EC	State Executive Committee
EWRs	Elected Women Representatives
GC	Governing Council
GOI	Government of India
GON	Government of Netherlan ds
Green Book	MS Guidelines issued by the National office, Dept of Education, GOI
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
JRP	Junior Resource Person
KS	Kishori Sanghas
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MSKk	Mahila Samakhya Karnataka
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NIAS	National Institute of Advanced Studies
NLM	National Literacy Mission
RNE	Royal Netherlands Embassy
RP	Resource Person
SPD	State Program Director
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCs	Standing Committees
SRC	State Resource Center
ST	Scheduled Tribes
PR Act	Panchayati Raj Act
PRIs	Panchayati Raj Institutions
SRG	State Resource Group
SJSY	Swarnjayanti Jawahar Swarozgar Yojana- scheme of GOI to promote self employment
SHG	Self Help Groups
Glossary	
Anganwadi Centre	preschool child centres at village level promoted under the ICDS scheme
Arrack	local liquor
Devadasi	discriminatory social practice of dedicating young girls to the gods
Ghataka	Cluster
Gowdas	land owning upper caste
Gram Panchayat	village level committee in the local self governance system
Gram Sabha	general assembly at the village level
Jalagamvardhan	
Mahasangha or Okkuttas	Federation
Mahila Sanghas	Women's Group
Nari Adalats	Women's Courts
Sahayogini	field level worker of the MS programme who implements and coordinates in 10 villages
Sanghamitra	Mela Conference of Sanghas held at New Delhi in march 2000
Swashakti	
VEC	Village Education Committees
Zilla Parishad	

ANNEXURE 1

10/12 Travel to Bombay and flight to Bangalore

Meeting with SPO Rewati and Sr. Research Person Contr

11/12 Introduction to the Programme by SPO with DPC Bidar, Raichur, Bijapur, Resource Person from Mysore

overnight stay at Bangalore.

Meeting over tea with Asha Ramesh, National Institute of Advance Studies, India Institute of Science , Lukos vallatharai state project director DPEP and Sobha. Nambisan Scecratory women and child Development, Madhuri Parthasarathy EDP.

Further discussion with SPO and Sr. resource person.

12/12 Final Meet for left out topics at MS programme office

Discussion on documentation with federation registration at Block level and training.

Vigalini Mathrani and on the functioning of EC with Rameshwari Verma.

MAHILA SAMAKHYA
INDO- DUTCH REVIEW MISSION 2001

ANDHRA PRADESH MAHILA SAMATHA SOCIETY

Team Members:

Hilde Janssen
Nishi Mehrotra
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CONTENTS

A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

B. MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME IN ANDHRA PRADESH

C. PROGRESS AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

1. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- 1.1 *Impact on Women's Personal and Family Lives, Autonomy and Socio-Cultural Environment*
- 1.2 *Creating a Foundation for a Grass-Root Level Women's Movement*
- 1.3 *Women's political participation*
- 1.4 *Women's legal rights*
- 1.5 *Cutting Across Caste and Class*
- 1.6 *Growth, Pace And Emerging Trends*

2 EDUCATION

- 2.1 *Childrens Education*
- 2.2 *Girls Education*
- 2.3 *Womens Education*
- 2.4 *Contribution to reducing Child Labour*

3. LINKAGES WITH GOVERNMENT, NGOs , WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND RNE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 *Current Linkage With Govt. & NGO Programmes*
- 3.2 *Linkages With The Women's Movement*
- 3.3 *Added Value and Linkages With RNE Sectoral Approach Priorities*

4. REPORTING AND MONITORING

5. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

6. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

7. HUMAN RESOURCES

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 *Funds Flow*
- 8.2 *Accounting*
- 8.3 *Purchase Procedure*
- 8.4 *Disclosures*
- 8.5 *Payroll System*
- 8.6 *Internal Controls*
- 8.7 *Utilization Of Funds*

C. THE NEXT PHASE

- 1. *Rationale for A New Phase*
- 2. *Recommended Strategy for the next phase*
- 3. *Structure and Programme Initiatives*

Annexure
Mission Itinerary
Abbreviations, Glossary

Indo-Dutch Joint Review Mission 2001
ANDHRA PRADESH MAHILA SAMATHA SOCIETY

A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Andhra Pradesh was selected for MS operations in the context of the situation of women's education and their unfavourable status as reflected in the indices of human and gender development.

Presently, AP has a population of 75.7 million, with 38.3 million men and 37.4 million women leading to a sex ratio of 978, which was 972 in 1991. The literacy rate for women is 51.17 compared to 70.85 for men. It had a decadal population growth rate of 13.86% as compared to that of the country at 21.34 %.

Table 1: Decadal Trends In Demography And Literacy

Population	Population Million		Literacy rate %		Total literacy rate	Sex ratio
	Men	Women	Men	Women		
Andhra Pradesh						
1991					44.0	972
2001 75.7 million	38.3	37.4	70.8 5	51.17	61.11	978
India						
2001 1.02 billion	531. 3	495.7	75.8 5	54.16	65.38	933

Source: Census data

Table 2: Literacy Data of Andhra Pradesh

	ANDHRA PRADESH	INDIA
LITERATES-SC	31.58	37.41
LITERATES-ST	17.15	26.60
FEMALE LITERACY	51.17	54.16
GENERAL	61.11	65.38

Source: Dept. of Education, Govt. of A.P.2001

AP lies in the lower quartile among the states and Union Territories of India in literacy for SCs and is at the bottom of the list in literacy for STs. Large gaps also exist between the literacy levels within specific disadvantaged groups. The gap between ST female literacy and SC male literacy was 33% in the last decade. The state has the dubious honour of having the highest number of child workers, with a work force participation of 11% for boys and 14 % for girls. The participation of women in the work force is the highest in India – 428/1000 and most women workers are found in the primary sector in the rural areas and backward districts where they earn 30-50% less than men.

Health too remains a major concern, since life expectancy at birth was 64% in '91 and IMR is 68('98). The relatively low age at marriage, 17 years, combined with a high fertility explains the high infant mortality together with child marriages and maternal mortality, which contributes to 20% of maternal deaths, particularly in the Telangana region.

Even though women's participation in politics is low, they have been able to influence politics as happened in the anti-arrack movement which was initiated by poor rural women in Nellore district. The Nellore experience is a historical landmark since women were empowered through the Total Literacy Campaigns and post literacy programmes to take up the anti-arrack movement and object against the proliferation of liquor shops in the north Telengana districts of Warangal, Karimnagar and Adilabad. This had a significant impact on the political agenda of several governments of the state from 1978 -'94. The debate on the liquor policy remains a live issue and part of the discourse in AP among activists and people, particularly among rural women. The state continues to woo women into local politics with special programmes and with the Panchayati Raj, 73rd Amendment.

Other Programme Initiatives for Women

MS was launched in the state in 1993, at a time when government and NGOs were not actively addressing women's development issues, although policy makers were acknowledging women as 'vehicles of change'. While women oriented national programmes like ICDS, IRDP and DWCRA had been functioning in the state, their efficacy as means of women's advancement was low, despite the fact that large numbers of Self-Help Groups were promoted.

Specific rural trends in the state were outlined in the following areas in the social development sector in the early nineties by the government of AP:

Table 3: Current Development Scenario In Andhra Pradesh

Sector	Needs /Trends	1.1.1.1 Initiatives
Education/ Skill building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -High dropout rates, especially among girls -Low adult literacy -Trade skills passed from parents to children -Few opportunities for vocational training -Low skill and technology up gradation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focused programmes to improve literacy among women, SC, ST groups and backward classes. -Adult Literacy Campaigns -'Back to School' programmes for drop outs -Encouragement for distance education -Establishment of formal trade based vocational training schools/centres -Community involvement in skill transfer Encouragement of small technologies
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Inadequate access to primary health care in remote habitations -Strong belief in traditional community health practices -High infant mortality/maternal mortality rates -Low productivity due to high absenteeism on account of poor health -Poor health management systems at Panchayat/community level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mobile health units -Family planning awareness -Community participation in provision of health care -Focus on preventive health and immunization -Access to drinking water and sanitation services

Social Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -High poverty levels -Women socially oppressed and economically weak with poor bargaining power -Women unemployed and underemployed in agriculture and unorganized sectors - Women under paid for equal work in unorganized sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Empowerment of women through self help groups – over 4.0 lakh -Employment schemes for rural sector for unemployed agricultural labour -Community based credit lending programmes -Special schemes for the economically vulnerable
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Source: Vision 2020, GoAP

In the late 1980s, the Government of AP launched the Action Plan for Women 2000 AD, followed in 1996 by the introduction of a discussion paper to evolve a policy for women's development. The goals outlined in the document, focus on elimination of discrimination against women in all fields. This policy is reinforced in the Vision 2020 document for the State, which acknowledges that women's empowerment is critical to the overall development process.

The GoAP has taken special interest in drawing up programmes for self-reliance of women, rural and disadvantaged groups(Refer to annexure 3). Successful implementation of these policies, however, is hampered by bureaucratic resistance, local politics, and socio-economic ground realities. Realising its limitations, the AP State government strongly stimulates the participation of NGOs¹, including Mahila Samakhya, and local communities. The success of the DWCRA programme in the state is attributed to the involvement of NGOs. Local communities are activated through the state-wide Janmaboomi programme, resulting in an upsurge of women Self Help Groups (SHGs). These developments have a significant impact on the present and future Mahila Samakhya Programme in the state. On the one hand it creates more space for convergence, and a greater demand for gender inputs and mobilisation of women by Mahila Samakhya, from both government and NGOs. At the same time, Mahila Samakhya is compelled to change its approach, being confronted with a large and growing number of SHGs in the villages. Entering two new neighbouring districts in 2000, i.e. Nalgonda and Warangal, the MS team decided to experiment with "village Sanghas" or 'super sanghas', visualised as umbrella forums, inviting all the existing SHGs in a village to establish one women's collective together. Since SHGs are focussing on economic activities, Mahila Samakhya is able to create a niche for itself, focussing on gender and social issues.

B. ANDHRA PRADESH MAHILA SAMATHA SOCIETY²

Andhra Pradesh Mahila Samatha Society was the second generation of Mahila Samakhya initiatives launched by the Government of India in 1993. It started in AP with the coverage of two districts – Medak and Mahboobnagar covering four Mandals³ in each district. As of 2001, the coverage of MS in AP extends to seven districts, covering over 1101 villages in 32 Mandals.

¹ The Secretary School Education and the State Project Director of DPEP, explicitly highlighted the need for NGO support to reach out of school children and to improve the education system.

² the programme is called Mahila Samakhya in other states and at the national level, it was called the Mahila Samatha programme in AP since there were already other programmes and organizations by the name of "Samakhya" in existance in the state

³ Mandal is the sub-district level administrative unit in the state and is smaller than the block as the found in other states

Table 4: Coverage Of The APMS Programme *

Districts included in the programme	Year of initiation	Mandals covered by 2001	Villages covered by 2001
Medak	1993	7	179
Mahboobnagar	1993	7	288
Karimnagar	1997	7	254
Nizamabad	1998	3	109
Adilabad	1998	4	116
Nalgonda	2000	2	80
Warangal	2000	2	75
7	2001	32	1101

*Source AP state report 2001.

The programme started in two blocks each of Medak and Mehboobnagar districts in '93 and is concentrated in the Telangana region, which is characterized by a situation of overall underdevelopment and :

- A large constituency of marginalised communities – SC, ST and Muslim
- Low literacy levels for SC/ST women, ranging from 15-25%
- Other low development indicators for women's health, life expectancy, birth rate, mean age at marriage, differential school enrolment for girl and socio-economic status.

Each district is managed by a District Implementation Unit having a team of Resource Persons, Consultants under the leadership of a District Coordinator and facilitated by support staff. While at the Mandal level there are a Junior Resource Persons and Sahyoginis who coordinate the Sanghas and federations.

Activities And Priority Issues

The activities of MS in AP are centered around 5 main issues - education, gender and social issues, health, self-governance, and natural resources and asset building- which in the context of the needs of the area and the development indicators have been and appropriate focus. The process of decentralization and the formation of Federations has become a prominent feature on the agenda since the last two years, resulting in an increase of capacity building training for staff and Sangha women.

After the evaluation in 1997, education became a priority issue at the national and state level. Through workshops and training the education activities were re-examined and streamlined, especially interventions regarding girls' education, the BMKs and MSKs. In Mahboobnagar the local BMK teachers played a crucial role in highlighting the issue of child labour in the cotton fields. Sangha women started addressing the problem in 1998, first at village level, stopping their own girls from working in the fields and trying to convince parents of the health hazards. In the following years they gradually extended their action radius, involving village elders, education committees, government officials and landowners. The persistent action has resulted in a significant reduction of child labour and in some villages the cotton production has been halted completely. The issue of child labour remains an issue of concern for Mahila Samakhya in AP, and AP MS is now an active member of the AP Alliance of Child Rights.

Social issues related to women dominate the agenda of the Sanghas. One of the main issues has been the struggle against the Jogini system, a religious tradition of dedicating young girls to a deity, which has become a form of child prostitution. Sangha women also

take collective action against child marriage, caste discrimination, alcoholism, domestic violence, harassment and rape. Two rape cases of minors led to big rallies in the last two years, involving around 800 women from across the region. However, the vision to build a network of 10,000 women has yet to materialize, as also the alternative women's courts.

Sustainable agriculture and collective farming emerged as an issue in 1997 after a workshop on rain fed agriculture in Mahboobnagar, gradually developing into a project of convergence. The issues that confronted them were those of:

- inequitable distribution of land -poor quality land accessible to SC groups
- inability to make investments to improve the quality of land
- low availability of wage work on farms –reduced numbers of work days (3-4 months in the year)
- increased cultivation of commercial crops that require high capital investments
- damage to land productivity and reduction of household food security
- involvement of child labour in cotton cultivation areas –source of cheap labour
- over exploitation of ground water resources for intensive cultivation.

MS responded to the request of older Sanghas to start collective farming for food security, by developing a revolving fund to co-finance the lease of land and agricultural inputs. Experiences with collective farming led to a felt need for accessing credit and expertise, which resulted in 1999 in the formulation of a proposal for the sustainable dry land agriculture project, Samatha Dharani, which covers 500 villages across 5 districts. The proposal was submitted to the department of Agriculture and was financed by the UNDP.⁴ Sanghas involved in the project, receive technical inputs from agriculture resource persons assigned to the programme, as well as from several institutes and NGOs. Women's own Samatha Dharani project thus took shape which helped them to link up with SAMETI, SAPAP, CRIDA, CEE and IGMRI for capacity building in areas of dry land farming, horticulture, processing technology, grain storage and water and land management.

The inputs include training in vermiculture, production and use of organic fertilizers, soil testing, seed production, and grain storage bins. The project has resulted in multiple activities, from addressing issues of food security, organic farming and land rights for women to strengthening the entrepreneurial capacity of women in selling their produce and starting collective businesses, making use of available government schemes and facilities. Despite the many challenges the programme has faced such as bureaucratic obstacles, unfavorable weather conditions, the project stands out as an example of successful convergence, based on the needs of Sangha women.

Women and governance is another priority issue for Mahila Samakhya in Andhra Pradesh, triggered off with the announcement of Panchayati Raj elections in the year 2000. The activities focussed on dissemination of information of the importance of local self-governance through training, workshops, and melas. Apart from creating voter awareness, these activities also provided an opportunity for elected members to share experiences, and to motivate women to stand for elections. Many Sangha women participated in the Panchayat elections, and a significant number were elected. The melas also resulted in an increased number of women being elected as chairpersons of village education committees, as women realized they could also stand for this post. Post the elections, Mahila Samakhya is concentrating on further capacity building, to strengthen elected members as well as to support the lobby activities of women.

⁴ The MoU was signed by the end of 1999 and the first installment of funds was released by mid 2000.

- ***The programme is named Mahila Samatha, because in AP there was already an organisation active under the name of Mahila Samakhya.**

Health is a major issue that affects Sanghas women's lives, work and outputs. This issue has been addressed through

- Perspective building inputs of women's health status and problems
- information dissemination of available health facilities
- analysis to take concrete action for addressing health needs
- revival of traditional knowledge systems
- conducting training programmes on herbal/traditional medicine
- production and marketing of these home based products locally

APMSS has disbursed health information on treatment of wounds and cleanliness for skin disease - neem leaves and turmeric powder treatment, pomegranate leaves for diarrhea and various herbal treatment for problems of white discharge etc. Capacity building of Karyakartas and Sangha women was initiated focussing on identification of symptoms of common diseases and preventive health, social and physical factors affecting women's health and integrating health with other gender issues and social practices. In partnership with WHO, MS took up a project on training of women health leaders in which 228 Sangha women from 2 districts in AP (Karimnagar and Medak) received training.

C. PROGRESS AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

1. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

1.1 The Impact on Women's Personal and Family Lives, Autonomy and the Socio Cultural Environment

Sanghas

It is quite evident that the inputs of the last several years have significantly changed the persona and self-identity of poor Dalit women. This is increasingly reflected in their evolution as Sanghas and as centres of power and pressure groups at village and Mandal level. The negotiation power of women has increased not only in their homes but also with village leaders, landowners, Panchayats and Sarpanches. They have been successful in altering caste/ class and gender relations at both domestic and village level. The intensive, reflective and analytical processes undertaken to help women develop and understand their situation and to develop strategies for negotiating, accessing and bringing within their control circumstances and assets have paid dividends. Women have become more articulate with information and validation of their knowledge and skills, and are now able to express themselves in all types of forums and situations. They have developed intra and inter Sangha networks for federation building across Mandals to address their needs and priorities.

Above all they have developed a clear understanding of issues that affect their lives – education, health and sanitation, violence, legal rights, child labour, natural resources and environment and governance.

⁵ Karyakarta is the term used for Sahayoginis in the AP state programme since Sahayogini was considered to be too similar a nomenclature to the term Jogini, a social custom that the programme was seeking to challenge

To educate people about child labour we conducted kaia jathas, rallies and gram sabha meetings and convinced many parents by explaining the health problems posed by the use of pesticides in the cotton fields. We took two years to stop 50% of the children from going into child labour. We have spoken to the Mandal officials and cotton growers to stop the cultivation of cotton. In six villages we have been successful in stopping the cultivation of cotton after convincing the owners.

Consequently, they are able to participate as a group and as individuals in meetings, discussions and negotiations with government and other functionaries to look critically at development programmes and examine schemes for the Sangha members and for village development at village, Mandal and district level. The fact that they are able to actually access and obtain what has been meant for them lends credibility to their image in the village and entrusts them with a certain kind of power and responsibility. Where once they were insignificant members of the community, today they have presence, voice and status despite the fact that they belong to marginalized social groups that were hitherto excluded from village forums.

This has been followed by the representation of Sangha women in many Panchayats, Mandal Committees and district bodies as well as School Education Committees. ***Three of us are SEC members. We ensure regular attendance of teachers and discuss the issue with the Sarpanch if the teacher continues to abstain from his duties. If it is not possible then we complain to the Mandal officials. We are sending all our children to school and the adolescent girls to the MSK. We are sending them to the Back to School Programme. Apart from Sangha families we are also convincing other parents to send their children to school.***

The training and capacity building of Sangha women has resulted in awareness about Panchayati Raj and the crucial role of the Gram Sabha, which has led to a greater preparedness for the recent elections. The Sanghas have contributed to disseminating a lot of information about the elections and their process to the community and activated several Gram Sabhas in their areas – particularly the women - to play an active role. They have also worked actively with the non-Sangha elected women members to inform and empower them with information about procedures, rules and regulations. Now they are not averse to being active participants in Panchayats as they are getting acquainted with the internal nuances of their operations and are able to influence the decisions of the committees that they are elected to. The men in the Panchayats have to listen to them because of their backing in the community and their rational justification of village issues and priority needs. Men have now realized that women in the village support the Sangha on issues of education, water, wages, health etc. So when issues are put before the Panchayat these are given priority.

With the growing level of information and active initiation/participation in social issues – jogini cult, child marriages, untouchability, female infanticide and discrimination of the girl child, minimum wages and land titles/rights – Sanghas have developed a network and linkages for collective action. This has led them to think of developing federations at Mandal and cluster level to address the issues on a wider scale. When success stories of cases are heard then other villages want to come within the fold of the MS Sanghas.

Challenges Ahead

Initially there was resistance to the Sangha from the men. But now gender relations have reportedly changed. Husbands are now more willing to look after the children; in-laws and children will prepare food for the family and look after the cattle when the women go for meetings and training in the older districts. Agricultural work is postponed for the next day in the event of urgent Sangha work. Women in all districts are giving priority to girls' education and have aspirations for them. Some women in Nizamabad shared their

preference to send their daughters to hostels as they are often busy with Sangha work and wage work and do not want them to be burdened with domestic work and denied development opportunities. They feel proud when the daughter is learning and do not shy away from taking lessons in literacy from school going daughters.

“ Men spend more time with us discussing things and are taking our opinion in decision making. They are also of the opinion that if we the wives get educated there is a chance of being elected as Sarpanch or MPTC member.”

Sangha members report that conflicts in family have reduced, due to women's participation in meetings. When one woman is beaten up the group talks to her husband many times and pressurizes him to mend his ways. They are sensitive to his problem and if he is bothering his wife due to external pressure they help him to deal with that or to resolve the issue as well. Women are aware of laws and may, if the need arises, threaten to take him to the Police or call him to the Sangha meeting.

The struggles for wage increase in villages across Mandals have given more confidence to the women. They have negotiated with the landlords for minimum wages with the support of women who are members of their Sanghas and are also from the land owning class. They have attained recognition in the villages and outside too. In neighboring Mandals the effort is to emulate the Sanghas. Sangha women are saving money now, they have acquired a social status, buy clothes they like, even indulge in buying earrings and accessories. While earlier they used to drink too, now they abstain from drinking and instead invest their money or get better food for themselves and for their families.

The Sarpanch in one village is not a group member but women go to her for support. She now wants to join the Sangha since Sangha women give her strength. Those who did not join the group now want to join; upper caste women also want to join the Sangha for strength, and express the need for women of all communities to come together.

Health issues have been addressed through the various training interventions and information that has been made available to the women. Women report that earlier they went to the doctor for all problems, but are now able to treat everyday ailments through the reinforcement and enhancement of their own knowledge. As a result of the WHO sponsored TOT programme, in which 228 Sangha women from Karimnagar and Medak received training, the women and the karyakarthas report the following outcomes –

- women realized the need to have control over their bodies and their sexuality towards improvement of their status
- women were able to share with many other women members what they had learnt
- wanted to be trained as dais (traditional birth attendants)
- became conscious about identifying and treating ordinary everyday ailments
- partnership with ANMs for health campaigns-immunization, filaria, sanitation
- women are demanding kits and further knowledge to deal with common ailments

In Reddipalli village, Medak, the ANM did not come regularly, This issue was discussed in the Sangha meeting and a plan was evolved. They then discussed the issue with the village. The Sangha women then spoke to doctor at the PHC due to which the problem was resolved. Anganwadi centres have been started in the village at the initiative of the Sangha women and they now monitor the teacher. They learnt how to access information on health, and about menstruation and hygienic habits related to it as well as about pregnancy check ups and immunization. They also learnt about the reasons for leukorea and methods of about herbal medicines to treat this and other reproductive tract infections (Venkatapur). Women share the information received during training with group members and practice what they learnt.

Now they feel strengthened in their knowledge of health care services and how to access them. Many Sangha women have developed an understanding of female infanticide and discrimination against the girl child in the name of social customs and traditions and have consciously taken the decision to oppose such practices along with those of early marriage, Jogini system and child labour.

Access To Resources And Sustainability Issues are being addressed through the Sanghas' engagement in the Samatha Dharini project. Sangha women had often discussed issues related to agriculture since their livelihoods were dependent on it.

Women decided to take up collective farming on their own lands or to procure land on lease. Many Sangha women took the initiative to get land titles in their names or in joint names with their husbands to secure future ownership and control over the asset. They have been able to save grain for lean periods in collective storage bins to ensure food security. They are able to handle Sangha funds and financial assistance funds through the banks, keeping track of expenditures and investments through norms and rules. The withdrawal of money for expenditures is done by two of the three signatories upto a limit of Rs 5000/- at a time. A frequency plan is also developed as to when the money will be required so that it is not lying idle when withdrawn from the bank.

In Mahboobnagar Sangha women of Vadwat village have taken up the issue of low and discriminatory wages. They collectively decided that they would not accept Rs 10 per day and protest by not going to the fields. For this they also drew support from other women in the village so that they would support their demands. The 25 Sangha women wage labourers in the Sangha convinced the other 18 members and other village labourers also. They discussed the issue with the Sarpanch, landlords and the Agriculture Officer. Finally the wages were fixed at Rs 15-25 per day, in the dry season and Rs 30-40 in the peak season.

Medak Sangha women say, "we are not able to grow white jowar (millet) because it requires fine soil. The soils we have are of poor quality so we are unable to grow it."

In one Sangha the women cultivated 10 acres of land to grow paddy and groundnuts. The paddy produced was 170 bags of 70 kg each. It was stored in the grain storage bin constructed in the village at cluster level to be used in the lean season. The ground nuts were used within the Sangha and some sold in the village.

In Bikkannur village in Nizamabad, the Sangha has obtained land for collective farming from an upper caste landlord for cultivation. The Sangha is two years old and one of its members has also been recently elected as the MPTC member. The group is currently faced with problems of coordination of the collective farm, as members are not equally involved or aware of the activities of the group nor are the terms of lease very clear. The members we interacted with were quite confident of being able to negotiate the terms of the lease in their favour beyond the 3 year period initially negotiated, as well as to ask to ensure the provision of a bore-well for the field without which agricultural activity would be unfruitful. However, the varying level of involvement and the lack of transparency in the management of the activity may cause serious problems in the group in its production activity. The availability of resources seems to have hastened the pace of the group's entry into the collective farming activity, without the systems for production and sharing of produce and returns having been adequately understood by all the members. Access to Sangha funds and the micro capital fund make it all the more necessary that collective processes are discussed and clear to all and adequate time and space is given for these to be internalized as values before the resources are made available.

Whereas women from Mahboobnagar were able to articulate the norms for collective farming and the ways of conflict resolution quite clearly, they had obviously not had adequate time to understand these issues. The group in Bikkanur is comparatively new and has little experience of working on common issues and struggles to create a common cohesive identity. The access to resources came at a time when group strengthening was needed, given that the regular Karyakartha was not available and the election of a member as the MPTC member created a new dynamic in the group.

Hence, a constant vigil is required to ensure that the group processes are not being compromised with the provision of new inputs, and that the groups are at a level to absorb such inputs and manage them in the collective. The collective management of resources and funds is a complicated issue and Sanghas require strong internal processes to function as a collective with well coordinated decision making and sustained support from the Karyakartha and DIU on these aspects, especially in the initial phase in order to succeed. The establishment of MIS systems at the DIU and state level to keep track of and provide all support to facilitate such groups is essential, especially when groups are swimming against the tide of market led private enterprise and competition models. In trying to establish the credibility of collective forms of production as an alternative means to address the needs of the most vulnerable communities, groups require guidance not only in the technical aspects, but also the operational management aspects.

At present, the programme structure provides for technical guidance through a Junior Resource Person who may have the expertise in the technical aspects of agriculture but may not be equipped to provide guidance on the collective management aspects which are essential to ensure that the process is sustained. In this context learning from other Sanghas in the older districts would help to develop these processes more effectively, as well as equip the RPs for these tasks. A greater involvement from the state office is also called for in ensuring that the learning of the older districts is transferred through exchanges and tours to new areas. Based on the experience gained so far in the older districts and the learning from other organizations, a set of guidelines for collective management of resources could also be evolved and enriched further through emerging experiences of the programme in AP and other states.

The programme however needs to be cautious about introducing the economic agenda for collective farming or the access to resources for construction of the Cluster level women's huts. This should only be done after groups are adequately strengthened and experienced in managing their resources and activities collectively, and have evolved ways to address internal problems, lest the access to resources before the group is mature enough to absorb these cause problems in the internal dynamics of groups. Especially in the new districts, where new activities and approaches are being introduced based on the learning emerging from old districts, adequate time must be given for such processes to play themselves out and for needs to emerge before such activities are introduced and substantial inputs are provided. The policy to release the Sangha funds only once the group is identified as strong is a sound one and should form the criteria for disbursement of other resources to them as well.

In new areas where the cluster is the focus of development, as the mission witnessed in Nizamabad, much more attention is required towards the transfer of learning and dissemination of information from the cluster to the Sanghas. While the RPs play a significant role of facilitating the inputs at the Cluster level, Karyakarthas have a key role to play in monitoring the transfer process. They need to ensure that learning does not remain centred with the leaders, and that all group members develop perspectives and are aware of the issues and activities that the group engages in.

1.2 Women's Political Participation

APMSS successfully incorporated the Panchayati Raj Act and its 33 percent reservation for women in local administrative bodies, as a vehicle to promote women's autonomy in self-governance. With the second round of elections announced in the year 2000 in AP and finally conducted in August 2001, both Sangha women and staff energetically swung into action. Information was channelled through workshops, trainings and mela's, focussing on voter awareness. Armed with this knowledge Sangha women were able to formulate their own needs, and challenge candidates and make demands during the election campaign. Many women also stood for elections. In meetings they recalled the problems they faced, such as the lack of experience and party support, and being pestered and pressurised by male leaders and high caste competitors. Some failed, but a significant number also got elected as ward members, Sarpanches, or representative at block level⁶.

Beyond the Sangha:

Ashamma related the instance of accessing housing for the poor and Joginis where the Sarpanch was not taking the initiative. The women went to meet the MRO regarding the issue 2-3 times and he too was unresponsive. So the Sangha decided to take out a rally and march to the MRO's office with flags and slogans. The MRO immediately sanctioned 50 houses to Karni village. He asked the women to list the poor people who required houses. The Sangha women identified 8 Sangha members who had huts and the rest were allocated to the needy villagers. After this many other women joined the Sangha feeling that it was not partial and was working for the good of the village. Similarly the people of Edsanpalli were able to get a road for the village. Women feel that if they form a Federation they have better learning and negotiation power

In Alladurg Mandal of Medak district one MSK student got elected as Mandal Parishad President. They are the new role models for many others who are waiting their turn in the next elections.

Besides these, in the tribal area of Adilabad in two villages – Mahagaon and Choripalli – in Sirpur Mandal, Adilabad district, MS worked actively to facilitate the establishment of two all women Panchayats. The whole community supported the initiative in order to overcome the usual political bickering among male candidates. With the exception of the Sarpanch all members were unanimously appointed. It is yet too early to measure the impact, but the women will need a lot of support to 'prove' themselves in these new leadership roles and to understand the procedures and nuances of local self governance. Continuous capacity building training is required for all elected women to ensure that they are active, to overcome their inhibitions, and to familiarise them with the rules and regulations and special skills to plan and manage affairs of the Panchayats.

The information Melas on Panchayati Raj provided women with valuable information on various topics. Women became aware that they can become members of the village education committee, and also strive for the chair⁷. Knowledge clearly empowered the Sangha women, encouraging them to stand for public posts, which before were seen as a male domain. Now they have their own Sangha network to support them. Sanghas are aware of their growing influence, as they consciously choose to strengthen their advocacy capacity via federations at mandal level.

⁶ A total of 531 sangha women got elected across the seven districts, 6 as Zilla Panchayat member, 34 as mandal panchayat member, and 531 at the village level, of which 55 as sarpanch and 21 as upasarpanch.

⁷ Compared to the previous elections, a significant larger number of sangha women got elected as chairperson of the village education comity. In December 2000 a total of 326 members and 115 chairpersons were elected, as against 335 members and just 3 chairpersons during the previous election.

Many took the initiative to stand for elections despite unfavourable odds even on reserved seats. They felt that "losing was not the issue, the issue was learning the intricacies of participation and obtaining a space for interventions." For this they had been well equipped through training, IEC materials and adequate discussion on strategies to deal with other political forces at ground level. The primary initiative of all Sanghas was to activate the Gram Sabhas to involve women at village level as their allies. These women were able to lobby and campaign for them. Women from Sanghas participated with a stronger understanding, being able to advocate and campaign on the basis of social and development issues concerning women.

The visibility of Sangha women in Panchayat elections at all levels is evident in the data presented here for 2001

Table 6: Participation Of Sangha Women In Panchayati Raj Elections

Number of Sangha women elected at various Levels of LSG	Districts
ZPTC 3,2,1 = 6	Adilabad, Nizamabad, Nalgonda
MTPC 13, 2,4,5,3,1,6 = 34	Vahboobnagar, Medak, Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, Nalgonda Adilabad
Ward Members = 415 Sarpanches = 55 Upsarpanches = 21 Total = 491	All Districts
Total 531 sangha women	All districts

Source: APMS report, 2000

Just being in the elected body is not the objective of the members. They have been able to address and voice the issues that affect women – schools, education for girls, drinking water, housing, roads, bore wells for agriculture, health care, immunization and income generating programmes. They set the agendas for meetings and demand accountability from other Panchayat members as well as government functionaries and Mandal Officers who are expected to render support for village and Mandal development.

1.4 Women's Legal Rights

Dissemination of legal rights information is an inherent part of MS activities. Sanghas demonstrate an increased awareness on women's rights and related laws and regulations by addressing various discriminatory social practices such as child marriage, the Jogini system and untouchability. Backed by information on legal and basic rights, women fight for implementation of minimum wages and joint land titles. Strong Sanghas are able to compel police and officials to support their actions, as they are aware of procedures. Their rallies against cases of rape, murder and caste violence have ensured timely and effective investigations, although not all culprits have been caught.

On several occasions women expressed the need for an alternative justice system, like the women's courts which MS has established in UP and Gujarat. Women heard about the experience through the Sanghamitra Conference held in Delhi and reiterate the need for such a mechanism every time they have to deal with violence in the domestic or public domain. An exposure trip could stimulate further action, especially with the Federations having emerged and in the process of defining their agenda.

The involvement of MS in legal rights issues has been positively acknowledged by common people, police and officials. On request of the District Collector of Medak,

MS developed a booklet on women's legal rights and organised several workshops and village meetings.

In the future the Sanghas/Federations want to take up legal rights issues by setting up Womens' Courts to help women and raise issues of child labour, wages, land rights/titles, child marriages, female infanticide, rape, violence and discrimination with a proper legal understanding. For child labour and child marriages Sanghas have campaigned and dialogued with parents, community, landlords and Sarpanches.

In this region where girls are employed for cotton picking, the Sanghas have been successful in bringing about significant reduction in the instances of child labour in cotton fields by taking up the issue of child rights. Through the networking between Sanghas they were able to pressurize landlords and the district administration to curb and ban the employment of children in the cotton fields. Following the instance of the death of a girl who inhaled excessive pesticide used to control pests in the cotton field, Sangha members took out a massive rally and built up pressure on the landlords to discourage them from cotton cultivation and desist from using child labour in the fields. They also highlighted the negative impact of mono cropping on the soil. Consequently across several villages in Mandals where the Sanghas have had influence, the non-availability of cheap child labour (children were paid Rs 5-10, adults Rs 30-40 as per new demands), farmers have stopped cultivating cotton.

Modes of payment for labour are also changing. Adult labourers earlier accepted arack as wages, but this was stopped in a number of villages after the women protested and identified this as a reason for their physical abuse and penury at the hands of drunken husbands and their own ill health. Instead women now demand payment in cash, food grains or eggs.

Sanghas have actively campaigned against child marriages. Just before the marriage season in Nizamabad, they campaigned door to door and during Melas and local festivals to educate people about not marrying off their daughter before maturity. They prepared songs, plays and slogans to convince people to change the practice of early marriage; they cite the MSKs as the alternative help people to send girls to MSKs and hostels for education. In fact, some girls at the MSK in Nizamabad admitted that they were earlier working in the cotton fields but were happy to acquire an education and were desirous of pursuing their education further.

They had also motivated other girls in their villages to join the MSKs. The girls too are conscious of the fact that it is illegal to marry before the age of 18 and make it clear to their parents that they will complain to the police if they are married early. Similarly women have campaigned against the Jogini system where young girls are dedicated for religious devotion, where in fact they are sexually exploited.

Sanghas have been able to enlist police and administrative support for curbing discriminatory and illegal social practices, but they are seeking legal clarity on many aspects in order to enable to take a strong position and to help in the resolution of cases in a gender sensitive manner. They would like to develop their capacities to run women's courts. Now that their Federations are being registered, women plan to frame proper procedures and regulations to gain recognition from the government. They plan to access schemes and programmes for development activities that will benefit their members and communities through better services and through the generation of employment opportunities through such community based works.

Buddamma rationalises with the community that the Jogini system is a bad practice, as girls become public property, they are ill treated, and do not get respect in society and also spoil their health. Federation leaders inform us that through their efforts the Jjogini system has been entirely stopped for the last two years in their Mandal. In one instance, when three girls were to be dedicated in Kurumurthy Jatra Narva, the Federation members stopped the ceremony with the help of the police. They remain ever vigilant to stop any more dedications in the region.

Sanghas and federations in the old districts prioritize the social mobilization agenda to address their social status; such articulation is however not explicit in the second phase districts, except in the tribal districts of Adilabad. MS needs to consciously focus its efforts towards establishing the primacy of the agenda of addressing strategic gender needs, in order to strengthen its identity as the only programme to focus on social empowerment concerns.

1.5 Transcending Caste And Class Divides

While MS focus on the social and economic marginalized households almost automatically results in a dominant representation of women from scheduled castes and other backward castes, the programme consciously tries to include other women. Crossing caste boundaries is easier for strong Sanghas, which are recognised as a reliable local organisation. Initially Sanghas often focus on basic needs such as water, housing, and roads, which are caste-centred as caste/class groups traditionally live in geographic separated areas. This however is not the case in the new districts of Warangal and Nalgonda, where MS from the start approach all existing women groups, focussing on common social concerns.

In Andhra Pradesh the caste divide remains an issue in the rural areas. Many villages still adhere to the 'two-glass' system (separate glasses for water/tea for upper and lower castes), separate temples and wells. Sanghas try to overcome the divide by stressing common concerns. They have written several songs to address the issue, singing that all people have the same blood. MS encourages women to rotate the meeting venue, to cover houses of all members and visibly demonstrate unity across class and caste. Experience shows that issues of violence are the most 'unifying' common concerns, which bring women from all backgrounds together. Now women have started participating in local governance and networking among elected women representatives. This offers another opening to bridge the caste and class divide and work together to focus on gender concerns.

Crossing caste boundaries has become possible for strong Sanghas, as they have developed a higher level of cohesion and articulation of issues and are recognised as reliable local organizations seeking to address social discriminatory practices. In the new districts of Warangal and Nalgonda, where MS seeks to work with all existing women groups, the Karyakartas report various instances of class and caste issues being addressed. Women have worked together to clear and repair water tanks and water points, to create access to services for the more vulnerable communities and to access justice for the oppressed across caste/class groups. SHG Groups that were originally formed as economic entities are now addressing social and gender issues across class/caste boundaries.

However, MS fears that the recently initiated state-wide poverty programme DPIP, could hamper these developments seems legitimate given the economic nature of the programme, its component of matching resources for groups, and its exclusive focus on SC/ST women

1.6 Creating A Foundation For Grass-Roots Level Women's Movement

The lively discussions with Sangha women and Karyakarthis and their eagerness to share experiences are testimony of the impact of the MS programme. Women are no longer silent. They now dare to speak out, among themselves, within the family, to village elders, landowners and government officials. All women cherish their own little and big 'victories', whether it is taking time off for a meeting, being able to choose the colour of new sari, writing their own name, sending their daughters to school, asking their husbands how much they have earned. They have progressed from Sanghas to coming together as Federations that provide the collective platform to challenge discriminatory practices, child labour, child marriage and sexual violence. This was neither an easy nor a quick process. But step by step Sangha women have gained more space, more influence and become more visible. It is very encouraging to see that once women discover their own strengths, the process of empowerment is irreversible and inclusive for other women around them.

'We hold the keys for development' say women from the Federation in Mahboobnagar district. They can open the doors to government services and resources like pensions, houses, bore wells and roads. With MS having provided the Sangha women with information, they themselves can access the government schemes, even demand and pressurise officials for quality and timely services. The Sanghas have thus emerged as credible local organisations, being recognised as valuable sources of information within the village.

Across all seven districts Sanghas are acting as local and regional pressure groups, taking up various social issues. Starting at village level and gradually expanding to the cluster and block level, women have successfully taken action against the *jogini*-system and child marriages. Last December, Sangha women of Mahboobnagar district themselves took the initiative to organise a stall at a regional *yatra*, a popular event where child marriage is a common feature. In the same district women are collectively fighting against child labour in the cotton fields. Even in the new districts of Nalgonda and Warangal, where MS started work in mid 2000, women already took collective action against locally brewed alcohol in several villages.

Sanghas across the state have started addressing the issue of violence against women, in the private as well as public domain. Two cases of rape in 1999 and 2000, one resulting in the death of an 18-year old, led to much publicised rallies in which 800 women including other women's organisations were involved. A broad-based women's network has yet to materialise, although the recently established federations are a step in that direction, creating new forums for women. The Sanghas see themselves as part of the women's movement. This feeling is strengthened by the fact that in most MS districts there are few other women's organisations active in the rural areas. However, it is still too early to speak of MS as a women's movement, as it lacks the critical mass. With a presence in 1101 villages spread over 7 districts and 32 Mandals, MS has a far larger base than most NGOs, but it needs to create a strong bond between the geographically scattered Sanghas across the districts, and across states. Strategic alliances with like-minded organisations also need to be improved, to strengthen women's solidarity.

Federations

Federations have emerged at Mandal level in the perspective of decentralization, self-reliance, autonomy and sustainability of Sanghas in the two older districts – Mahboobnagar and Medak. The Sanghas have visualized them as forums to serve as pressure groups to influence change, interface with the government departments and act as a resource group for health, education, Panchayati Raj, agriculture and social issues like child labour, jogini system and child marriages.

In the meeting with Federation members from the two districts, members articulated their vision for the Federations as "Independent" forum where Sangha women can be actors without dependence on Karyakarthis" with their own credibility for linkage and support to groups. Tasks ahead were identified as follows-

- Attain a legal status and recognition
- To draw more support from men as a strategy to combat resistance from men.
- To demand greater strength of women in watershed committees.
- Identify problems / common works that and seek Mandal support and to negotiate with Mandal officials.
- Demand for rights and programmes from Mandal for SC/ST groups
- Tackle issues of violence with more support from larger number of women.
- Render support to other community groups seeking support on common issues
- Seek wider visibility and support as well as information/knowledge

They outlined their immediate agenda as -

- * Dealing with atrocities against women – through campaigns and agitations and setting up Nari Adalats like in other MS states
- * Develop information centres at village/Mandal, phone connection, information necessary for problems solving and quick response to women's needs
- * Set up MSKs for women's literacy skills and training as well for their children
- * Develop a support network for agricultural inputs and good practices
- * Take up issues of irrigation and water supply at village level

Women in the Mahboobnagar Federation held discussions about water and agriculture. They decided to construct a grain storage bin, and develop a bore well in the field. For this they planned to meet concerned officials to submit applications to address their requirements.

However they do need inputs for:

- technical skill up gradation – material development, communication,
- political understanding of social issues such as child labour and bonded labour
- accessing government resources and programmes
- financial management and planning
- coordination of planned activities and generation of resources for sustainability

Federations- 4 in Mahboobnagar and 2 in Medak district- have been formally registered under the Societies Act in the past year. They have governing bodies and executive bodies for policy and managerial decisions respectively. They pass resolutions by majority and have bi-monthly meetings at Mandal level on fixed dates. The office bearers are elected and appointed for a one-year tenure. The formation of Federations as a process of decentralisation marks the increasing autonomy of Sangha women. The MS functionaries support the process, and envisage the setting up of a Gender Resource Centre (at State and District level) to cater to the new roles of Sangha women, Karyakarthis and other staff.

Models of federation vary across the talukas based on the level of trust and interface between groups. Thus Adarsh Federation has federation representation from each member village in the Mandal, whereas Makthal Federation has a pattern of cluster representation. This provides the option of flexibility for groups based on their inter group dynamics and does not impose a predetermined model. The clarity among member groups about roles of Executive Committee members/ Federation members varies although leaders themselves are quite clear about their own roles and responsibilities.

Government officials treat Sangha women with respect and regularly request their assistance for various awareness campaigns or to mobilise women. Realising this potential, Sangha members have begun to take up public posts as members and chairpersons of Village Education Committees, and as elected representatives of the

village and Mandal Panchayats. To enlarge their role in local self-governance the older Sanghas started to set up Federations, combining their strength at the Mandal level.

While women in the Sanghas view themselves as affiliated to a larger forum of women across the states, whose purpose is to improve the status of women, they are not aware of any other initiatives or of a women's movement in the state. Awareness of experiences of women's organization and agitation in various parts of the state to address women's priorities is also limited to the older districts and older groups. The focus seems to be that of empowerment as a programmatic thrust within the MS itself, rather than of enabling women to see themselves as part of a larger movement. Efforts need to be made to introduce more discussion on the experiences of the movement and to enable women of MS Sanghas to actively engage with other women's organizations and platforms to be able to place themselves within the larger perspective.

1.7 Growth, Pace And Emerging Trends

Since its inception in 1993, there has been an accelerated growth of the MS programme in the Telangana region of AP in the last five years. Since 1997 the programme has rapidly expanded to new villages, new Mandals and new districts. Experience in the old districts has provided the impetus to the MS staff to accelerate the pace in the new groups and New Districts. Existing Sanghas have also contributed to the expansion as they help neighbouring village women to establish their own Sanghas. With stronger Sanghas becoming more independent and capable of handling their work and needing less support on a day to day basis, some Karyakartas have been able to focus on emerging groups. Old Karyakartas and district staff have also moved to new districts and blocks to initiate the processes as part of a systematic strategy of expansion, drawing upon their past experiences. In the older districts the outreach of the Sanghas has been strengthened with the formation of clusters, bringing together 3 to 5 neighbouring Sanghas together. These clusters are the stepping stone for the formation of Federations at Mandal level. In AP, this process of decentralization started in earnest two years ago, after the **Sanghamitra** workshop in Delhi. By the end of 2001 a total of 6 Federations have been formally registered in Medak and Mahbubnagar districts, whereas several more are in the process of registration. In recent years many Sanghas have also established Cheli or Balika Sanghas for adolescent girls

The processes in the second phase districts have however not been as intensive and lack the rigour of the first phase districts, partly due to the fact that there is a perennial staff shortage especially in the new districts. This staff turnover also implies a loss of people who have shared the common and fundamental perspectives that are essential to the strengthening and expansion of the processes in the new districts. This lack of personnel is directly attributable to the low remuneration, at levels far below the market rate, and the demands of the programme. While the state office has sought to provide the support required for overcoming this problem, they themselves have been stretched due to a similar problem at the state level. The expansion of the programme to the envisaged nine districts has also not been possible for the same reasons. Retention and appropriate compensation to the staff are a prerequisite for the quality of the programme especially in such a process-oriented programme.

However, the strategy has been modified in Nalgonda and Warangal district in the third phase, to involve all existing SHGs as part of the village Sangha, with a number of SHGs in each such Sangha. The results of this strategy are gradually becoming explicit in the level of solidarity among women and the streamlining of systems in the SHGs on the basis of new information and values imbibed during the course of Sangha interventions by SHGs. Thus the **Super Sangha Or Village Sangha** approach has a unifying effect on women, and the potential of strengthening and correction impact on the existing SHGs

based on the principles of accountability and collective functioning learnt through the interface with MS. The response to this strategy has been positive as women realise the need to move beyond the economic agenda of thrift and credit and income generating activities to a forum that addresses social issues to bring about a change in their status. However, the state team fears that even with this approach future expansion will be limited, given the fact that the DPIP programme will shortly enter all the districts, with field workers placed at the Mandal level. Therefore MS is now gearing itself to cater to the arising gender and social inputs needs through the recently established **State Gender Resource Centre**. This development strengthens the institutional development of MS as a state based society and creates new learning opportunities and challenges for staff and Sangha women.

2. EDUCATION

Educational activities in APMSS commenced with an understanding of interventions of the government departments and the constant dialogue with Sanghas where the need for information was paramount. In the course of their attempts to address social problems – low levels of girls' education, child marriages, child labour, marital and social violence, Jogini system – the Sanghas have the demand for literacy and education for themselves and their daughters continuously.

The programme has addressed these needs by way of:

- Literacy camps and Adult Literacy Centres (ALCs) for women
- Summer camps for girls
- Bal Mitra Kendras (BMKs)
- Mahila Shikshan Kendras

These educational interventions have impacted the increase in enrolment of children in mainstream schools, decreased the drop out rates, particularly for girls, reduced teacher absenteeism and helped improve school infrastructure.

2.1 Children's Education

The figures in table 7 are a reflection of the efforts of Sanghas, BMK teachers and those of the MSKs in taking up the issue of children's education seriously. It is also hoped that the children presently in BMKs will be absorbed in schools in the next academic year. This has happened with the large-scale active participation of Sangha women who are constantly concerned about education. Through their efforts total enrolment has been achieved in 68 villages of the programme. The processes that have brought this about have been community level PRA exercises at village level, village mapping for education, rallies and campaigns, Kala Jathas by BMK teachers, mobilization of Gram Sabhas and the election of Sangha women as chairpersons and members of School Education Committees (SECs) in villages. There were strong debates and discussions on the issue of children's labour in the fields and domestic chores.

Table 8 a: Number of Children Mainstreamed through BMKs

District	Total children enrolled	Girls	Boys
Medak	490	355	135
Mahabubnagar	718	512	206

Karimnagar	493	236	257
Nizamabad	404	346	58
Adilabad	96	57	39
Total	2201	1506	695

In Ushanagar, where there is no SEC, the school teacher draws his salary but does not take classes. Members of two nearby Sanghas went and met the Mandal Education Officer to appraise him of the situation. They also spoke to the women of the village and told them about the roles and responsibilities of the SEC, so that they could follow up on the school situation to ensure that classes are held regularly.

Bal Mitra Kendras (BMKs) have been run with the objective of assisting dropouts, particularly girls to get back to school (refer to table above), eliminating child labour, delaying the age of marriage for girls and helping girls to move to upper primary level. Their main purpose is to mainstream children and not to provide alternative learning centres. They are generally run from 7-8:00 p. m and are attended by both school going and non-school going children. The need for a BMK in the village is linked to the number of girls out of school in a particular village. Four girls from this centre moved up to the MSK in the district in the past year.

In the BMK in Bikkanur, of 21 children (SC) 8 were attending the government school, including one girl. The children were in the age group 9-12 years. The teacher had participated in three training and said he was using songs, role plays and participatory activities for teaching children in the one hour that he spent with them, according to the curriculum in his daily transactions with the children. He expressed inability to tackle the health related section with adolescent girls and sought Karyakartas support to take up puberty related / physiological explanations and exercises. The teacher earned Rs 300/- of which each Sangha member paid Re1/- per child and the parents Rs 3/- per child. Sometimes parents were too poor to pay for their child on a regular basis.

The teacher in Chinnatmakur village, Medak said he was responsible for the ALC and the BMK, facilitating the enrollment of children in the government school, strengthening the Cheli Sanghas and supporting Sangha activities. He however viewed greater responsibility towards the Sangha and views his role as facilitator, and as worker of MS even in long run.

Table 8 b: Children covered by Bala Mitra Kendras (BMKs)

District	No. of BMKs	No. of Children covered		
		Total	Girls	Boys
Medak	38	905	892	13
Mahabubnagar	82	1267	1174	93
Karimnagar	12	183	162	21
Nizamabad	30	600	482	118
Adilabad	19	553	437	116
Total	181	3508	3147	361

Table 8 c: Girls Covered by Mahila Shikshan Kendras (MSKs)

District	No. of MSKs	No. of Girls Covered
Medak	1	30
Mahabubnagar	1	56
Karimnagar	1	54
Nizamabad	1	50
Total	4	190

Table 8 d: Number of Girls Covered by Cheli/Balika Sanghams

District	No. of Cheli/Balika Sanghams	No. of Girls Covered
Medak	57	930
Mahabubnagar	75	915
Karimnagar	28	560
Nizamabad	25	387
Total	185	2792

Table 8 e: Women Covered by Adult Literacy Centres (ALCs)

District	No. Of ALCs	Women Covered
Medak	50	500
Mahabubnagar	70	504
Karimnagar	38	539
Nizamabad	33	502
Total	191	2045

The number of girls mainstreamed is almost double that of boys in 2001.

The BMK teachers receive a monthly salary of Rs 300/-, which is paid by MSSAP on the condition that Sangha women approval the candidate. This approach stresses the responsibility of the Sangha regarding the running of the BMKs and the teacher. The BMK teachers acknowledge the role of the Sangha as they feel accountable towards the Sangha. The honorarium policy has undergone a modification in 1999 with regard to the parental contribution. Earlier parents were obliged to pay Rs 3 per months per BMK student. However, increased defaulting resulted in a review, based on the argument of severe economic constraints from the side of the parents. Thus the parental contribution is now depending on their financial ability.

While teachers at the BMK were reported to be providing a useful service and a number children were mainstreamed from the centres, the relationship with the school teacher was weak and the teachers did not also view themselves as part of an educational continuum. Instead the teachers showed far greater interest in the activities of the Sanghas than in their own task of teaching. The teachers consider themselves as accountable to the Sanghas, which had identified and selected them, although honoraria are paid by the project through the Karyakartas. They are responsible for the ALC and the BMK,

facilitating the enrollment of children in the government school, facilitating and strengthening the Cheli Sanghas and supporting Sangha activities. Teachers see their role as supportive of the activities of the Sangha and apart from providing literacy inputs view themselves as facilitators of Sangha activities, and as worker of MS. There is a risk of the Sangha becoming dependent on the teachers for literacy related tasks, to provide information and keep track of their accounts and meeting agendas, which may account for the few numbers of women who are attending the literacy classes themselves. The dependency also has implications for the autonomy of the Sangha in its processes and decisions.

In Adilabad district also the teachers dealt with school going and other children together and found it difficult to handle their different learning needs. Older boys who worked as labour also attended their centre and had gained access to education for the first time. The number of girls in their centres was however comparatively lower. The set of materials (alphabets) available with teachers was incomplete or had been prepared a while back at the training programme and was hardly legible. Little initiative was visible to develop or prepare fresh materials among the teachers.

The teachers have been trained for transacting the curriculum but need a strong gender perspective and further training for gender focused pedagogical transactions. Though they are using some materials developed by other NGOs, schools and organizations that needs to be related to MS perspectives and activities. The BMK teachers need to be clued in to women's issues – violence, health, learning needs The education imparted in the centres requires linkages with the MSK and the school apart from mainstreaming the girls.

The following issues need to be addressed in the above context in order to strengthen this component of the programme:

- The duration and structure of classes to deal with a group of more than 20 children at different levels of learning
- classroom dynamics and the presence of school going boys particularly which adversely affect the non school going girls in the centre
- Linkages of the centre with the MSK and the formal educational system in the village
- Teacher evaluation in the perspective of the curriculum and assessment of children
- Competencies/skills to teach adult women, adolescent girls and children

2.2 Girl's Education

Mahila Sikshan Kendras (MSKs) which are the residential learning centres for 14+ girls have been the one of the most successful educational components of the programme. Intensive processes in planning, designing inputs, curriculum development and developing a focus on education of adolescent girls with their special needs were undertaken to evolve the programme.

Their main objective is to:

- Create opportunities for adolescent girls to go back to school
- Prevent the initiation of girls into the Jogini cult
- Postpone the age of marriage
- Eliminate the induction of girls in the labour force – cotton picking
- Develop a second generation of leadership.

Though the MSKs are very popular and acceptable today to parents, communities and the girls, they saw a lot of resistance when the idea was discussed in Sanghas, as parents thought this was ploy to send the girls to hostels. Sanghas and parents are now convinced that MSKs are an opportunity for adolescent girls to be in a safe learning environment that

is conducive to the learning needs of girls and to enable them to enter mainstream. The quality of MSKs varies in each district according to the teachers available and the environment that they generate.

Many of the 30+ girls we met at the MSK in Sangareddy spoke of how they had argued and fought with their parents to come to the MSK and how they count the days for the short holiday breaks to be over to return to the centre. They spoke about the household chores they did and the work in the cotton fields or construction sites, that exhausted them. They enjoy the daily routine of the MSK even though it involves doing things like maintaining the place, being part of committees – food, cleanliness, teaching learning materials and looking after their clothes and personal effects. They had a good rapport with the teachers who did not stay in the MSK. The warden stays full time in the centre along with a cook and helper.

The curriculum and classroom transactions require review in the context of messages given through songs and activities undertaken in the classroom through participatory methodologies. The curriculum seems to focus on more gender specific content than the integration of gender class and caste into the core curriculum. Learning could also be integrated from Sanghas and their experiences of social issues that could be incorporated in the curriculum.

The 4 MSKs have catered to about 190 girls so far with the majority of them having moved to mainstream schools as hostlers or day scholars. In the MSKs visited in Sangareddy and Nizamabad the girls were nearly ready to take the class eight exam next year. They had acquired additional skills like sewing, raising nurseries and knowledge about nutrition and health, child rights and legal literacy which are not part of the formal school curriculum.

Ratnamma, Chairperson of the SEC and member of the committee, Tekmar Mandal, spoke of how the team mobilised the parents to send their children to school (before she was elected). Now, they monitor the school and the attendance of the four teachers. All 175 children of the village attend school regularly. The women monitor the distribution of monthly rations to the children. Once when Ratnamma was away for some urgent work the teacher preferred to wait until she returned to distribute it to the children, which she did not approve. The SEC also took up the task ensuring blackboards in all classrooms and is taking up the matter of upgrading the school to upper Primary level so that girls can continue their education without having to go far away to another school.

Sanghas and parents have demanded MSKs in Mandals so those girls are closer to their homes. About one fourth of the girls are under 12 years old, being sent with their older siblings. Consequently the curriculum needs to be oriented to their differing learning needs and teachers also need to divide time adequately for their requirements, perhaps with shorter courses. MSKs are the need of the hour as bridge courses would definitely ensure the enrollment of 10% children who are still out of school as has been pointed out by the State Project Director, DPEP AP.

2.3 Women's Education

The Sangha women do not consider their own education as significant, although many of them have participated in the TLC programme, literacy camps and are attending literacy centres, run at night by the BMK teachers. However there is a perceptible shift as women describe the relevance of education in their lives in a number of ways and contexts

- Enabling them to sign instead of using their thumb impression.
- In seeking information of government schemes and programmes such as for housing and pensions they are constrained by literacy

- In political processes women felt literacy was necessary for sound leadership
- Enabling them to take better care of their children
- Enabling them to learn and develop new skills
- Teach others and transfer knowledge
- Their ability to influence men and improve the village
- Remove social evils and prevent bad habits
- Negotiate for what they need and want

Initially the literacy classes were run by locally available educated adolescent girls and women, but presently the BMK teachers run the adult literacy centres for women. So far 2045 women have benefited from 191 centres. The number of women per centre is around 10-12, who are taught with the aid of a curriculum developed for them (see annexure). The girls of the Cheli Sangha also attended the centre. The DIUs also circulate a bi- monthly newsletter carrying information about Sangha activities, schools and their activities, availability of hostels seats, health facilities, home remedies, case studies and other news. These help the Sangha women to continue their learning, reading and writing skills and competencies. In some Sanghas women have been able to get slates and other learning/ information materials from Mandal offices.

The Sangha women have not been too serious about their own education though many of them have participated in the TLC programme, literacy camps and are attending literacy centres, run at night by the BMK teachers. **One of the active Sangha members however said, “ Our lives have changed, our girls are going to schools. My power is my education. Now I am learning to read and write.”** Currently, with the recent Panchayat elections many Sangha women who have attained positions and those from the village are expressing a strong desire to enhance their own education with literacy to be effectively participate in governance.

The impact of the Educational component is visible in the high increase in literacy figures in the programme districts as compared to other districts, in major part attributable to the MS programme. There is also evidence of the programme's effectiveness in the successes in enrolment in its Mandals and villages. The majority of women we met in all our meetings were sending their children to the school or to BMKs or MSKs and were themselves attending literacy classes.

There is a growing demand for writing and numeracy skills with the emergence of Federations. The increasing relevance of education as perceived by the women is likely to create a greater demand for learning opportunities with literacy inputs. Follow up for Continuing Education is imperative in view of the forthcoming autonomy of Sanghas for developing federations

The programme however needs to address itself to the following issues in the delivery of literacy and educational inputs for women and girls:

- differential learning needs of women and adolescent girls require a different approach and input, which the present system is not equipped to cater to
- The male teachers who currently conduct the literacy classes and also facilitate continuing education are not equipped and are not the appropriate choice for providing learning inputs related to women's issues – violence, health,.
- Ways to strengthen or modify the centre approach to make it cost effective and enhance its outreach to cater to a larger number of women, beyond the current limited participation of Sangha members in literacy classes especially for the new districts.
- Women who have attended literacy camps often lapse into illiteracy; the leader of the Mahboobnagar federation had attended 3 camps over the past 5 years but was unable to retain literacy skills due to pressure of work. Strategies or combinations of

strategies are required to enable the women to attain literacy skills and to sustain them.

- A related issue is that of monitoring the content and pedagogy of inputs.
- Preparation of literacy material and provision of inputs to teachers needs to be based on a well-conceived strategy to strengthen the education programme components.
- While the programme is creating an environment for children's education and enrolment, recognizing and planning for the emerging need for women's education is equally important. A focussed planning exercise is required for the education component to cater to the emerging needs for women's education more effectively, especially since there are high expectations from the mainstream department that the APMS will evolve and demonstrate innovative strategies for women's education.

2.4 Contribution to Reduction of Child Labour

The Sanghas are actively involved in the fight against child labour. Through the educational interventions of BMKs, MSKs, and enrolment campaigns, Sangha women promote children's schooling, thus indirectly discouraging child labour. The state government acknowledges the contribution of MS and explicitly encourages these initiatives as an instrument to combat child labour. AP state, which has the dubious distinction of having the highest number of working children in the country, is seriously trying to get working children to school, amongst others by organising annual Back to School projects with the help of NGOs.

In places where working children are a dominant feature, like in the cotton fields of Mahbubnagar, Sanghas have gone one step further and actually started rallying against child labour in order to put an end to it. Through persistent action, which started in 1998 by not sending their own girls to the cotton fields women are gradually convincing other parents, village elders and landowners of the health hazards. Sangha women have succeeded in a significant reduction of child labour in the district. In some villages the cotton production has been stopped completely and replaced by traditional food crops, thus linking it with the issue of sustainable agriculture. In other villages the fight goes on, with landowners increasing the daily wages of girls to keep them out of school. Some Sanghas tried to counter this by offering cheaper labour of older women. Elsewhere they decided to tackle the use of pesticide, demanding that spraying is done only when the children are not working, thus trying to reduce the health risk.

The struggle against girls working in the cotton fields has led to more attention on the issue of child labour across all MS groups across the state. In other districts Sanghas are getting actively involved in the fight against child labour in their communities. Across the project area MS celebrates the Child Rights Convention week, involving schoolteachers, children and local organisations. Last year, APMS formally became a member of APARC, a state level network working towards the protection of Child Rights. In this context MS organised a series of district level workshops in Karimnagar, Adilabad and Nizamabad to bring all organisations working on children's issues to one platform. A Child Rights Protection Forum was established in Karimnagar but did not take off in other districts.

3. LINKAGES WITH GOVERNMENT , NGOs , THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND RNE PRIORITIES

3.1 Current Linkage with Govt. & NGO Programmes

MS programme in AP has drawn upon various organizations & individuals to strengthen its initiatives in various spheres. Internally the programme has drawn upon the consultants at

the National level to provide inputs on livelihoods and NRM and facilitate the formulation of the Samatha Dharani programme. More recently NRG members and RPS/consultants have been involved in the process to visualize the proposed State Gender Resource Centre.

With the development of capacities of its own team at state & district levels the programme has relied less on inputs from women's organizations & other NGOs. It has however linked with the Deccan Development Society, a leading NGO in the region, to undertake the documentation of agri based bio-diversity in their programme areas. MS is already working in coordination with the agriculture department for the Samatha Dharani Programme in 500 villages of five districts. This experience coupled with the learning's through its linkages with DDS will help in the development of new knowledge which can be shared through the forging of new partnerships with ANTWA and with the Watershed Development Programme. The Federations can take up key roles for training and information dissemination in this context, and facilitate the strengthening of women's perspective on agriculture development and natural resources.

In the area of health the participation of MS staff in WHO sponsored. Training of Trainers programme has facilitated the strengthening of knowledge on the issue upto grassroots level, the results of which are evident in Sangha women's & Karyakartas' enhanced knowledge and changed practices. *The potential exists for this initiative to facilitate a validation of women's own knowledge through a documentation of traditional health practices, apart from providing information to them.* The training and grassroots level capacity building has given women a presence in the health sector, as they educate communities about health and assist in campaigns and drives in partnership with the Health Department, as well as monitor the delivery of health services. Their increasing knowledge and alliances with ANMs and PHCs have proved that they are informed allies for improving the health status of people. The DIU in Nizamabad has partnered with the local branch of the Jan Vigyan Vedika (peoples science movement) and **contributed to the analysis of poor people's access to health services.** This has sharpened the programme's perspectives and enabled it to work with other partners to develop strategies for greater access. MS also participated in the Peoples Health Assembly, (a forum at the National and International level that seeks to track the implications of the Cairo declaration on the lives of poor people) & shared its findings at the forum. **The linkage with JVV has the potential to strengthen programme perspectives the in health sector as well as in adult and adolescent girls' education, an area of JVVs recent entry.**

MS AP is acknowledged as a significant actor in **addressing child rights** through its efforts to prevent child labour, a fact acknowledged by the Collector in Medak district. MS was a key actor in the rally on child rights at Karimnagar organized by the PCL forum along with numerous other child rights activists and organisations.

MS AP is viewed as a key organization for mobilization & awareness building around issues related to the status and subordination of women. At the grassroots level it has participated in partnership with other government departments to raise awareness on health issues & against discriminatory practices such as the Jogini custom. The federation in Mahboobnagar has on its own initiative participated in the annual 'Yatra' and set up a stall to promote awareness on AIDs. *A sharing of experiences, perspectives & materials with other such organizations involved in the area of women & girls' education would provide insights to strengthen the programme, as well as to influence the gender content and pedagogy of other organizations and may be considered for on-going learning and networking.*

Linkages with Govt. Programmes.

MS has sought to create awareness of government programmes for vulnerable groups, by disseminating information and demand generation. Increased health awareness & understanding of the relevance of education have enhanced women's engagement with these sectoral programmes and processes. District teams & Federation women have worked in partnership with govt. depts. to create awareness and generate demand during Polio & other immunization campaigns, based on their understanding of the need for such inputs. ***MS has the potential of developing alliances for convergence with other departments and agencies to enable the Federations to access development programmes.***

In the education sector, MS is represented as a member on the committees at the village level as well as at the state. It is valued as an innovative NGO and the Education Department anticipates that MS will demonstrate & evolve approaches to reach the most vulnerable sections to cater to their educational needs, especially of the 'poor women'. *The inter-linkages possible between the education department's interventions and MS could be envisaged in a number of ways through the District Resource Centres and Federations as NGOs. They could be involved for:*

- mobilization of girl children, working children and adult illiterates, especially among the SC and ST population, whose education is a major gap in the present scenario
- motivating communities to manage schools within the framework provided by the State's education regulation of 1998 for channeling funds to the School Education Committees
- provision of inputs in curriculum and development of teaching materials, based on the experiences of MSKs
- participation in and management of Continuing Education and post literacy education programmes,
- Management of Bridge courses and innovative education programmes already in existence through a flexible arrangement with the state agencies for continuing and non-formal education and with support from the DRCs.

GoAP views APMSS as an experienced organization for cooperation in the education sector. In their view the programme needs to be more aggressive and demonstrative about its strengths and based on its experience should venture forth to run bridge courses, and to expand their presence to other areas. ***The scale and strategy of MS needs to be enhanced and articulated with greater confidence for it to impact on the mainstream education sector and its interventions especially for women and girls education.*** Visible impact of the programme is evident in the data on literacy for the MS districts as available in the 2001 census figures, based on which scaling up and visibility may be planned. Obviously Dept of Education, AP would like to see a greater role of the MS programme in the state in the implementation of programmes to supplement efforts to address state priorities. The programme needs to however position itself for advocacy of gender sensitive qualitative approaches, while avoiding the role of becoming one more implementer to supplement governments efforts.

The MS AP programme has also sought to establish linkages with the Dept. of WCD's women's Finance Corporations to create a convergence model for girl's education. The experience of the partnership towards such convergence sponsored by UNICEF for a 2 year period was mixed at best. MS was constrained from ensuring the provision of a safe environment and quality care for girls in the Pranganams at par with its own MSKs, since it's role was limited to the provision of educational inputs & materials in these centres. The Pranganam or women's campus located at District level, are often in remote locations and staff is rarely resident. Without assurance of a safe environment a sustainable flow of new batches of girls to such centres is unlikely.

The Women's Finance Corporations focuses on skill training, production activities and entrepreneurship enhancement in various trades and services such as computer, handicraft, nutrition, food processing, and leatherwork. They have trained 47000 women in the last 10 years covering 12 districts including the 7 MS districts, through Mahila Pranganams. The MD of the Pranganam at Medak was quite positive about working together with MS to formalize a partnership to provide training. The potential exists for MS to explore alternative strategies to overcome the limitations of previous experiences, using the infrastructure of the Pranganams as MSKs run by the programme itself where the Pranganams are suitably located, while providing opportunities for linkages with skill training for adolescent girls and women from their Sanghas.

The demand for MS to provide gender training inputs has been increasing as MS is gaining visibility through its efficacy in the field. Training inputs have been provided to a range of NGOs & government functionaries. APMSS participated in workshops and conferences organized by Deccan Development Society, a leading NGO in the region, towards the establishment of the AP Coalition in Defense of Biodiversity. The staff and Sangha women also participated in other programmes such as NIPPCD International Training on Adolescence-HIV/AIDS, Centre for Women's Studies, Osmania University's International Seminar on Women, Aging and Empowerment, and Asmita's workshop on Violence Against Women in the Context of Adult Learning.

MS provides gender training to several NGOs/ state departments for their women's programmes which primarily focus on income generating activities through thrift and credit groups. Sanghas are actively involved in the annual Back to School Programme, and participate in school enrolment campaigns. in the forest district of Adilabad, Sanghas participate in the Forestry Management Programme by setting up nurseries. in Mahboobnagar district MS became the implementing agent in a watershed project covering 13 villages. Commissioner Medak requested the team's assistance to make a booklet on women and legal rights, and to conduct legal rights camps and village visits under the Janmabhoomi Programme.

MS has also participated in the preparation of learning content and materials on various issues related to women's empowerment. The emerging State Gender Resource Centre is expected to cater to the training needs of the DPIP project on social development and gender inputs. It also has the potential to provide inputs for engendering the agriculture sector interventions of ANTWA.

The ANTWA project overlaps with the MS in Nalgonda and Warangal and is currently seeking women trainers to provide technical training for sustainable agriculture as well as for post harvest training, ***It offers potential to support marketing of women's products through government linkages. The MS project could facilitate the linkage with the WFC to create access to such training in post harvest technologies and marketing opportunities as well as to share its own learning in food security and agricultural initiatives through collective farming.*** MS could also provide training inputs to women on Collective management of farm operations and food security.

There is a need for MS to exercise caution in developing linkages and partnerships with other programmes and agencies so that it does not become a vehicle of delivery, and to maintain its own focus of strengthening feminist perspectives within its own programme. It must ensure that the agenda for women's empowerment and education is not compromised and nor should there be any peril to the autonomy of the programme in the perspective of its non-negotiable principles.

3.2 Linkages with the Women's Movement

APMSS has in the past been nurtured and informed by the perspectives and experiences of the women's movement especially in its initial phases and has developed a feminist framework to address the subordination of women as reflected in its work with Sanghas on violence & health issues. The groups & federations that have emerged are thus visible strands of the women's movement. Their linkages with other formations of women have however been limited to the Anti-Attack movement. In the wake of the proliferation of SHGs & delivery models of development & group formation, MS as a programme has drawn more on its own resources rather than strengthening the relationship with women's groups. Its character therefore is more insular and inward looking with little dialogue with women's forums or organizations at all levels, although it did participate in the Women's Studies Conference and share its experiences on mobilization of women.

Presently MS AP & the federations & Sanghas that it has facilitated represent a grassroots movement of women primarily seeking to address the social agenda for women's empowerment in an area increasingly overwhelmed by economic focused modes, organizations & forums. The challenge is to address the social agenda by bringing together the SHGs & other formations of women so that they collectively emerge as an entity seeking to change the status of women in society. This implies a need to consolidate the gains of the program, to share the learning at grassroots level & strengthen and test perspectives with other organizations. This would provide the basis for MS AP to be a sustainable forum representative of women's interests in the face of DPIIP and other such programmes.

The MS team feels that they are very much apart of the local women's movement as they have themselves taken up issues and struggles that have affected their lives. They need to forge greater alliances with the women's movement through networking on issues, collaboration in activities and engaging in discourse on perspectives that will sharpen their own identity as a women's organization.

3.3 Added Value And Linkages With RNE Sectoral Approach Priorities

The MS programme offers large potential to address RNE priorities, given its engagement with strengthening grassroots processes for demand based development, a basic requirement for good governance and in keeping with the GAVIM requirements of RNE. RNE initiatives for Watershed Development offer potential to strengthen the present approaches in the state. MS experience in Mahboobnagar district as the implementing agency for the watershed project covering 13 villages could inform these initiatives and provide insights based on the experiences of women's participation in Watershed Development Committees to engender the programme planned. The communication skills available could serve as a powerful means to communicate relevant messages on shared agenda. In the agriculture sector also the Samatha Dharani project experience has provided MS opportunity for learning and sharing with women in the ANTWA project, starting with the 2 districts of overlap.

MS seeks to build forums of women from vulnerable communities to address their needs & participate more actively in processes of governance. Thus it addresses the RNE priority of decentralized planning towards strengthening democratic processes in a gender equality framework. Creation of access to educational opportunities through the programme and development of their own federations is a significant measure towards ensuring gender equality while enabling people in the most vulnerable communities to fight poverty, subordination & deprivation. In view of the new initiatives emerging in the state to address poverty, the role of MS to influence these approaches through a strengthened role as a resource agency that focuses on holistic approaches and a strong gender perspective cannot be overstated.

4. REPORTING AND MONITORING

Details of the Reporting monitoring and the information systems are enunciated in the general report since practices are by and large common across all the Dutch Assisted MS state Programmes. However, the state specific variances and good practices are highlighted as part of this report, along with areas that need attention by the State office.

4.1 Reporting

The processes of monitoring, reporting and accounts are well laid out and intensively and accurately maintained at all levels in the programme, including the Sanghas. The process of internal reporting and meetings is presented in exhibits 1 and 1a. The periodicity of reporting across each level is uniform, though the pattern of reporting is in a narrative form and there is no fixed format on which reports are generated.

Proper detailed formats need to be developed for reporting at each level. These formats should be very flexible and could be amended as new ideas and learning emerge from the program. The importance of formats is that all the desired aspects that need to be covered would be done and there would be no scope for missing out on the qualitative processes of the programme.

Recommendation

Staff require skill development in the following areas in order to strengthen reporting and to facilitate more efficient MIS to strengthen the programme design and processes:

- Strategic Planning.
- Financial Management
- Documentation

4.2 External Audit

Quarterly external audit is carried out by the Chartered Accountant for both the State as well the District level accounts. (100% audit of all vouchers is carried out). CAG audit was also carried out on APMSS in the year 2000.

5. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

The process of budgeting as undertaken is presented in Exhibit 2. Budgeting is carried out activity wise across all levels. The process of budgeting followed is truly based on a bottom up approach, though there is no formal structure on the basis of which experiences of the last year are factored into the budget and plan of the next year. In other words, there is no analysis done of formal budgeted versus actual expense and activity at the end of the year, which could help in formulating the next year's Budget and Plan.

Recommendations

- The MS Objectives as mentioned in the Green ⁸Book should be used as the National Guidelines based upon which State specific objectives and aims should be framed, with milestones to be achieved by the State MS highlighted therein.
- Reporting should be of output/result focussing on the above milestones. While MS has a process based approach, achievements need to be planned even in qualitative terms and the process towards achievement of tracked through the reports generated and records of various interactions
- There is a need for periodic review and analysis of plans and achievements, as well as budgeted versus actual expense, which could throw up reasons for variations which could be then be factored into the next years Plan and Budget.
- The SPD should get a monthly review of budgeted amount and activity v/s the actual amount and activity and the reasons for variations should be analyzed in order to have a management and to minimize variances in the program between plans and actual.
- All the staff should be trained in the use of an effective Management Information System towards the achievement of defined goals.

It is important to ensure that a periodic variance analysis is carried out and the conclusions of the same are factored into the next year's projected budget.

6. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Project Implementation Structure for APMS is similar as in other states of MS and is elucidated in the general report. Chaired by Secretary Education GoAP, the programme receives direction and guidance from the Executive Committee. There are also a number of resource persons in the state that have provided substantive support to the programme from time to time, apart from the National Consultant who is now located in Hyderabad. The Executive Committee facilitates the approval and implementation of the state Action Plan through the State Program Director (SPD). The SPD, preferably from the non-government sector, is responsible for overall execution and smooth running of the program within the State. EC meetings and core group interactions are held regularly and provide insights and guidance to the programme. DPCs of new districts have recently been inducted into this process. These consultative processes however need to be broadened with members of Womens organizations etc to provide greater rigour and perspective to the programme.

The APMS has progressed beyond an implementation role to serve as a State Gender Resource Agency, for which role certain structural changes have had to be considered. Further at the district level in some blocks of old districts also, the DIU is gradually metamorphosing into a DRC with different demands being made on it for perspective building and support to activities at Federation level and in collaboration with other developmental and social campaigns in the area.

⁸Mahila Samakhya Ninth Plan Document of the Mahila Samakhya (1997-2002), Deptt of Education, Ministry of HRD, Govt of India

Recommendation

The composition of the Executive Committee in the state needs to be broadened to include persons from NGOs and womens organizations as well as professionals. This would strengthen perspectives and create a pool of resource persons for the programme to draw upon more intensively, facilitate linkages with the womens movement, provide opportunities for greater networking and issue based collaboration”

Rationalization of the posts at the various levels is also required to carter to the emrging needs with the new structures being evolved as women owned institutions

State Gender Resource Centre (SGRC) is an organic outcome of the programme’s evolution and the consequent changes in the roles that the State MS office is now performing. It provide continuity to the programme and is likely to redirect its energy to respond to the emerging needs of federations, as well as facilitate strategic work on research and pedagogy. The SGRC could engage with the women’s movement and networks towards women’s solidarity and empowerment, as well as serve to influence the discourse on gender and development in the state. This is all the more critical in the conext of programme initiatives such as the DPIP and Kudumbashree that represent a limited and instrumentalist vision of women’s empowerment.

7. HUMAN RESOURCES

MS has been able to carve a special position for itself and make its presence felt on the ground due to its dedicated personnel⁹. However, there is a serious problem of staff turnover. Table 9 shows staff turnover in APMSS at the State and district level. Problem of turnover is more acute at the District level as compared to State level. This could lead to serious gaps in the implementation of the program, evidence of which is already beginning to show in the form of high workload on the current staff.

Table 9: Staff turnover in APMSS

	State Resignations as % of total Employees	Districts Resignations as % of total Employees
1997-98	0	5
1998-99	0	15
1999-00	7	33
2000-01	0	36
2001-02	23	2

Honoraria and travel allowance were fixed in 1997 (five years ago) and have since not been revised. This is leading to serious morale and retention issues. The Programme

⁹ This level of dedication has been developed and nurtured through the programme period in several ways- perspective building and sharing, training inputs, team work, lack of heirarchical rigidities and authority based management, ownership of the programme due to involvement in decision making, autonomy provided to workers in need based planning, recognition of the field worker as the core functionary for effective projet planning, support from State office in various ways. Despite the meagre salaries that staff currently receive and the hardship of the job, these are aspects that reportedly hold those who are still with the programme on the job.

stands the risk of loosing its momentum and jeopardizing its gains if this issue is not handled immediately. There is a need to benchmark MS compensation and employee benefit practices to other programs to be able to attract and retain proficient personnel. The recommended revisions should also incorporate provisions to account for general inflation as well as performance based incentives, which need not always be monetary.

Salaries are very low as compared to other projects running in the state. A comparative analysis of salaries in the APMSS with the DPIP programme in the state is presented at Table 10

Table 10: APMSS Compensation compared to DPIP, Andhra Pradesh

	Mahila Samakhya Rs per month	DPIP Rs per month
State Program Director	10000	14000-20000
District Program Coordinator	6000	10000-15000

Formal personnel appraisal forms have been formulated. The exercise of Personnel Appraisal is done in September and the renewal of contracts are based on the same. This form has been implemented for the first time in September 2001. Personnel Appraisal Form is presented at Exhibit 4

In terms of training needs, all project staff including accountants need training inputs towards fluency in accounting and use of computer for administrative and accounting needs.

Exhibit 4 (a) depicts the **Hiring Process** followed by the APMSS.

Recommendations

- Insurance cover for all employees may be taken. NISHI TO CLARIFY
- The personnel appraisal form should not only be used for renewal of contracts and training needs but also be used to provide other growth opportunities to staff.

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

8.1 Funds Flow

Exhibit 5 depicts Flow of Funds within APMSS

Exhibit 6 depicts the process of transfer of funds to the Sanghas

8.2 Accounting

Books of Accounts- cash book, general ledger, journal voucher register, asset register and inventory register of consumables are maintained. Separate books of account are maintained for the UNDP Samatha Dharani Project. The accrual system of accounting is followed together with double entry system of account. All expenses are recorded and reported on the basis of activities carried out. All vouchers are properly receipted and revenue stamp is affixed for any cash payment of Rs.500/- and above.

Cash payment is made for amounts upto Rs.500/- and all payments above the said amount is done by account payee cheques. (Though this may not be possible in all cases at the village level). All payment vouchers are authorised by the SPD at the State Level.

DPC/Accountant or in some cases RP/Incharge DIU also authorise payments at the District Level.

State level accounts have been fully computerized though parallel manual books of accounts are also being maintained by the Accounts Department. District accounts are maintained manually. For all new districts the state accountants maintain accounts at the State Office till such time that an accounts person is hired and trained at the District level. This exercise is done up to a maximum of 2 years.

Bank Accounts: At the State Office one bank account is maintained for internal payments & another is maintained for external payments. At the district one bank account is maintained for both external and internal payments. At the State Office savings bank accounts are reconciled once quarterly and at the District level they are reconciled monthly.

8.3 Treatment of Specific Tied Grants received from other than Government of India:

When any specific tied grant is received by the State Office, it is credited to the advance account of the donor rather than being credited to an income account and all the expenses incurred against the same project are debited to the same advance account. Therefore neither the income nor the expense against the same is shown in the Income & Expense account of APMSS.

Computerization of accounting system at the district office and better utilization of the existing accounting software at the State Office (i.e. Ex - Next Gen) would lead to better efficiency of the accounts department

Recommendations

The authorization of expense vouchers should be delegated to the level of Resource Person depending on the person who has incurred the expense. Only a limited number of vouchers should come to the SPD/DPC. A limit could be fixed above which all the vouchers would need to necessarily be approved by the SPD at the State Office and the DPC at the District Office.

Manual accounting should be phased out with adequate back up of financial data generated electronically at the State Office. Accounts of the districts should be computerized and even in the districts manual accounts (that may need to be maintained on a parallel basis) may be discontinued after some period .

All specific grants received and the expenses incurred the same should be treated as income and expense respectively in the books of accounts. These should not be debited and credited to the advance account of the donor agency.

All the community contribution received for meetings, trainings and other activities should be valued at market value. These should then also be factored into the preparation of the annual budget for the next year.

8.4 Purchase Procedures

Table 11: Delegation of Purchase Powers

NATURE AND LIMIT	EXTENT
Purchase of consumable items or hiring of equipment amounting to a total of rupees 500.00	Karyakartha on authorization of DPC
Purchase of consumable items or hiring of premises or equipment	DPC – powers upto Rs. 5,000 Cheque Powers to DPC upto Rs.4,500/-

	SPD – powers upto Rs. 10,000
Purchase of nonrecurring items of expenditure up to Rs. 10,000	State Programme Director – Full Powers

All purchases below Rs. 500 per item may be made directly from the market after making simple verbal inquiries regarding prices and quality. All purchases involving amounts above Rs 500 but below Rs. 50,000 may be made from the market after receiving sealed quotations from dealers/shops. Alternatively purchases may be made from any of the State or Central Government Corporations, handicraft boards, khadi and village industries etc. without any other quotations being taken as per procedures of D.R.D.As.

Purchase of items involving more than Rs. 50,000.00 may be made either in accordance with a rate contract of the State or Central Government or after inviting open tenders. In case of vehicles, it may be purchased from Government authorized dealer.

Recommendations

Enhancement of purchase limit to Rs.10,000 so that calling for sealed quotations for purchases may only be required for purchases above the sum of Rs.10,000.

A simple procedure of one of the programme functionaries surveying the market and getting 3 quotations from reputed shops. She should then make a detailed report about her recommendations after discussion with the SPD/DPC. This note along with all the quotations and analysis of the same should then be handed over to the Accounts Officer/Accountant who should through other sources confirm whether all the prices mentioned in the quotations are appropriate or not. After this the same note along with the process followed for verification and findings of the Accountant should be put in front of the SPD/DPC for approval. After the approval of the SPD, there should be a formal purchase order placed with the selected dealer in writing detailing all the terms and conditions agreed upon between the dealer and APMSS. On the basis of the above purchase order payments to the dealer should be released.

8.5 Disclosures

Income received from sources other than the GOI are neither shown as income nor expense for the same is being treated as expense. Bank interest and other miscellaneous incomes shown as income in the Income and Expenditure account.

Specific Tied grants from GOI for Mahila Samakhya and UNDP for Samatha Dharani are being shown as capital fund and not as income and the amount utilized is deducted from the same in the balance sheet.

Purchase of capital assets not shown as expense, only the depreciation calculated every year as per the Income Tax Act, 1961. It is shown as amount expended every year in the Income and Expenditure account.

Recommendations

All inflow of grants/donations/collections from any source should be shown as income and expense against the same should be shown as expense.

Any specific grants received from GOI or any other source should be shown on the income side in the Income and Expenditure Account to the extent the said grant has been utilised and the balance(i.e. Bank + Cash + Advances – Liabilities) should be shown in the Balance Sheet being liability on account of amount unutilized.

Treatment of capital assets should be standardized across all the states.

8.6 Payroll System

Currently the payroll system across the state and its districts are done manually. Due to this all calculations of provident fund payments and all other records regarding personnel are maintained manually.

Recommendation

It is recommended that all the payroll records should be maintained on a computer in order to streamline the printing of receipts, generation of letter of payment to the bank and also update the said records online. This database could also be used to submit reports to the Provident Fund Office and also could be used in the analysis of turnover of staff.

8.7 Internal Controls

A strong system of internal control is maintained through proper distribution of work load right from the Sangha level to the State Office. At the Sangha Level the internal control is exercised through checks at various stages by DPC/DRP/JRP/Karyakarthis/Members of the Sanghas.

Different functionaries in the organization handle approval, Actual Payment, recording & authorization. (e.g. See Exhibit 7 for the process of transfer of funds to the Sanghas)

The State Accountants visit different districts by rotation and check all the vouchers at the DIU level carry out monthly internal audit. There is no budgeted activity/amount v/s actual verification and analysis, which could show some variations that need to be carefully analyzed.

See exhibit 8 for system for approval of payment to BMK Teachers

Recommendation

The SPD should get a monthly review of budgeted amount and activity v/s the actual amount and activity and analyse the reasons for variations through this process in order to have a better control of the program.

8.8 Utilization Of Funds

Table 12 : Budget versus Actual Expenditure of Funds (Total) 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	141.87	77.51	55%
1998-99	132.26	96.81	73%
1999-00	155.77	103.23	66%
2000-01	202.23	134.94	67%

In the financial year 1999-00 a special permission was taken from the Executive Committee to raise the salaries of the Program Functionaries and thus the Expense went above the Budgeted amount under the Management Cost

Table 13: Budget versus Actual Expenditure (Management Cost) 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	43.76	35.4	81%
1998-99	54.74	45.15	82%

1999-00	51.24	53.51	104%
2000-01	64.75	60.23	93%

The following could be the main reasons due to which there is a lot of variation between the actual and the budgeted activity costs:

- Lack of formal variance analysis between the budgeted versus actual – expense and activity, which could help in formulating the next year's Budget and Plan.
- Community contributions for meetings and training are not valued during the year and thus are also not factored into the budget for the next year.

Table 14: Budget versus Actual Expenditure(Activity Cost) by APMS during the period 1997-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1997-98	98.11	42.11	43%
1998-99	77.52	51.66	67%
1999-00	104.53	49.72	48%
2000-01	137.48	74.71	54%

The Management Cost as compared to the Activity Cost is very high.

Table 15 : Management Cost, Activity Cost and Management Cost as ratio of Total Cost in APMS during the period 1997-2002

Financial Year	Management Cost	Activity Cost	Management Cost / Total Cost
1997-98	35.4	42.11	84%
1998-99	45.15	51.66	87%
1999-00	53.51	49.72	108%
2000-01	60.23	74.71	81%

D. THE NEXT PHASE

1. Rationale For A New Phase

The Mahila Samakhya programme has been successful in establishing the linkages between educational processes and women's empowerment. It has adequately demonstrated the means to empower women through processes of education and organization and stands on its own achievements as an alternative paradigm. Recognition has come in various ways from various parties, reflected in the expectations articulated by different parties that the mission interacted with as well as, more significantly, in the confident faces and voices of the women we met. The next phase of the programme should seek to establish and demonstrate mainstreaming strategies within the framework of the programme's core values and principles, often termed as the "Non negotiables".

In the midst of a myriad of programmes that are working with a women focus, MS would serve to demonstrate a women centred approach to planning and development. It would also present a programme that nurtures organisational spaces for women, based on their priorities and the advocacy of women's interests in the larger paradigm of development

2. Recommended Strategy

APMSS is currently at a crossroads, confronted by developments in the state that pose challenges as well as opportunities for the programme:

Internally:

- The Sanghas have emerged as strong and self-reliant especially in the old districts, capable of forming new Sanghas and forging their own forums in the form of the Federations.
- The processes that women in Sanghas initiate also influence the processes in the newer districts and there is much potential for peer learning through exchanges, with minimal support from the DIU and the SPO.
- Sanghas and karyakarthis are currently engaged in evolving new approaches that encompass groups of various rootage and focus into their purview, to build a common ground swell towards the achievement of women's equality. This strategy may well provide the multiplier in numbers but is faced with the inadequacies of earlier initiatives that have left the groups in a somewhat mixed state of autonomy, as well as the onerous task of addressing larger issues of social change to address strategic gender interests.

Externally:

- The programme has received much recognition at the district level for its contribution in mobilization and awareness building to stop gender discriminatory practices and changes in social attitudes. But with this recognition has come increasing demands and expectations that the Sanghas as well as the programme will function in the capacity of mobilizer and motivator towards achievement of numerous developmental goals, without consideration of the perspective these present.
- MS as a process-oriented need-based programme which has provided the space for development to follow the pace of women's progress is confronted with the larger market-driven models of development such as the DPIP to address poverty. These programmes while they address income poverty do not incorporate the understanding of essential poverty of which women are the primary victims and which MS processes are beginning to address. Based on a matching grant subsidy model, DPIP is likely to impact on development scenario in a significant manner due to its scale and the incentive of quick monetary returns.
- Educational initiatives are snowballing in the state towards the achievement of EFA goals related to primary education, within which women's roles are viewed primarily as mobilizers of girls' education. Women's education would take a back seat in such a scenario, despite the expressed interest of the state government to engage with initiatives to promote innovative programmes and bridge courses for women's education.

The programme would therefore need to move towards

Consolidation in existing blocks, covering new villages and including more women to develop a critical mass in these areas. This could be through the programme or through the initiatives of old Sanghas and federations

Expansion of area in 3-4 districts towards the formation of Village Sanghas and cluster Sanghas, in collaboration with existing programmes and SHGs

Diversification of its roles from an implementation organisation to include a resource agency at the State as well as at the district level.

from donor agencies to implement programmes and projects to further the aims and objectives of MS.

The Resource Centre would have a formal identify with autonomy to function under the banner of APMSS. MS should enter into contracts with clarity and specificity about the role of and expectations from it on condition that it does not adversely affect the work of APMSS.

With the envisaged new structure focussing on the State and District level Resource Centres, learning and capacity building needs of the functionaries and the Sanghas /federations, human resource development and additional staff requirement become a priority. The number of activities within MS would increase as well as demands from organizations and institutions would arise for gender focused inputs. More team members with the appropriate perspective and skills would be needed or else the present staff would be stretched. **The most immediate need however is to address the problem of low remuneration of staff, and to benchmark MS salaries at the level of other development programmes. This would solve the current problem of turnover, retention of old staff and current problems of recruitment. The staff is the core strength to the effective grounding of the programme, and its motivation levels directly impinge on the qualitative aspects of the programme. Immediate efforts to address these issues would enable the programme to work towards consolidation, expansion and diversification of its programme as envisaged above so that the programme goals can be achieved.**

In order to strengthen the programme support components and address specific needs for documentation, capacity development and management support, some options like having short term placements from universities, women's studies centres and institutes at the state level as well as collaborations with women's groups and NGOs may be explored. Existing team members with good skills and competencies should be given opportunities for working at the state level for specific assignments, in order to enable them to broaden perspectives and to move into new roles. The entire orientation of the programme would need to shift from hands on implementation to, facilitation and planning, management support and backstopping resource development, action research and capacity building.

With the establishment of the National Resource Centre, the APMSS should contribute significantly based on its own capacities and perspectives to the emerging agenda and focus of the new organization. The NRC should provide new impetus to networking and exchanges between various MS programme states and other programme for women's empowerment. It should also facilitate the emergence of knowledge and perspectives on sectoral issues and strategies to strengthen educational interventions within the framework of development. The relationship with the NRCW is therefore envisaged as a partnership and collaboration. In the meantime, the NRG and state resource persons may be brought to bear towards strengthening the programme and evolving a strategic plan for the next phase.

Financial and Budgetary Implications of this emerging organizational framework and the programmatic changes are reflected in the financial details contained in the general report.

4. Organizational structure

The above transition to new roles based on the emerging demands and environment for women need an altered organisational structure, together with altered strategic planning for internal needs of the programme as well as outputs for the several levels of clients. This also requires adequate in house professional of competencies within the team to deal with the varying demands, for which a capacity enhancement strategy is an urgent requirement.. Plans would have to be developed for spatial expansion on the one hand and work diversification to encompass the dual roles elucidated above in a phased manner.

1. For **spatial expansion** strategic inputs may be provided in a phased manner in 3-4 new districts in **collaboration with other initiatives for women's development** such as the District Poverty Initiatives Project (DPIP) to strengthen social and gender inputs and organization for women's empowerment in a phased manner. Apart from Gender inputs in the programme, MS could also play a critical role in the development of learning opportunities for women within the partnership, to strengthen the educational content of the programme which is primarily focussed on developmental goals of poverty alleviation. This would serve to demonstrate the viability of addressing empowerment agenda based on MS perspectives and approach within a development framework.

2. **Strengthening of the educational component:** Expansion and strengthening of MSKs at district and block level with strategies to enhance outreach and turnover of larger number of girls, along with an agenda to cater to women's literacy needs. Women's literacy addressed through the ALCs needs to be systematized with generation and utilization of appropriate materials for neo-literate, and with linkages to the MSKs. Involvement and collaboration with other organizations in this area needs to be explored for capacity development of MS team.

3. **Facilitation of the Federations** as they emerge in the seven districts through simultaneous transformation/ establishment of **district resource centers**, to provide issue-based support to them and to a larger clientele. Partnership with the federations to undertake perspective building and campaigns on gender and women's status would enable federations to become more viable and provide inputs to strengthen these perspectives in other programmes also.

4. Strengthening the **State Gender Resource Centre** within the sanctions of the EC and with scope for further evolution as the programme expands. The State Gender Resource Center would:

- cater to the needs and demands of the other programmes for perspective and capacity development on gender and women's issues, specific sectoral inputs, cadre building towards women's empowerment etc
- upscale the experiences as an out reach strategy for expansion of MS philosophy.
- initiate/undertake projects which are in line with MS programme(eg such as the Samatha Dharini initiative).

Assignments of capacity building with a Gender perspective and women's issues that were taken up for the various organizations during the last three years speak of the fact that MS has the potential and vision to develop into a full fledged Gender Resource Centre at the state level and also to transform the DIUs into District Resource Centres to cater to the emergent needs of Federations and aspirations of Sanghas. The financial and budgetary implications(incorporated in the budgetary framework as part of the general report) have been worked out at the State and National level to facilitate the new dimensions of the Programme.

By establishing a women's resource centre MS would provide technical support to government agencies, NGOs and others, to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment processes in their ongoing initiatives. It would receive funds from ministries, departments and autonomous bodies of the government (State Government and GOI) and

3. Organization Structure And Programme Initiatives

The New Phase is a turning point in the programme. MS currently stands at the threshold with a shift in its dual roles an **implementing and resource organization** for the period 2002-2007

3.1 In The Implementers Role

APMSS would need to address:

- * out reach strategies with a focus on issue based action with larger number of women and groups through existing groups at village and cluster level in new areas for expansion.
- * Facilitation of the federative processes and provision of backstopping support to the Federations.
- * Partnerships with larger programmes such as the DPIP, as a training input for their teams on gender issues in the first instance, and then through negotiated partnerships towards the achievement of holistic goals of empowerment. These partnerships may in the long run be viewed as efforts to influence the processes of these programmes from within
- * Greater involvement with women's and girls education through expansion of MSKs, enhanced outreach, and more intensive processes therein, to enhance quality of teaching learning processes and environment; creating opportunities for greater outreach to women and systematic structuring of the ALCs and the MSK as spaces for women's education. These efforts should aim to demonstrate viable models for the education of women and girls as well as facilitate the development of appropriate curriculum and materials. Linkages with the existing bridge programme and the innovative education scheme may be explored towards this end

3.2 As A Resource Agency

APMSS would need to address the following areas:

i) at the State level

- The establishment of the State Gender Resource Centre to provide resource support, capacity building, action research, and advocacy towards womens education and equality
- Networking with the women's movement and with other agencies towards common goals of women's equality
- support to the District Resource Centres to emerge into resource agencies capable of providing support on issues and initiatives to the federations as well as to other programmes and departments as the need arises
- Demands from the state and other agencies to undertake policy and capacity development activities with other organizations
- sectoral database development on gender issues in collaboration with key sectors

ii) at the district level

- Facilitate the formation of district resource teams/centres to provide the inputs for grassroots level organizations of women to emerge, to provide backup support in the form of organisation development and management inputs etc till such time that these tasks are gradually managed by the women themselves
- issue based inputs towards perspective and capacity development for Sanghas and federations, as well as linkages with opportunities towards viability and outreach of Federations at least in the short run

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APMSS

- Expansion strategy and approach in 3-4 new districts to be aligned to working with Federations in districts where DPIIP programme is coming in, while ensuring that MS ideology for empowerment is not weakened. MoUs should be drafted prior to partnerships to reflect these basic principles of MS.
- Establishment of State/District Gender Resource Centres in accordance with programme needs and client/partner capacity building requirements, within the framework of MS philosophy and non negotiables. MoUs and agreements for collaboration drafted prior to partnerships to incorporate the basic principles of MS.
- Strengthening and expansion of education component, particularly for Sangha women and adolescent girls through continuing education and bridge courses – access government programmes too under SSA, AE and others. Review of existing material and curriculum with a gender perspective and participatory learning pedagogy perspective with the assistance of specialists and experts in the sector.
- Capacity building of State/District Resource Centre teams to mould them into new roles as programme managers, facilitators and resource providers to Sanghas/federations and other programmes. Shift from implementation mode to resource facilitation and capacity building mode of operations.
- Strengthen Federations to set up Nari Adalats and other need based centres (health awareness, livelihoods etc) at Mandal level. Learning should be facilitated through interstate exposure and learning from other NGO innovations and best practices in the country for self- management towards self-reliance and autonomy
- Exposure and study tours of teams across districts and other MS states to enable karyakarthis to share experiences and cross-fertilize new ideas and trends to assist federations and Sanghas to move towards autonomy.
- With a presence in 1101 villages spread over 7 districts and 32 Mandals, APMSS has a far larger base than most NGOs, but it needs to create a strong bond between the geographically scattered Sanghas across the districts, and across states as well as consolidate within these areas. Strategic alliances with like-minded organisations also need to be improved, to strengthen women's solidarity. Expansion and extension of national, state and district level linkages/wider dissemination of MS practices with NGOs, resource organisations/ institutions and women's studies centres for learning and sharing and for field level action research and micro studies is called for.
- **The most critical factor to enable the programme to remain effective and enhance the achievement of goals is the enhancement of salaries from the present unrealistic levels to be at par with other development initiatives and with provision for increases as recommended in the body of the report. This is an urgent requirement on which the future of the programme is hinged, and cannot be overstated.**

**ANNEXURE 1:
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER INDICATORS OF ANDHRA PRADESH**

Indicator	Year	AP	India
Literacy	1991		
Female literacy		32 %	39 %
Literacy		44 %	
Rural literacy		34 %	
Female literacy ST		9 %	
Literacy ST		17 %	
Education-Drop out	1991		
SC		31.58%	
ST		17.15%	
Gender ratio	1991 (1971)	972 (976)	927
Rural		977 (983)	
Urban		958	
Health	1991		
Female life exp.			
Fertility rate			
Doctor attended birth	1992/93		
- rural		27.4 %	
- urban		67.4 %	
Infant mortality rate	1991 (1997)	73/1000	(71/1000)
Population per doctor	1991	(63)	N/A.
Hospital beds/million		61.471	
- rural			2409
- urban		1827	152
Safe drinking water		76	
- rural			64 %
- urban		57 %	91 %
		87 %	
Land	1991		
Irrigated land		35.5 %	
Fallow land		17 %	
Forest land		23 %	
Marginal land (0-1 ha)		56 %	
Landless households	1987/88	11 %	
Poverty	1993/94		
Below poverty line		22.19 %	35.97 %
Human Poverty Index		40.78	40.49
Ranking HPI/India		9	
Ranking SDP/India		7	
Population	1991		
Backward Caste (BC)		38 %	
Scheduled Caste (SC)		16 %	
Scheduled Tribes (ST)		6.3 %	

**ANNEXURE 2 A:
DEMOGRAPHIC AND LITERACY DATA IN THE 7 APSS PROGRAMME DISTRICTS**

STATE/ DISTRICT	TOTAL POPULATION	SEX RATIO	LITERATES			LITERACY RATE
			MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	
Andhra Pradesh	75727541	975	1801206	1386432	3187638	70.70
Adilabad	237460	977	84797	62833	147630	71.43
Nizamabad	198453	968	66059	48870	114929	67.55
Karimnagar	190852	968	68547	49723	118270	70.01
Medak	62622	974	23277	17177	40454	74.37
Mahabubnagar	51481	961	19660	14790	34450	77.77
Nalgonda	106610	926	41301	29192	70493	75.41
Warangal	230190	982	87814	63954	151768	74.98

Source: Provisional Census – 2001, Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Hyderabad

ANNEXURE 2B: DEATH RATE BY SEX – 1999

	TOTAL			RURAL			URBAN		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
INDIA	9.0	8.3	8.7	9.7	9.1	9.4	6.7	5.8	6.3
ANDHRA PRADESH	9.0	7.4	8.2	9.8	8.1	9.0	6.4	5.0	5.7

ANNEXURE 2C: IMR BY SEX

	TOTAL			RURAL			URBAN		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
INDIA	69.8	70.8	70.0	75.6	75.2	75.4	47.4	39.7	43.8
ANDHRA PRADESH	68.9	63.5	66.3	79.2	70.6	75.4	35.1	39.9	37.4

ANNEXURE 2D: INDIA - HDI / GDI (COMPARATIVE STATEMENT 1995 – 1998)

HDI as % of highest value in region		Gender related Development Index GDI		Gender Empowerment Measure- GEM		HP (%) Human Poverty Index	
1995	1998	1995	1998	1995	1998	1995	1998
59	77	0.424	0.545	0.228	-	35.9	34.6

Source: Human Development Report – 2000

ANNEXURE 3 : SCHEMES OF THE GOAP

The GoAP has taken special interest in drawing up programmes for self-reliance of women, rural and disadvantaged groups through:

- Empowerment and decentralization of development programmes through Panchayats– Janmabhoomi, Shramdanam, DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas), WUA (Water Users Associations), CMEY Programme (Chief Minister's Empowerment of Youth) and VSS (Vana Sanarakshana Samitis)
- Developing agriculture through sector reforms – harnessing water resources, programmes for rain fed agriculture, watershed development, development of wastelands, environmental management and regeneration and the ANTWA programme with a specific focus on creation of access to agricultural technology and training for women
- Building capabilities in health, education, food security and poverty eradication for secure livelihoods.
- Creating and developing infrastructure and services –irrigation, roads, transport, processing and storage facilities, communications and housing.
- Integrated approach to planning and development through local bodies and Panchayats with financial, technical and managerial assistance for implementing micro level plans and schemes.

The state government's affirmative actions for women's welfare and protection include:

- 30 percent reservation of posts in state government and other public sector organizations,
- a minimal 30 percent women beneficiaries in development programmes,
- free education for girls up to graduate level,
- entrustment of fair price shops exclusively to women,
- grant of land and house titles in joint names of husband and wife.

ANNEXURE 4 a:Curriculum followed in the Mahila Shikshan Kendra

Major theme	Detailed content
MS philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emphasis on MS objectives, non-negotiable principles ▪ Collective strength ▪ Importance of education and impact of education on life ▪ Federation, role of literacy at this stage
Functional Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reading, writing ▪ Numeracy – counting, addition, subtraction, etc. ▪ Language and Communication skills
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parts of the body – their functions ▪ Personal hygiene, environmental hygiene ▪ Diseases – seasonal, water borne diseases, contagious diseases – treatment and prevention ▪ Child bearing, child rearing, immunization ▪ Reproductive health, family planning – methods ▪ Training in first aid ▪ Women's health – related to work load
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nutrition, supplementary nutrition ▪ Deficiency disorders – anaemia, marasmas, kwashiorkar ▪ Cooking methods, preservation ▪ Contamination
Government Health facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness on the Government health system – ANM, PHC, Sub-centre, ▪ Community health worker – roles and responsibilities ▪ Health policy – women's role
Natural resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land – types ▪ Forests – growing, conserving, uses, VSS ▪ Water – sources, utility, conserving, water users' committee ▪ Control over resources ▪ Information about local and external resources
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crops – food crops, cash crops ▪ pesticides, fertilizers – organic, chemical ▪ Vermi compost, neem seeds, neem oil ▪ Organic manure – preparation, use ▪ Bio Intensive Gardens (BIG) – Kitchen gardens, nurseries, social forestry ▪ Animal husbandry ▪ Seeds, grains – storage methods ▪ New agricultural methods – women's role ▪ Bio-diversity ▪ Economic development and income generation activities
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning, budgeting, accounting, management, marketing skills, middle men – exploitation ▪ Godowns – available facilities, utility, problems, co-operative marketing ▪ Bargaining/negotiating power
Pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water, air, environment, sound, food ▪ Degradation of natural resources
Panchayati raj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Panchayats – role, responsibilities, rights of the members ▪ Elections, importance/value of vote ▪ Awareness about politics, participation of women ▪ Reservations – women's, castes, regions ▪ Awareness on different structures and systems – relation ▪ Women in governance

Major theme	Detailed content
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Status of women ▪ Changing roles and responsibilities of women in the society ▪ Work done by male and female – value
Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Role of women in society, problems faced by women ▪ Customs, traditions, beliefs ▪ Family, marriage, caste and religion
Social problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child marriages – problems, laws related to it ▪ Child labour – problems, laws related to it ▪ <i>Jogini</i> cult, ▪ poverty, dowry
Legal literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rights and responsibilities ▪ Awareness about different laws and legislation related to women ▪ Violence – domestic, outside the home, in the work place, protesting against violence/resisting violence.
Status of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Status of women, changing roles and responsibilities ▪ In the family, outside the family, in the community ▪ Women's role in policy making
Government facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Village level facilities – drainages, drinking water, electricity, ration cards, housing ▪ Schools, hostels ▪ Loans/subsidies, schemes, insurance ▪ Pension, banks – savings, loans, subsidies
Skill development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Articulation, analysis, critical thinking ▪ Addressing issues ▪ Management skills, presentation skills ▪ Maintenance of registers ▪ Leadership qualities ▪ Preparation of songs, role plays, case studies ▪ Decentralisation/federation – <i>sangham</i> women as resource group

Annexure 4 b: The curriculum followed in the BMKs

Subject	Curricular Details
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reading, writing ▪ Expression, communication ▪ Songs, play, story telling, etc.
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Functional arithmetic – counting, writing numbers ▪ Simple additions, subtractions, multiplication, division
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness about one's body – body parts, it's functions ▪ Personal hygiene ▪ Environmental hygiene ▪ Eco-development ▪ Pollution – water, air, food, sound (pictures, stories, books)
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family, community ▪ Customs, traditions, beliefs ▪ Geography – planets, stars, continents, oceans, rivers, mountains, ▪ History – ▪ Civics – country, states, parliament, assembly, elections, etc.
General knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National leaders, national anthem, national symbols, national festivals ▪ India – different regions, different cultures ▪ States – capitals, important places ▪ Currency ▪ Sports – prominent personalities ▪ World – prominent personalities, famous places ▪ Wonders of the world
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal hygiene ▪ Food – nutrition, vitamins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, etc. ▪ Environment – impact on health ▪ Common health problems in the age group of 9-12, prevention, care to be taken ▪ Awareness about diseases – first aid ▪ Link between food, health and work they do.
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difference between boy and girl, work they do ▪ Socialization values attached, etc.
Child rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child labour, nature of work, wages and impact on health, questioning, decision-making, etc.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eco-development ▪ Crops – food crops, commercial crops ▪ Environment – impact, ▪ Environmental pollution – their role in controlling it, ▪ Social forestry ▪ Low rainfall – causes, measures to be taken
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizations and institutions like hostels, schools, hospitals, panchayats, bus-stand, post office, bank, etc. – its functions ▪ Visit to different organizations and institutions for better understanding
Collectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Cheli/Balika sanghas</i>

Annexure 5: Components of Training in Education

Theme	Content	Objectives
Education Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning as a life long - Process - Learning as interaction and sharing - Creating conducive conditions for learning - An integrated approach to learning - Education for growth and self development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To help the participants internalize the idea of pressure free constructive processes of learning. * To equip them to use education as a tool for initiating transformation
Gender Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue • The problems arising out of the issue • Gender and societal changes • Gender, Health, Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To lead participants to question the prevailing notions on gender • To help alter perceptions * To help implement these changes in daily interactions of work and learning. * To link this with development
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation • Expression • Inquiry • Exploration • Presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To equip participants to use communication as a tool for learning and growing * To help conceive and practice learning as communication/sharing of experience * To help them discover their own resources and use them
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How things work on scale • Administration • Economy • Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To establish a link in the participants minds between education and reality. So that their curriculum can evolve from their context and thereby be more relevant.
Organizational skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning : For an occasion; for a centre; or for a programme • Optimum use of available resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To equip the teams and individuals in the team for autonomous constructive operations.
Curriculum : Learning content & material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a framework for learning/teaching • Formulating a relevant framework • Identifying contents • Designing and creating material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To help the trainees plan and evolve meaningful curriculum for specific target groups * To provide inputs for developing indigenous learning material.
Subject teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom interaction • Concept : learning and teaching concrete to abstract to concrete • Subject specific skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To provide inputs to teachers and others to be effective facilitators * To help them identity/thrust areas * To offer specific support to classroom teaching * To prepare them to deal with classroom and learning problems.
Project work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project – a learning / teaching strategy • Multidimensional approach • Theme wise detailed study and presentation from among a range of contextual topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To offer tools for integrated approach to learning by exposing them to the process. * Practice for each participant in planning, presenting, evaluating and learning.
Art & Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative inputs • Use of material • Work with hand, paper, clay other available resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To help the trainees see the significance of joy in learning * To help them use art and craft as an exercise in concentration * To help design and create learning material
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical appreciation • Self-assessment • Assessing skills of the group • Evaluation for improvement • Techniques of evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To help formulate effective evaluation patterns • To facilitate goal setting and self-checks.

ANNEXURE 6:

MISSION ITINERARY IN ANDHRA PRADESH: 2ND – 9TH DECEMBER 2001

- 2nd Dec : Briefing meeting at New Delhi with JS, DoE and NPD MS
Arrival in Hyderabad
- 3rd Dec : Meeting and briefing at the State Office
Meeting with Secretary Education, GoAP, State Project Director, DPEP and
Commissioner School Education
Meeting with Managing Director and Marketing Manager, Women's
Finance Corporation and Ms Jhansi from ANTWA
Meeting with national consultant/NRG Member Kameshwari Jindayala
- 4th Dec : Departure for Sangareddy field visit
Meeting with Federation members of Medak and Mehboobnagar districts
Meeting with Joint Director, SC Service Cooperative Society
Meeting with Karyakartas and DIU teams from Medak and Mehboobnagar
Meeting with teachers and children at district MSK
- 5th Dec : Departure for Yellareddy, Nizamabad District
Meeting with Sangha women at Bikkanur village-women from 8 villages
participated
Discussions with women involved in collective farming in the village
Meeting and discussions with BMK teachers and children from centres
and Cheli Sanghas
Meeting with teachers and children at Mandal MSK
Meeting with District Collector, Nizamabad
- 6th Dec : Cluster meeting with Sangha women at Chinnatmakur village
Discussions with Sangha women
Meeting with school teacher of government school
Meetings/ discussions with Mandal/District officials and NGO
representatives
Discussions with BMK teachers
- 7th Dec : Departure for Adilabad- Sirpur
Meeting with Community leaders and all-women panchayat members and
other women
Meeting with district team-Karyakarthis, RPs and DPC
Meetings with Sangha women of Gunnur and Gowi
- 8th Dec : Departure for Hyderabad
Collation of information at state office
Meeting with the District team of Nalgonda and Warangal Districts
- 9th Dec : Debriefing with APMSS state office team
- 10th Dec: Departure for Tiruvananthapuram, Kerala

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ALC	Adult literacy Centres
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
ANTWA	Andhra Pradesh Training for Women in Agriculture Project
APMSS*	Andhra Pradesh Mahila Samatha Society
BMK	Bal Mitra Kendra
CREDA	A hyderabad based NGO
DPIP	District Poverty Initiatives Project
GoAP	Government of Andhra Pradesh
ICDS	Integrated Child Developemnt Services
IGMRI	
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPTC	Member Panchayat Technical Committee
MRO	Mandal Revenue Officer
MS	Mahila Samatha/ Mahila Samakhya
MSK	Mahila Shikshana Kendra
PHC	Primary Health Centre
SC/ST	Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe
SEC	School Education Committee
SHGs	Self Help Groups
TLC	Total Literacy Campaign
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

In AP the MS programme is known as Mahila Samatha as there are other programmes by the name of Mahila Samakhya.

Glossary

Anganwadi	Childcare centre under ICDS
Cheli Sangha	Collective Of Adolescent Girls
Gram Sabha	Village general body
Kalajatha	Cultural rally for community mobilization
Karyakartha	Coordinator of 10 Sanghas
Mandals	Sub district level administrative unit
Mela	Fair
Neem	Tropical tree with herbal, germicidal properties
Panchayats	Local self-governing unit at village level
Sangha	Collective of women
Sarpanch	Head of the village council/ panchayat
Shramdanam	Voluntary labour

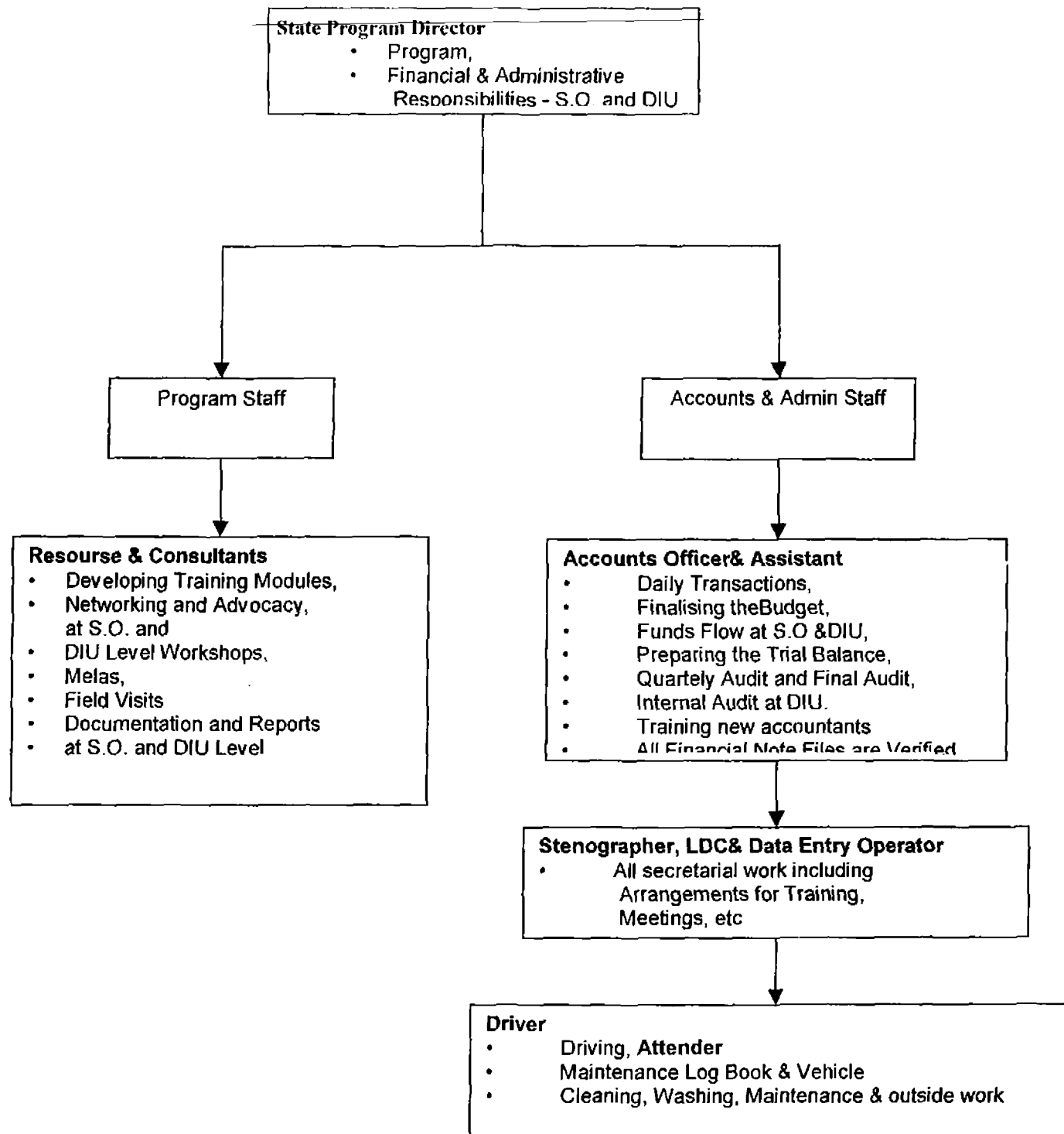


EXHIBIT 3b: Organisational Structure District

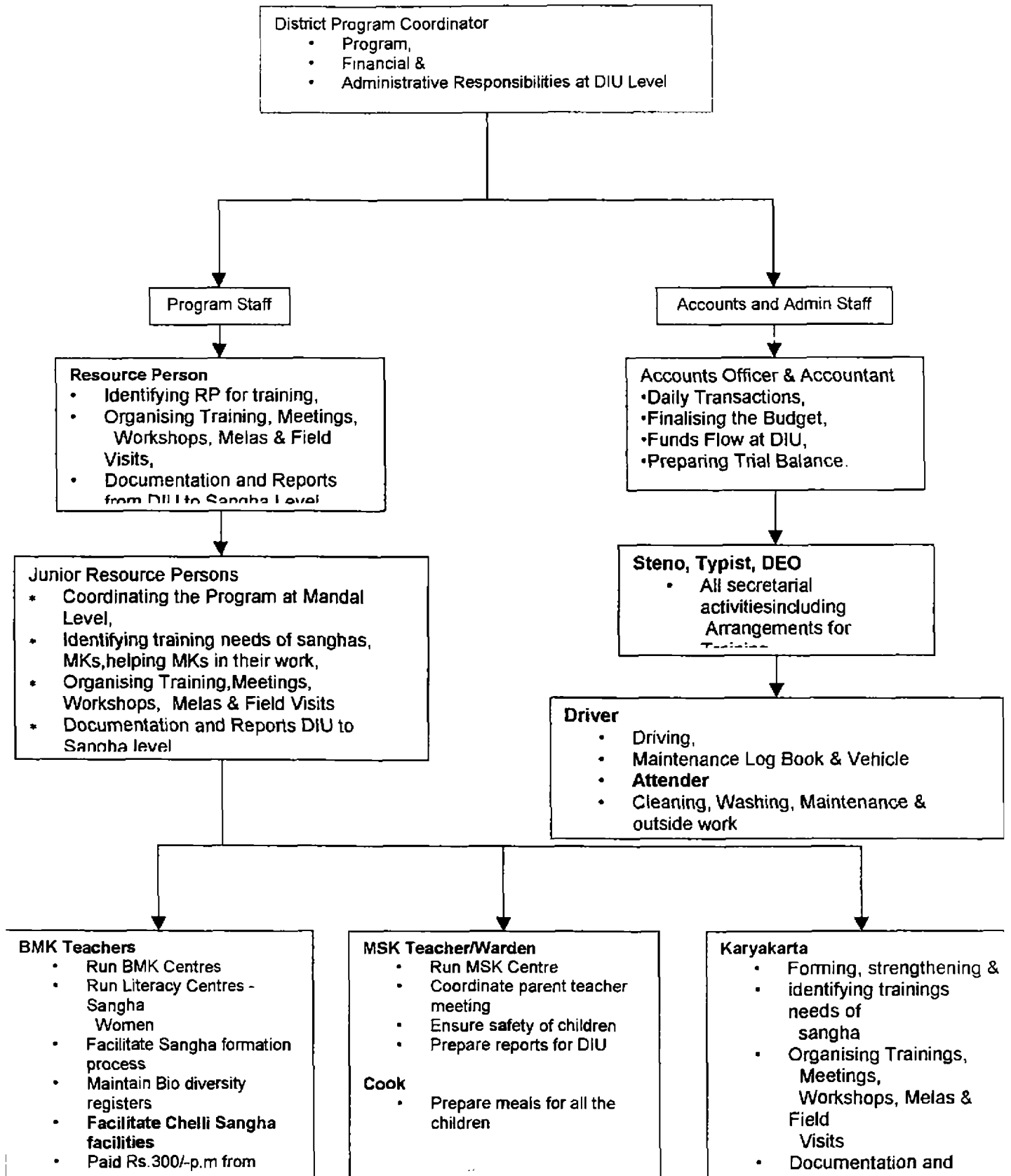


EXHIBIT 4A: HIRING PROCESS

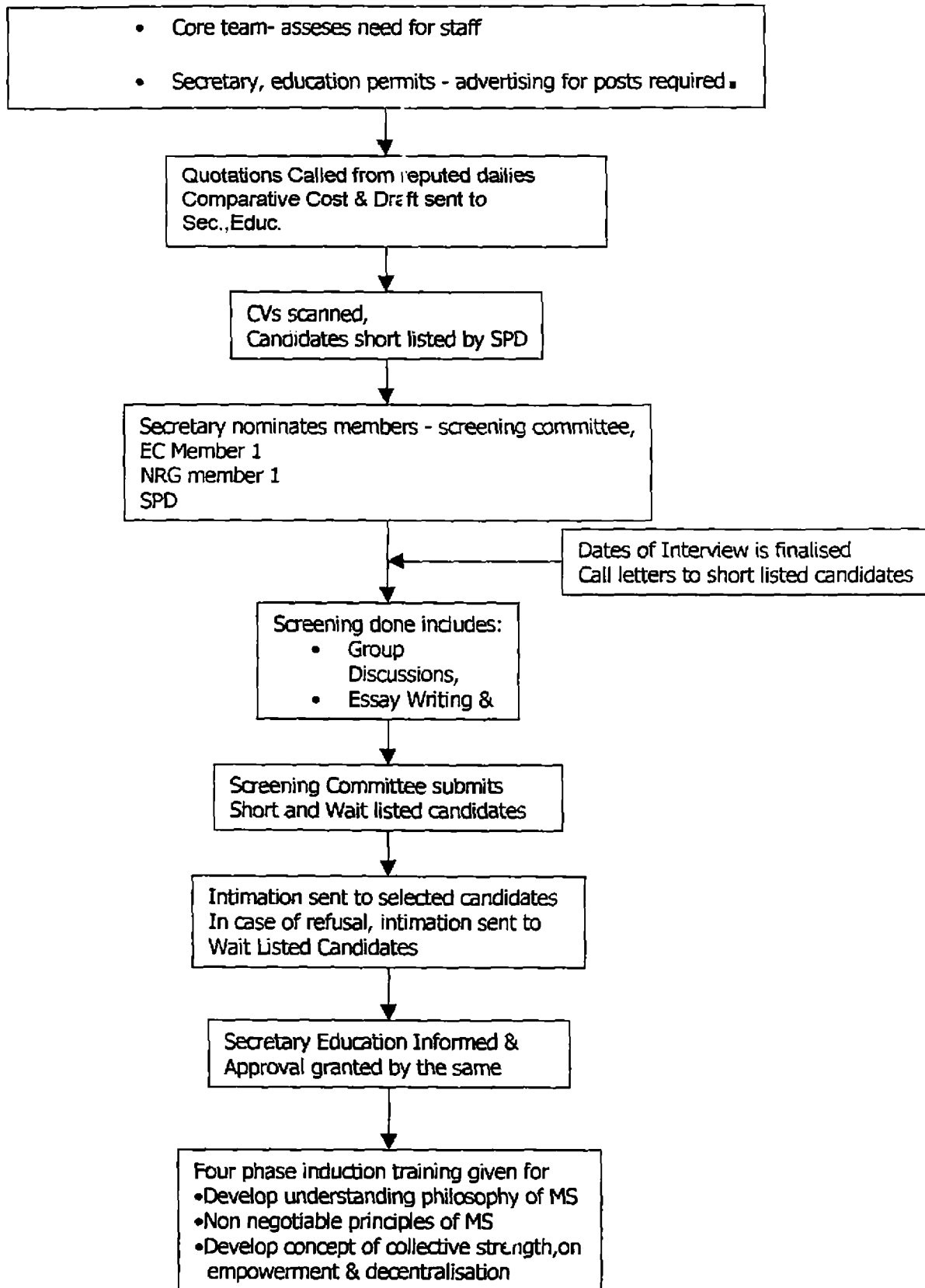


EXHIBIT 4b: CRITERIA FOR PAYMENT TO BMK TEACHERS

- Minimum 15 children in centre
- Run literacy classes for sangha women
 - Maintain attendance registers
 - Take periodical tests & send to DIU
 - Facilitate Chelli Sangha facilities
- Attend review cum training held once in 2 months
 - Facilitate sangha formation process
 - Keep updated about local news
- Attend education training at District/State level once every 4 months
- Maintain bio diversity registers (though this is not compulsory)
 - Besides this the all sangha women have to certify that BMK teacher has worked well and then only is his payment released once every 3 months.

EXHIBIT I: Reporting and information Flow

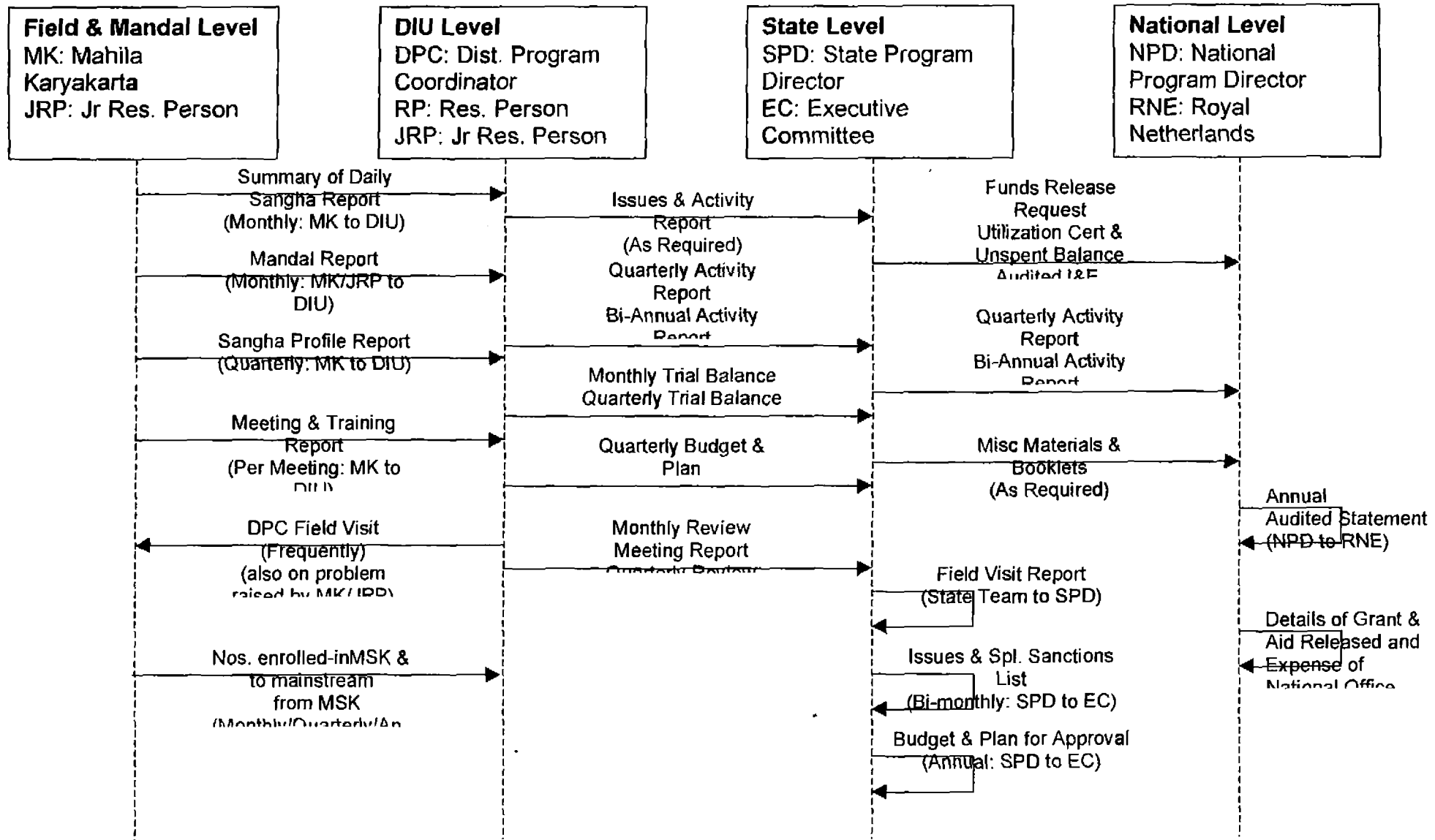
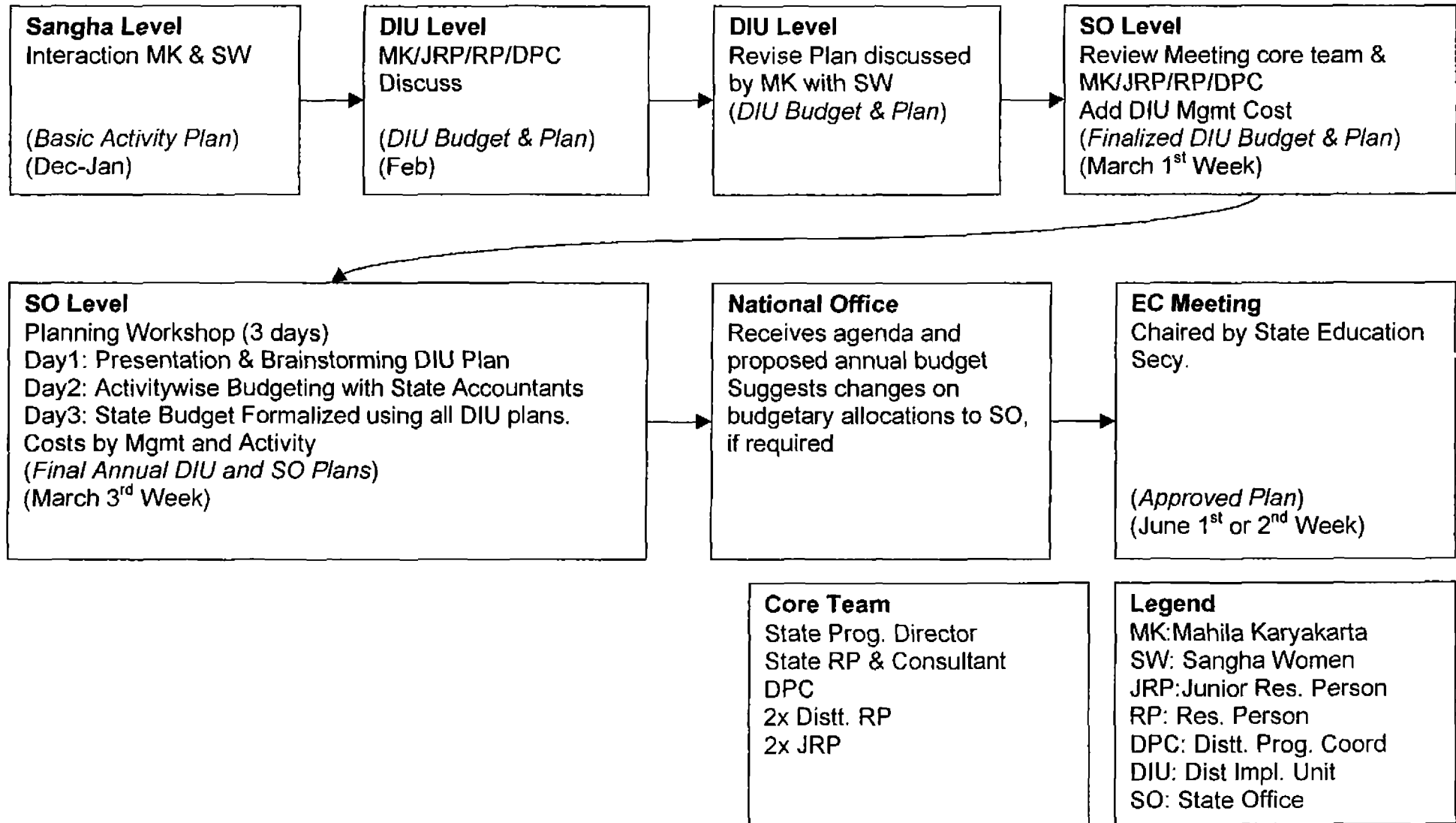


EXHIBIT 2: Budgeting Process



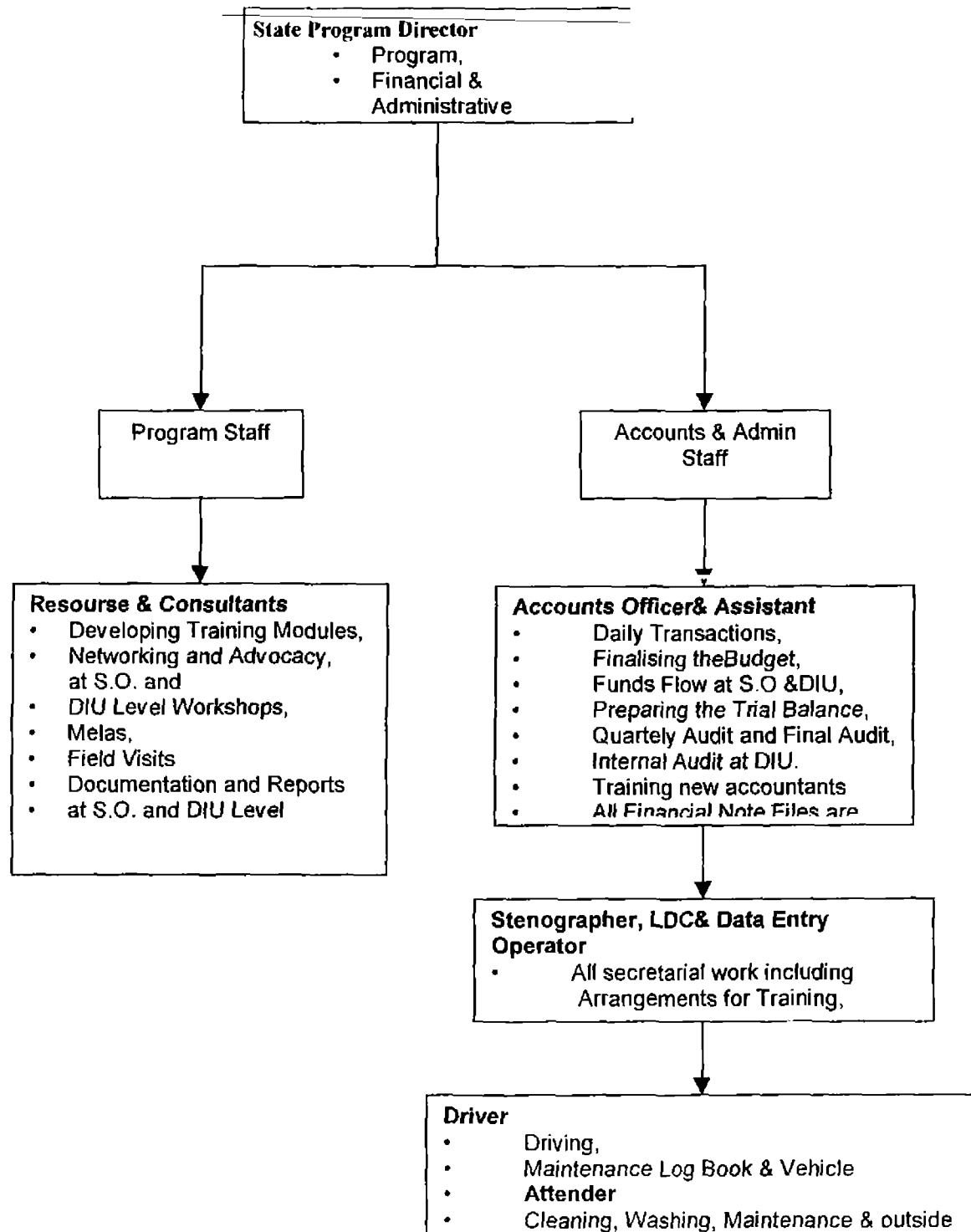


EXHIBIT 3b: Organisational Structure District

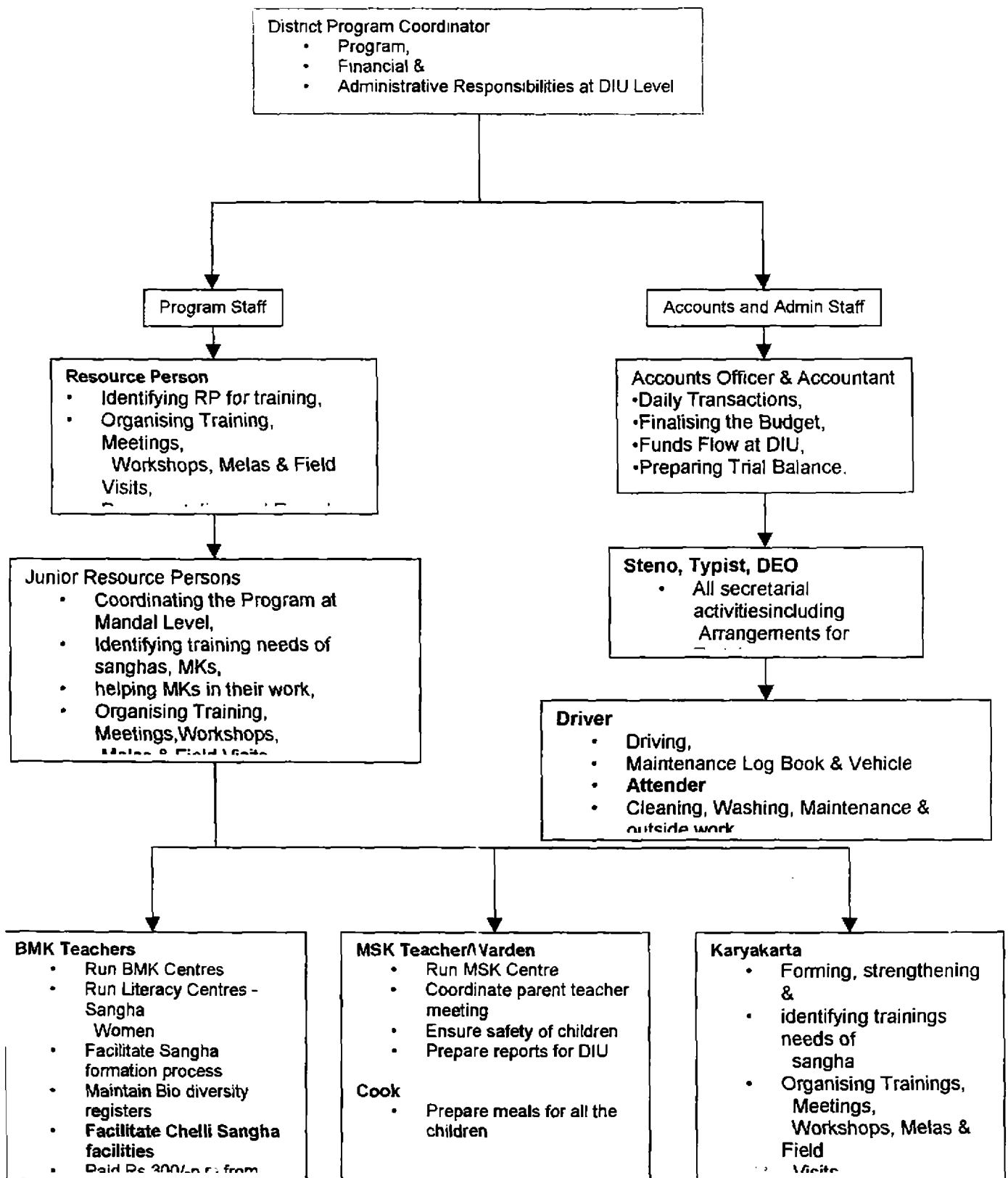
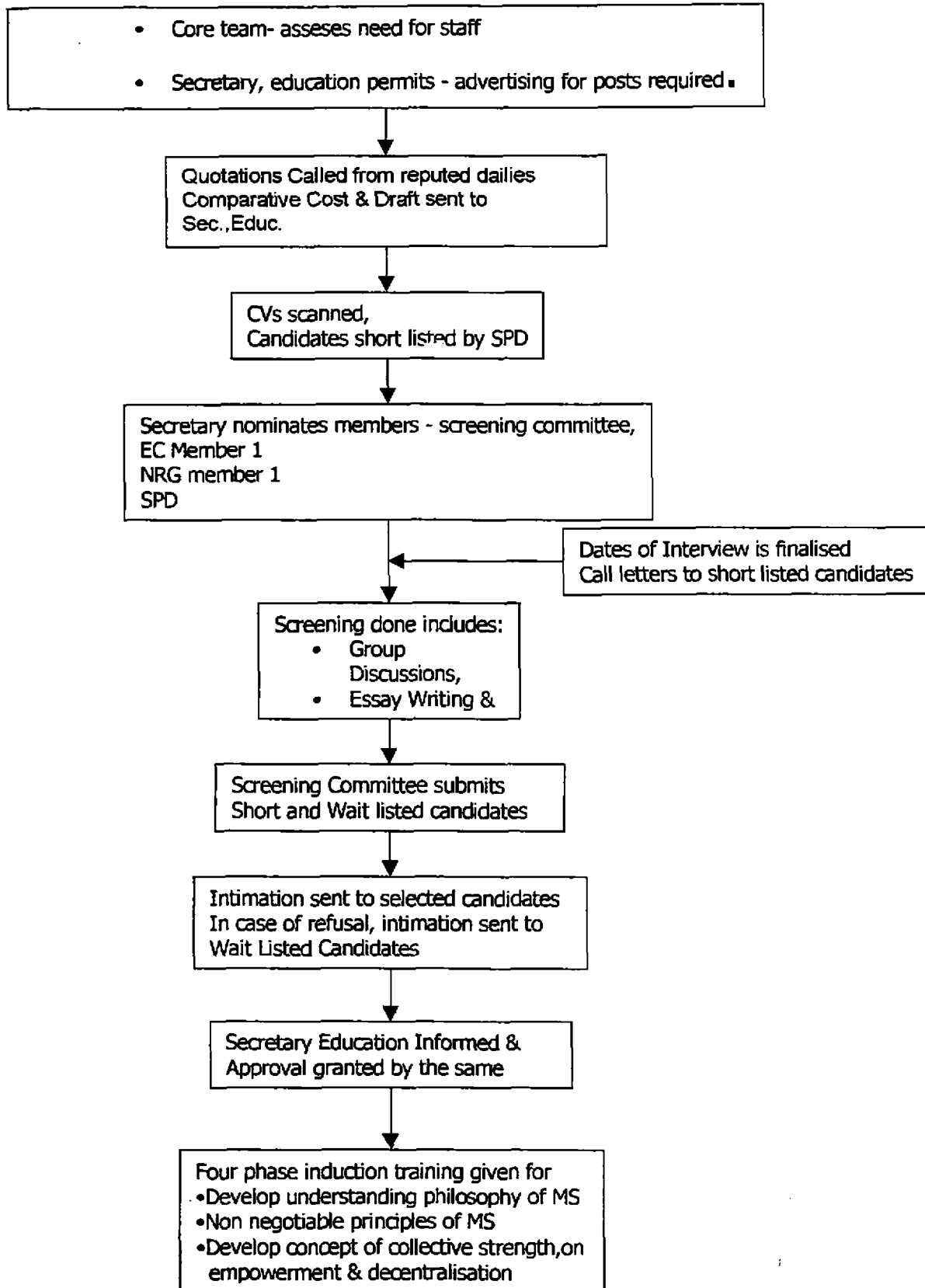


EXHIBIT 4A:

HIRING PROCESS



MAHILA SAMAKHYA
INDO- DUTCH REVIEW MISSION 2001

KERALA MAHILA SAMAKHYA SOCIETY

Team Members:

Hilde Janssen
Soma Kishore Parthasarathy
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Varun Anand

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 THE SAKSHYA PROGRAMME IN KERALA

1.2 SCOPE AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

1.3 WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- 1.3.1 *Impact on Women's Personal and Family Lives, Autonomy and Socio-Cultural Environment*
- 1.3.2 *Creating a Foundation for a Grass-Root Level Women's Movement*
- 1.3.3 *Women's political participation*
- 1.3.4 *Women's legal rights*
- 1.3.5 *Cutting Across Caste and Class*
- 1.3.6 *Growth, Pace And Emerging Trends*

1.4 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 1.4.1 *Post literacy and continuing education*
- 1.4.2 *Awareness classes*
- 1.4.3 *Vocational training*
- 1.4.4 *Capacity Training*
- 1.4.5 *Contribution to reduction of child labour*

1.5 LINKAGES WITH GOVERNMENT, NGOs, WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND RNE PRIORITIES

- 1.5.1 *Linkages with Government Departments and Agencies*
- 1.5.2 *Linkages with Panchayat Institutions*
- 1.5.3 *Linkages with NGOs and Women's Movement*
- 1.5.4 *Added Value and Linkages with RNE Sector/ Approach Priorities*

1.6 REPORTING AND MONITORING

1.7 PLANNING AND BUDGETING

1.8 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

1.9 HUMAN RESOURCES

1.10 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 1.10.1 *Funds Flow*
- 1.10.2 *Accounting*
- 1.10.3 *Purchase Procedure*
- 1.10.4 *Proclosures*
- 1.10.5 *Payroll System*
- 1.10.6 *Internal Controls*
- 1.10.7 *Utilization of Funds*

1.11 FUTURE RELEASE

- 1.11.1 *Relevance for A New Phase*
- 1.11.2 *Recommended Strategy for the next phase*
- 1.11.3 *Structure and Programme Initiatives*

Annexures, Mission Itinerary, Abbreviations, Glossary

Preface

Mahila Samakhya (MS), meaning "Education for Women's Equality" is a novel programme of the Government of India (GOI), Department of Education. The programme is sponsored by Dutch Development Co-operation under a bilateral agreement in 5 states. Conceptualised as a process rather than mere fulfilment of targets, the programme was initiated in 6 districts of U.P, Karnataka, and Gujarat. MS is registered as an autonomous society and is a national programme. Co-ordination of the MS programme through a National Office imparts a national identity. The programme was twelve years old in December 2001. Hence the Indo-Dutch Review Mission was fielded in December 2001 to undertake visits to the five states where the programme operates with RNE assistance to assess the gains and progress of the programme and to make suggestions for the next phase. Kerala joined the Mahila Samakhya programme under Dutch Assistance most recently and this review is the first external assessment of the programme in that state.

The Indo-Dutch Review Mission consisting of ten members (including 3 GOI representatives) worked in two teams to cover the 5 states for review. The first team comprising of Fatima Ali Khan, Riet Turksma, Shushmita Dutt and Virat Divyakirti visited Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, the states where the programme was initiated in the first phase. The second team consisting of Hilde Janssen, Nishi Kurobra, Soma Kishore Parthasarathy (mission leader) Varita Mukherjee and Varun Anand covered the states included in the programme in the second and third phase i.e. Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Charu Sehgal also joined the team for two days in Kerala.

The task of the review mission as laid down in the Terms of reference was to:

- Review the progress of the programme since January 1998, and assess its impact in terms of empowerment of women.
- Recommend a strategy for the next phase (2003-2007) in the three concentration states, i.e. Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, consistent with the policy of the Government of India (GOI) and the policy of the Netherlands (GON)
- Provide an estimate of the total budget for the next phase.

The following mission report is one of two reports for the 2 states visited by the second team.

The specific analysis and conclusions of the Programme in Kerala are based on a five-day visit to the state, including field visits to the two blocks in Thiruvantapuram and Malappuram district where Kerala Mahila Samakhya Society is implementing its programme. Discussions were held with state and district staff, Sangha women, elected Panchayat members and government officials as well as with NGO and civil society organisation representatives and Core committee members of the State Society. The Itinerary of the mission's visit to the state is at Annex 1. Relevant documents of the programme and of state policy and programmes as impinging upon the MS programme were also referred to in the preparation of this report.

MAHILA SAMAKHYA INDO-DUTCH REVIEW MISSION 2001

KERALA MAHILA SAMAKHYA SOCIETY

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. Background of Women's Status and Education in Kerala

Kerala presents several paradoxes with regard to women. Despite the relatively high educational and health status, women are economically marginalized and are quite invisible in the public domain. Literacy achievements in Kerala are impressive and comparable to those of developed countries. Kerala's female literacy rate of 86.2 percent (1991) is nearly equal to male literacy rates, as compared to the Indian average of 39 percent, which is one-third lower than that of male. Almost total literacy has been achieved for the age group between 6 and 24 years: the rate is above 97 percent in both rural and urban areas. For all age groups below 34 years, female rural literacy in Kerala is higher than the urban male literacy in India as a whole.

The infant mortality rate in Kerala stands at only 13 as against 80 in India, and the number of children per couple has declined to less than two. The better health status of women is reflected in the favourable sex ratio, although the last decade recorded a reversal of this trend in the age group of less than seven years. Women's life expectancy is 74 years, or 15 years longer than the average Indian woman.

The better education levels and the reduced childcare burden due to declining fertility have however, not resulted in an increased work participation of women, neither in a more visible social leadership role. The work participation rate of women in Kerala is significantly low and has tended to decline, primarily due to the severe unemployment rate in the state. The incidence of unemployment among females in rural areas is twice as high as among males, and three times in urban areas.

Table 1: Males And Female Work Participation Rates (Kerala and India – A comparison)

YEAR	KERALA			INDIA		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	65.66	19.70	42.68	51.1	27.9	42.5
1981	44.89	16.61	30.53	52.62	19.67	36.70
1991	47.58	15.85	31.43	51.56	22.73	37.68

Source: Iridat, 1994

The female labour force is predominantly concentrated in low paying, unorganized sectors, in agriculture labour, in cottage and traditional industries, and in certain service sectors. There has been a shift to less labour intensive cash crops, as well as the steep decline in prices of cash crops in international and national markets. This has resulted in a decline in the proportion of women in the agriculture labour force, from 43.6 per cent in 1981 to 36.1 per cent in 1991. The female work force in the cottage industries has also declined from 7.7 per cent to 5.9 percent. Despite a powerful trade union movement, equal wages for equal work still remains elusive and gender discrimination at the work place is widely prevalent. The burdens of female-headed households in Kerala is relatively higher. They constitute 35 per cent of the poor households.

The economic marginalization of women and their lack of control over resources have been major impediments in improving the social status of women in Kerala. The incidence of violence against women and sexual harassment has increased: registered crimes against women increased from 1,862 registered cases in 1991 to 4,937 in 1996. The practice of dowry has been spreading among all communities and regions, resulting in an increasing incidence of dowry related harassment and deaths. Suicides among women and men are also a growing concern in Kerala.

Women are virtually absent among the state political leadership, despite the general progressive political environment in Kerala and women's active involvement in grass-root level political processes. In many trade unions where the rank and file membership is predominantly female, such as the agricultural workers union and the unions of the cashew and coir industries, the representation of women at the leadership level has been only namesake. Female representation in the entire history of the state legislature has only once exceeded six per cent.

2. Decentralised Development Planning and Gender

In August 1996, a mandatory 33 percent reservation for women in three tiers of village block and district Panchayat was implemented in Kerala. The Left Democratic Front government launched this measure as part of the People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning, also known as the **People's Plan Campaign (PPC)**. It initiated a bottom-up planning process with a high degree of autonomy granted to local bodies to determine their own priorities, stressing people's participation and transparency. An Administrative Reforms Committee was set up to institutionalize the decentralization process. The PPC was accompanied by a financial revolution to the local bodies, for the first time ever in India. Forty percent of the state resources were devolved to the grassroots level as grant-in-aid. The local bodies were mandated to prepare a comprehensive area plan, with the village as the basic planning unit. Ten percent of these allocated funds were earmarked for women under the **Women Component Plan(WCP)**.

These initiatives by the State set into motion a ***new process of planning***, which has a transformative potential for both governance and citizenship in Kerala, based on its key principles of democratic participation, accountability and transparency. The attempts to address gender issues; environmental concerns and issues affecting marginalized communities further enhance the potential for achieving social justice through the planning process.

The gender component of the Peoples Plan Campaign in Kerala has several dimensions. Conscious attempts were made by the state to address gender issues during the several stages of the People Plan Campaign and a gender planning exercise was undertaken as a part of the Campaign. But this was limited to planning for the 10 per cent earmarked for women, and did not extend to gender integration in the other sectors and areas of decentralized planning for development. The presence of a critical mass of women leaders through the Panchayat Raj 33 percent reservation for women has also not altered the political landscape significantly in Kerala. The two strong party coalitions have left very little space for women leaders to manoeuvre, as party prerogatives and dictate predominate. The growing presence of rightist groups in the last decade poses a serious threat to the democratic political space with implications for women's empowerment.

a. Context for Mahila Samakhya in the State

Kerala is politically a vibrant state, with a wide array of mass and class organizations including women's and youth organizations. Clubs for sports and leisure and movements for

blending science co-exist engaging almost half of Kerala's population in civic and public life. The phenomenal rise in exclusive women's groups at the grassroots (Mahila Samajams) and other varieties of group formations is an indicator of women's increasing participation in social and community life. Apart from a few feminist and progressive groups, most of these formations have taken up activities that tend to reinforce women's reproductive roles and gender stereotypes.

Even though socially and culturally prescribed norms have been relaxed to facilitate women's presence in many domains of the public sphere, rigidities remain, especially in mediating options and choices for women's engagement in specific activities of political formation groups. Gender roles and responsibilities, socio-economic barriers, and women's limited skills and capacities are significant impediments to women's participation, despite the access to literacy and education. The gender division of labour remains fairly rigid and men's jobs for women are often extensions of their domestic reproductive role. Their double burden leaves little time or inclination for public activities, so that social leadership ends up remaining a male prerogative.

The participation of women in Kerala is closely related to "legitimacy" of activity undertaken and the nature of such activity. While blatant forms of restrictive practices for women like "purdah" are absent, there is an undercurrent of a subversive social control that results in a 'dusk curfew', urging women to stay home after dark². Women need to seek permission from husbands or "elders" in the family to attend meetings or join public forums. Due to these factors, women hesitate in taking on positions of responsibilities and the day-to-day functioning of the formations and groups. Instead women tend to gravitate to leadership positions in their women's groups, tailored to locations and timings that do adhere to norms of social prohibitions for women. The lack of experience leads to lack of confidence among women to speak out and intervene in public discussion.

Mission of Mahila Samakhya

Kerala Mahila Samakhya was launched in 1998; a decade after the National Mission was piloted and launched in Karnataka, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. The main reason for this late start is it was generally assumed women in Kerala did not need an MS programme, based on the relatively progressive social development indicators on education and health. The erstwhile Education Secretary, under whose leadership the MS was initiated, highlighted the fact that many questions were raised about the role of MS in Kerala. It was a very strong articulation of the above-enunciated issues to have Kerala included as a pilot MS programme.

The MS Executive Committee selected two blocks – Adimali in Idukki district and Namburam in Thiruvananthapuram district - based on criteria of general backwardness in terms of female literacy, percentage (presence) of scheduled caste and tribe population and level of civil society activities³. The State Project Director and other key staff had no say in selection as they were appointed a year later in 1999, at which time the programme was formally initiated in the field. Till then, an accounts officer from the government of Kerala administered the programme under the guidance of the Secretary of Education. The staff and personnel were keen to continue in the capacity of SPD and it was on the initiative of the NPD that an independent SPD was appointed. This SPD initially started also as resource person.

² The responses to these are women from the Muslim communities who practice symbolic veiling.

³ Backwardness is manifested on the main streets of both urban and rural areas after 8pm in Kerala. Rarely do women go alone, and if they do venture out alone, they hazard being harassed or mistaken for a sex-worker.

⁴ The members of the Core group however shared with the Mission that initially different districts were selected but changed later since other development projects were being taken up in those areas. Hence the selection was influenced by factors other than the development indicators.

While the Secretary Education was aware of the need to enhance space for the programme to evolve right from the start, and sought to provide functional autonomy, the ownership of the programme remained vested in the state government, due to the fact that the programme was initiated by the Secretary and was located in the department. To this date in fact it still continues to be perceived as such by the state government⁴. This is reflected in various facets of its work:

a. The chairman (Secretary Education, GoK) is actively involved in all decisions relating to the programme including the activity plan for each month, and the SPD requires prior approval for her activities and travel plans.

b. All appointments and contracts are made by the chairman. The accountant has been appointed by the chairman and his terms of appointment are not known (or accessible) to the SPD, nor have these been referred to or ratified by the EC. The appointment and extension of the SPD's term are sought to be approved by the minister of Education, GoK and were pending at the time of the mission's visit. Other issues regarding the programme are often referred to the Minister, given the swinging fortunes of political parties in the highly polarised state scenario.

c. The financial powers of the SPD are limited to Rs. 500/, beyond which approval of the GoK must be sought, contrary to other states where the SPD has greater powers and refers to the EC for such decisions and delegation of financial powers.

d. Meetings of EC are called and chaired by the chairman, and the agenda is also determined by him. Although this is common practice, the SPDs in other states have in effect a far greater autonomy and only refer to the chairman for formal approvals. In Kerala the SPD is required to refer to the chairman regarding all programme initiatives, resources, appointment & extension. The role of the EC seems to have been far from effective in facilitating the operation of the MS as an autonomous programme initiative. The Executive Committee has a larger representation of the government departments than in other states and few representatives for women's organizations and NGOs from the state.

e. All the government personnel that the mission interacted with stressed on the potential of Mahila Samakhyas to facilitate mobilization of women towards convergence of government programmes, and had little appreciation of the programme approach to work on issues that women themselves prioritised.

C. The Context of Governance

REISS emerged in the context of the People's Plan Campaign, which attempted a radical restructuring of development planning and programming in Kerala, taking planning to the people and attempting women's participation in the process for deciding local priorities and programmes. The ten percent fund available for Women Component Plan (WCP) at the Panchayat level represents a substantial sum of 100 crores across 1000 Panchayats (i.e. Rs.10 lakh per Panchayat). The fund is devoted exclusively for women – to be prioritised, planned, designed and implemented by women. However, the implementation of the WCP varies, depending on the understanding and interests of the local representatives and local women.

Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) emerged in Panchayats where men and women of 50 households formed a group and decided on their priorities. In many Panchayats, Women's

⁴ It is evident in our discussions with the Secretary Decentralised Planning GoK and with the Additional Secretary, Education, who inquired as to why the Dutch Government could not fund MS directly to the State.

⁵ Representatives of the Vamanapuram Block Panchayat informed the mission that the WCP fund was distributed equally among all the SHGs, whereas some village panchayats invited SHG proposals, of which the village received the additional funding.

of credit groups were formed. These groups also became applicants for women's groups as part of the WCP. In 1998, when KMSS was launched, only few Panchayats in the Kerala State had formed SHGs.

MS emphasised the social and political barriers for women's participation, emphasised mobilising of capacities of women elected members, and establishment of groups of poor women citizens within the villages who could demand accountability from them and their members, while seeking to address their own needs collectively. The strategy of "self" formation was initiated in the two blocks. Simultaneously some time had to be spent in convincing Panchayat members about the role of KMSS and its potential for developing women's capacities to participate in decentralised planning processes. Questions were posed for MS on what additional input MS had to offer since women were being mobilised through the People's Plan Campaign anyway. This was made difficult as MS was a "service-provider" or "fund giving" programme.

To the credit of the KMSS team that they managed to create a niche programme albeit on a small and exploratory scale, without comprising on the essential philosophy of social mobilisation, responding to the needs on the ground to carve out a presence in a highly politicised environment. The process has been evolving over time and it has meant that MS has had to redesign its strategy on women's collectives or Sanghas to the ground to accommodate groups that exist at the grassroots level, while continuing to work closely with the structures of state and governance.

2.2.2.2. MAJOR PROGRAMME IN THE STATE

Kerala Sahakariya (KMSS) operates in 2 blocks of 2 districts of Kerala - Vamanapuram in Thiruvananthapuram in the South and Adimali in Idukki in Central Kerala. Vamanapuram is a coastal district and is more urbanised and politicised while Idukki is in the highlands of the state with a substantial tribal population. KMSS has been operating in Vamanapuram block in 8 Panchayats, and in Idukki in 5 Panchayats. 13 Sevini⁶ are established in 13 Panchayats with grass roots women's Sanghas and facilitate a wide range of activities among the poor and other deprived groups of women comprising both scheduled and non-scheduled castes.

2.2.2.2.1. Overview of KMSS

Block	Total Panchayat	Total Wards	Population of Women	Scheduled Tribe Population	Scheduled Caste population	No of SHGs Total/MS
Vamanapuram	8	65	67,962	8611	11570	618/ 263
Adimali	5	108	1,04,409	2570	14688	716/ 512

1. In Vamanapuram Panchayat, there has been no Sevini for over a year, hence interventions in this block are minimal at the moment.

2. In Adimali Panchayat of Adimali the Sevini has just joined a month ago and activities are just starting. The tribal groups are 10 in number, and most of them are in Adimali Panchayat.

Sanghas consist of three to five SHGs of 15-20 women. Sanghas are organised into blocks comprising representatives of each Sangha. At the time of the mission visit in Vamanapuram had established ward Smithies, and two were in the Adimali block. In above-mentioned four Panchayats a total of 45 'Vanitha Sabhas'

⁶ Sevini - a term used in KMSS for the grassroots worker or the Sahayogini of MS

have been formed through a one-day workshop, i.e. clusters of 8-12 Sanghas with three representatives per Sangha on rotation.

2. Activities initiated

Given the upsurge of SHGs and the high unemployment rates among women, KMSS activities are focussed on vocational training and economic activities, combined with awareness classes⁷ on various social and health related issues and capacity building. In cooperation with various institutes and departments KMSS has organised vocational training regarding tailoring and embroidery, paper-, umbrella- and soap making, mushroom cultivation and vermi-culture, as well as masonry. Most Sanghas are now engaged in some kind of economic activity, for which they receive guidance and additional training, including capacity building for bookkeeping. Many groups are engaged in traditional economic activities such as vegetable cultivation, soap making and food processing, while others are pioneering into collective farming, quarry work and masonry. The awareness classes focus more on social issues as requested by the groups, and are meant to overcome women's information gap and limited interaction with officials. Some Panchayats have allotted space to KMSS to start a resource centre to cater to the needs of the local SHGs and other women's groups. KMSS has published elaborate booklets on SHGs and KMSS, which provide excellent basic guidelines and information on group formation and women's rights.

Separate activities are organised for adolescent girls, whose needs are not addressed by any other programmes. KMSS started this activity by training 35 women as resource persons and has also provided training for five adolescent girls as part of the Total Health project of UNICEF. The training and group meetings that follow focus on the physical, mental and emotional changes among girls and dealing with society. The girls' groups have overcome their initial shyness and express relief at being able to share their experiences. Some groups want to engage in economic activities as well, while others expressed a need for remedial classes to help them pass their exams, which they earlier failed.

Capacity training for elected women representatives is an important part of the MS programme, since the Panchayats play a dominant role in women's empowerment at the local level. The training provides information on the role of elected members, their duties and responsibilities as well as practical skills to improve their performance. A separate training was organised on the WCP and the development of innovative projects. The participants highly appreciate these training inputs, as they can also share their experiences. These training inputs are potential stepping-stones for the formation of women's platform, as these representatives are involved in various 'sensitive' social issues like violence against women.

Recently KMSS has started activities in tribal settlements in Adimali district in close cooperation with tribal activists. Given the relatively low level of education, these relatively new KMSS groups focus on *literacy* and other basic information needs.

⁷ The nature of classes is similar to the awareness generation discussions that are conducted elsewhere. In fact they are called classes, since most people are familiar and comfortable with attending 'classes' having attended schools for schooling.

IMPACT AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Impact on Women's Personal & Family Lives, Autonomy & Socio-Cultural Transformation

In a year or a limited period to assess the programme's impact on women's empowerment. However, one unifying response from Sevinis, Sangha women and elected women representatives across Vamanapuram and Adimali blocks is the space and legitimacy that has opened for women to come together, out of their homes. The dynamics of belonging to a women's collective has brought knowledge and limited monetary benefits, and has increased confidence and self-worth among women and consequently raised their status in their households. Of course, this has not translated automatically into 'autonomy' for women. Many still feel the need to take permission from their husbands to attend meetings and other activities. However, there is 'negotiated autonomy' that women are beginning to exercise. In spite of clinging to certain norms of gender roles, women are asserting themselves in other spheres of the family and the larger community.

Overall, women stress the fact that KMSS has paved the way for women to venture although somewhat tentatively, into the public domain. This has given them access to information, encouraged them to contact officials, and provided them with access to opportunities to acquire vocational skills. Exposure trips and workshops elsewhere are new experiences for women, as earlier these were normally opportunities reserved for men. Contact with the world outside their home and their collective economic activity has encouraged women to analyse their own position as women and start sharing experiences.

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As a stepping stone to gradually challenge existing power equations, be it going out after dark, taking up men's jobs or addressing issues of domestic violence and alcohol. Efforts have been made by women to support each other and fight against it, as well as to negotiate through their new-found collective strength against wife abuse and harassment of women and widows. The Sanghas have also given single and widowed women a forum for support and where they feel secure.

Another most visible empowerment is among adolescent girls. Adolescent girls remain a neglected category, while mobilisation of women is a key methodology for various purposes. For adolescent girls there have always been recreation groups, clubs and cultural organizations. The formation of an adolescent girls group to create and to create opportunities for accessing public spaces, freedom of movement and access to

'I always used to hide my sanitary towels, but now... I (have to) wash them in hot water and put them in the front yard to dry in the sun. I don't feel embarrassed anymore when my brothers see them,' says Sunita (18) from Neelanad.

public spaces outside their text books and information about "life-skills" has brought girls in large numbers to the groups. Although this is a fairly new initiative and the group has only a few members, the enthusiasm and energy in the group of young girls is palpable. These girls are getting an early opportunity to meet and discuss their problems with their group. The 'awareness classes' on reproductive health focus on knowing their bodies, menstruation and other associated problems were a big step for the girl's access to gain self-empowerment. These discussions and analysis of issues have enabled young girls to deal with these situations and provided a confidence to protest. They are dealing with their interactions with boys. The methodology adopted by MS for the training and awareness classes were also facilitative of building self-confidence and bringing out their voices. The adolescents reported an increased confidence to face a crowd – to speak,

to sing and dance. They also discussed about how parents initially were wary of these meetings and resisted sending their girls out. But the process of asserting their rights to meet with their peers by explaining and convincing their parents has been an exercise in self-determination and negotiation. Talking about menstruation and learning to know their bodies, they no longer feel helpless and ignorant and are less diffident. They recognise the social restrictions placed on them by society and discuss how to tackle eve teasing, showing more self-confidence in public.

For the tribal women in Adimali block literacy training, initiated by MS, has made them more independent, as they are able to read bus-signs, prices and product information. The various

of breakfast is boiled
in place. A kilo now costs
Rs 100. When cultivated
collectively, it works out
cheaper for us. We take it for
our own use and sometimes
sell surplus to other village
women say the women of
Surya Sangha

vocational training has enabled Sangha women to develop new skills and earn an extra income, which strengthens their position in a society where unemployment rates are very high. While most groups engage in activities within the 'female' sectors like food processing, paper or soap making, some collectives felt emboldened enough to enter male labour segments like quarry work, road contracting or masonry and have started tendering for Panchayat contracts. Women are even doing ploughing and climb trees and ladders to pluck the pepper tasks, which were earlier done only by men. Women take pride in talking

about these new roles. Confronted with a fall in international spice and coffee prices, Sangha in Adimali block started cultivating fallow village land to address food security and diversify their incomes. All twenty members of the Udaya Sangha took to tapioca cultivation and share the produce equally.

Along with the training and information inputs through SHGs and vocational training, the programme has provided women with a better understanding of the economy and the effects of their purchase and production decisions with globalisation policies. Women in Adimali block spoke about the spice business and implications for their own economic security, while women in the Idduki block spoke about market trends for consumer products such as soap in a global economic context. Women in the Adimali block meet at the Vanita Sabha to discuss on these issues as well as to market their products to their own members as a means of exploring markets and competing against global products.

Women analyse the impact of globalization on their lives :

“depressed wage rates, lower income and consequently lower nutrition levels; higher indebtedness, incidence of suicides; on top of this the reduction in govt services makes us even more vulnerable to these economic trends.”

“Individual problems across households were common so we decided to work on a common solution – All members of the group now do ploughing, weeding, planting in rotation so that each one can survive”
Surya Sangha, Idduki block

While the viability of this strategy may be questioned, women are now beginning to understand their economic reality in the context of larger global trends. Similarly a discussion on vegetable cultivation led the women to understand the nutritive value of various foods and to seek products that could be marketed locally, and reduce their vulnerability to the global market trends.

The social standing of the Sangha and its members has significantly improved. They are no longer labeled as just 'gossip groups' and the initial resistance of husbands and villagers has disappeared. By continuing to meet (with husband's permission) and demonstrating the 'benefits' through income generating and social activities, their legitimacy has begun to take root in village. Both Sangha women and Sevinis are regularly consulted on various issues ranging from disease prevention, vocational skills, domestic violence and marital problems. Other SHGs and Panchayat members seek their support and advice. Some Panchayat members have shown their appreciation by providing MS space for a resource centre.

confidence and respect are a source of encouragement for all women involved in the MS Sanghas.

"After becoming a Sevini, I am being recognised as a person in my own right. I am participating in importance and discuss issues in the Sangha. Earlier, I never had the capacity to address public meeting. Now I can. I feel good about myself and feel very confident." Girija, Sevini.

Sevini work in backward Panchayat where the population is poor. The area is mostly tribal and dalit settlers. I have a "responsibility" to work in these areas as a woman. The confidence to the women's lives. The confidence has increased and I have become a leader (by meeting) people in the community. Sulekha, Sevini

However, society still defines the rules. Some male Panchayat members tend to participate in Sangha activities, trying to control the group dynamics and claim honours. Sevinis, who are the 'leaders' and "organizers" continue to face criticism. Since the Sevini's work neither has fixed timings nor a fixed place, it is misunderstood as a "wandering" job not befitting "decent" women, more so because Sevinis sometimes travel after dark. Husbands who earlier used to give a deadline of 6pm, however have become more supportive, providing legitimacy to their wives' work by buying torches and waiting at the bus-stops to accompany them back home. Sevini's want to continue their work, realizing that 'It is women's sub-ordinate position in society that is leading

to the constraints for women of timings and restrictions on mobility etc. Before joining Sanghas, these housewives, working in and around the house, abiding to the social norms, though they are educated at least till the high school final, and some are literate. They find satisfaction in the intimate interaction and bonds of friendship they have formed with their peers and with Sangha women, and in the way it changed their lives. They are from the similar social and economic background as the Sangha women. They represent the first level of change, and are now perceived as the role models in the community, displaying courage and confidence in their negotiations and interactions with the leaders and elders of the communities. While describing their role as leaders in the community, simultaneously they stress that it is very rewarding to work with the community in a somewhat less equal relation and a change in their own identity.

3.1.3.1. *Characteristics for a Grassroots Level Women's Movement*

There is a long way to go before a solid foundation for women's movement can be laid in the region, given its limited geographic coverage and sporadic collective activities. In contrast to other SHGs in the region, MS Sanghas clearly emphasise economic empowerment along with economic empowerment. When Sangha women take part in the formation of other Sanghas, they talk about benefits not only in terms of economic empowerment but also in terms of 'women's empowerment'.

Women are now recognising and experiencing their collective strengths. Some now feel confident to claim the seats reserved for women in buses. Others related how their

"Sangha women as a group have gained confidence and gain from their groups. As a result, less than 10% of the women makes a complaint. Sevini, Sevini

Sangha had successfully negotiated with a nearby ashram to prevent them from blocking the stream that the women used to soak coconuts, based on the support of the neighbourhood. Various groups referred to their rallies and actions against alcohol consumption. Sangha women in Pallivasal Panchayat in Adimali block organised a road block to prevent delivery and mobilised support from 148 women and 64 men including Panchayat members and were able to close down a liquor shop. Elsewhere women were able to persuade the police to take away the canisters used to store the liquor.

Women also view alcohol consumption as directly linked to domestic violence. However, both alcohol consumption and domestic violence are sensitive issues, which most Panchayat members would rather ignore. A few Sanghas and elected

Members have begun to address these issues since the community seeks their help. While concerted action is needed to address these problems, MS does not wish to take the lead, as the state team fears repercussions of being politically branded by the government machinery. MS also prefers to distance itself from the women's movement, which is perceived as politically affiliated to the Left Democratic Front in the state. While it is important for MS to remain non-partisan, MS should examine alternative approaches such as networking on issues, since the issue is too serious to be ignored. Moreover MS needs to strengthen and draw strength from other groups and organizations that represent progressive thought related to women's status so that its initiatives in the field may also draw from their support when required. Domestic violence has been identified by other MS states as the common issue that is likely to generate a platform for women beyond class, caste and party boundaries. One option would be to create forums of elected women members from different political parties. They could become the foundation of a broader campaign, starting with less sensitive strategic interventions such as counselling. Elected women members, especially those from Adimali, expressed the need for MS support to tackle those issues. One tribal representative requested direct help regarding a safe house for young prostitutes. In the current situation the programme is too small to intervene in a large way. Hence a two pronged strategy may be necessary, of building on women's platform of Sangha women and elected representatives on the one hand at the local level; and establishing networks and alliances with the women's groups on these issues on the other. This would serve to create credibility for MS as an organisation focussing on women's social empowerment and strengthen MS towards a larger role on the issue and within the women's movement in the long term.

The structured meetings on a larger scale, at ward/Panchayat or **Vanitha Sabha** level is a step towards formation of a women's platform as women realise the potentials of their collective strengths. However, Sevini's view this organisational structure more as an instrument that enables them to communicate with more Sanghas, because they have too small an area and too many groups to meet them separately⁸ on a regular basis.

3.2.1 Women's Political Participation

The progressive decentralisation process in Kerala has created ample space and opportunities for women's political participation. KMSS' major relevance lies in its potential to enhance political participation of both elected women leaders and women groups through a better understanding of their role within the altered equations of decentralised governance. The programme has however only started addressing this issue after the recent elections, unlike other MS states given its recent inception and tentative beginnings. A conscious decision was taken by KMSS to distance itself from pre-election activities such as voter awareness training, to safeguard its political neutrality. This was a real risk for a relatively new organisation as MS in a politically divided state like Kerala. MS in fact actually withdrew from the field during the month preceding the campaign period and concentrated on staff training instead. This may have been necessary in the past elections given the recent entry of the MS programme. However efforts now need to be made towards strengthening Sanghas for a greater consciousness of citizenship so that they can play a greater role in governance and influence political agenda to address women's needs in the future.

KMSS has however organised capacity building training for elected women representatives, which are highly valued by the participants in both blocks. The elected members, mostly councillors, perceived the training as a means to familiarise themselves with their new roles and responsibilities, daring to speak out and acknowledge their ignorance among 'equals'. They underlined that MS training was different from other political capacity building programmes they had attended⁹, as it has a clear focus on women's constraints, needs, and

⁸ Sevini's from Trivandrum district have to cater to 90 sanghas on the average. They try to meet weaker sanghas twice in two weeks, or at least once a month, and stronger sanghas once in two months.

⁹ The women representatives from Adimali block had attended in total 4 training sessions, one from Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) and two from the State Planning Board, of which one was exclusively

the level of a personal and society level. Sharing experiences and exchanging advise has brought a bond among the women representatives beyond party lines, which could be better institutionalised by MS as a women's platform. The elected women members of MS confessed that they were able to overcome the party divide for the common women's good. They also pointed to the need for men to receive MS training to become sensitive to women's issues and women's rights. Given the political developments in Kerala, MS could play a significant role by providing gender inputs to a larger group of elected representatives in collaboration with other institutes such as KILA. Both male and female elected representatives feel the need for further training, in communication skills as well as administrative skills.

MS has organised workshops on the Women Component Plan (WCP) at the block level, and at Panchayats based on requests, to explain the new guidelines on the floor planning for women's development. At the same time Sevini's motivate Sangha women to prepare project proposals and apply for special provisions under the WCP. The elected women representatives at the village level show a better understanding of the WCP at the block level, as they interact more closely with Sanghas and other SHGs. MS should focus on Gender Budgeting apart from better implementation of the WCP.

MS has noted an increasing participation of Sangha women in village meetings. The women show more interest in village affairs, keen to claim benefits. Sangha women of Adimala block proudly related how they managed to get a bus shed, and how they now focus on water supply and electricity facilities. They realise that their voices are heard if they get elected to office. They also feel that they have a role in bridging the party divide. A Sangha in one village in Idukki block had organised a cultural programme to mark the occasion for which they collected contributions from different parties, whose members gathered the Dias for the first time. "We elected them, for us all are equal, so we should unite."

3.4.2.1 Women's rights

Quote
The elected women of Adimala block said that, "I've applied to the Panchayat for a sanction for building a bus shed for my village to take away the burden of my men. Their motive is to stop the corruption by male officials and to create new earning opportunities for me through the provision of educational services. When I don't get it, I blame the women's representatives. Now pointing at their responsibility, I've met with male officials and they've agreed to sign. The women stood up for me. They are now awaiting the sanction to begin the work."

Mahila Samakhya has been conducting legal literacy classes for the Sangha members on a regular basis and published a booklet, which provides an overview of important laws regarding women's rights¹⁰. Women show an increased awareness of their rights, and are also vocal about the lack of implementation of equal rights. Several references were made to the prevalence of gender discrimination, for instance with regard to equal wages for equal work and women's restricted access to information and government facilities. Sangha women feel confident of claiming their rightful benefits and welfare provided by the state like pensions, housing loans, well-construction loan, and grants for animal husbandry etc from the Panchayat office.

In the case of Padiraps Panchayat, the elected woman representative requested the Panchayat for a meeting with some Sanghas to discuss group loan activities with the officials. However, on the day of the meeting, drunken men occupied the hall and the Panchayat's filed complaint did not result in action for three weeks, women

¹⁰ The booklets were produced also because of the smaller size groups, which enables more intimacy and participation.

¹¹ The booklets are for education and training. The booklet is a useful and practical source of information, as most of the women in Kerala are literate.

discussed to picket the Panchayat, after which the men were called and made to give a public apology for their misconduct.

Generally women have also come forward to address issues of domestic violence, to lend support to each other and negotiate with the men in the community. However, this issue remains highly sensitive. Society tends to avoid and ignore these problems. Even a woman member of Memariapuram Block Samithi, in Thiruvantapuram district was unwilling to discuss the issue in the presence of the Block chairman.

Breaking Class and Caste Divides

The educational gains made by the lower castes in Kerala in terms of access to education and attainment of upward mobility (especially the middle castes) has meant that the rights of lower castes have been acknowledged in the society right from early parts of the 20th century. These rights were gained with a lot of struggle and therefore, in Kerala, very blatant forms of caste-discrimination do not exist. However, the scheduled castes still constitute a deprived class in Kerala. However, this deprivation doesn't lead to discrimination in space and participation. In fact, in Kerala, segregated space for low castes at public meetings is regarded as socially incorrect. The MS groups in Kerala are very heterogeneous with women from every possible caste and religion, although most belong to the poorer sections. In fact, there has been only one isolated case among 775 Sanghas where an upper caste person refused food during a meeting at the house of a low caste member. The issue was discussed openly and resolved at the Sangha meeting after a complaint from the low caste.

In the past, during a public function organized by some other groups, it was considered a sign of unity and honour for the poorest, but poorest woman agricultural labourer of the village, a Dalit, shared the Dias with members of the upper class and Panchayat leaders. This created a visibility for women's groups as a unified force in the public domain to contest discrimination and to build a positive image for women across class and caste distinctions.

“Working with women from different castes, religion and politics is a very satisfying experience. I had not worked among the Dalits before. I have learned more about life than any formal education could have taught me. I am being recognized by the Panchayat as a sincere worker.” Achala Kumari, Sevini.

Emerging Trends, in terms of Growth, Pace and Impact

In the relatively short period of two years that KMSS has been active in two blocks and 13 Panchayats, it has facilitated the formation and development of 775 Sanghas. Given the growing popularity of the Self-Help Groups model in Kerala, due to the persistent economic crisis, these Sanghas are in effect women's SHG groups with a strong social empowerment component. Economic activities are a high priority for women as a means to change the stereotyped perception of women and to enable them to become more confident and self-reliant. KMSS has strategically facilitated the process of SHG formation to build the confidence, linked with vocational training and income earning opportunities, while focussing its efforts on areas of enhancing women access to information about their rights and opportunities. KMSS is building their capacities to challenge social discriminatory practices and stereotypes. In this two-year period the level of impact is most visible on the Seviniis who were considered as the first rung of the community. Although they are workers with the lowest status they represent the community and their struggles and changing roles and have set in motion a process of social change and legitimacy for the programme.

Learning building is a strong forte of MS activities. Both Seviniis and Sangha women replicate their experience in-group formation and group dynamics as a learning to be

to mobilise women. In Valathooval Panchayat, for example, there has been a proliferation of Sanghas by women members, at least 2 to 4 Sanghas each. Expansion of the programme has been going on both horizontally and vertically in an organic manner.

Block-level Vanitha Sanghas have recently been formed by clustering of 6-8 Sanghas. The advantage of this clustering is learning and sharing across Sangha members that women value. Many of the Sanghas were initiated to overcome the constraint of the large area that each village Sangha has to cover. The Vanitha Sabha is visualised as the next level of institutionalisation and should be developed as a forum to strengthen women's ability to build alliances with Panchayat leaders, and influence larger issues such as those of violence and governance in the governance agenda in the interest of women. This may also provide a platform to develop leadership among women and prepare them for a greater political role to represent women's interests and influence political agenda in favour of women. The critical success factor of the Vanitha Sabha envisages to mobilise may create a visibility for the programme. It is essential that more effort is invested in building the Sanghas as the first level of institutionalisation, providing the opportunity for women to develop solidarity, collectively handle issues of harassment and violence, and negotiate with the community and leaders to address their needs. In the initial phase the process needs to be more intensive at the level of the block Sangha itself. The programme needs to consider the appointment of additional resource persons at the block level to supplement the team of Sevini since the number of Sanghas to be covered within a Panchayat is large and does not fall within the formal role of the Sevini as contained in the guidelines. This may be done either by recruiting resource persons for each block, or by assigning more resource persons to provide issue-specific support to Sevini.

The impact of the programme has been limited, as the project has been implemented in only a few of the districts and had a late start due to the processes of appointment of staff and programme launch a year. While the programme's potential to mobilise women for social development has been recognised, it has yet to establish a presence at the Panchayat level at its intended scale of coverage. Some village Panchayats clearly perceive MS as a programme to access vocational training for women, while the recently elected block representatives were unclear about the programme. Since the political fortunes of parties in the block are likely to keep changing, the programme needs to address itself to building relationships and enabling the groups to influence the political processes more directly in favour of women. Simultaneously efforts to build a relationship of collaboration with the elected and the elected representatives at the block level.

The MS programme has been focusing on two hitherto 'un-served' groups: young adolescent and tribal women. The adolescent girls groups have demonstrated the necessity of a programme to support the process of mobilization and empowerment to deal with complex, and sometimes of subordination. The tribal women are isolated in their forest habitats and are considered a difficult group to mobilize because of the distances, difficult terrain and limited resources. The Sevini are gradually establishing a relation of trust, starting with the adolescent girls.

The success stories in reaching out to tribal communities have been recognised at state level. Officials would like KMSS to take up more work in that area, preferably in collaboration with the Ashree, a state wide anti-poverty programme focussing on women's empowerment. Others want KMSS to work in equally challenging coastal areas, or among the urban poor. If the programme should be extended to new districts to enhance its reach, it should adopt a progressive people oriented strategy that prioritises women's interests; the selection of new districts also needs to be made on basis of potential for maximum impact on women's lives. Expanding the outreach in backward tribal areas is well founded, since the programme has demonstrated the potential to mobilize women in such areas.

The MS programme need not exclusively focus on tribal women, but must continue to reach out to a broader group of women, to remain a mainstream women's programme and to

with mainstream development processes. This does not absolve the KMSS team from working with selected target groups in key areas to strengthen women's status. With women's groups becoming the state vehicle for women's empowerment through an economic approach, it is important that the KMSS examine strategies by which to demonstrate effective approaches that address women's needs in a holistic and need based manner towards their empowerment.

Violence against women is emerging as a major issue for women in Kerala. Domestic violence, dowry harassment, molestation and eve teasing of young girls have become rampant. There is demand for Panchayat counselling centres to be managed by KMSS, with Sangha women handling crisis cases and to jointly build community action against violence against women in any form. Despite its reluctance to become a spearhead of an anti-violence movement, MS should seriously consider providing guidance and capacity development to these relevant groups and Panchayats, and link them with other women's forums. Sanghas should then be strengthened to demand resources from the Panchayat funds to run such counselling centres. MS may even consider providing a small support fund to such elected groups who undertake such an initiative to demonstrate the potential of such a centre.

One of the visible impact of MS is in the redefining of governance as a part of People's Plan Programme through their capacity building of elected members and building of sense of citizenship among ordinary women to demand accountability from the leaders. Though there are differences between the two sets of women – the leaders and masses – there are similarities. Sangha women question decisions in a gram Panchayat which becomes more amenable for the women leaders, working as they are within the dictates of political expediency of their leaders. This can lead to some tension, but on the whole, the autonomy by the women is maintained.

FOURTH COMPONENT: ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Continuing Education and Continuing Education (CE)

The field Mahila Samakhyas focus primarily on continuing education, given the high levels of female basic education and literacy in Kerala. The programme addresses the educational needs of women and adolescent girls through "awareness raising, structural training and capacity building"¹¹. Despite their educational background and literacy skills, Sangha women feel deprived of information due to the social-cultural constraints. MS offers them a safe learning environment, an entry point to venture out. MS works in co-operation with the Panchayat bodies on this component. Some Panchayats have provided free space for a KMSS resource centre to provide training and information for the women. KMSS in turn participates as a gender specialist in training and capacity building, which are organised by the Panchayats, such as the masonry training in Kollam.

MS also motivates illiterate or semi-literate Sangha members to acquire literacy. Group members are encouraged to organise literacy classes to help illiterate Sangha members. In the tribal settlements of Idupki literacy classes play a prominent role, given the high illiteracy rates, and provide the basis for mobilization of groups. The tribal women have acquired the basic literacy skills, as they view these as a means to enable them to read the bus signs and bills. 'We cannot be blamed for our illiteracy, our parents wouldn't let us go to school, but we won't make the same mistake as the tribal women in Adimali Panchayat. Their children go either to the tribal school or to tribal school hostels. The women themselves have constructed a

¹¹ For more details on this material see Annex 2.

id) for literacy classes next to the DPEP school. Their tribal teacher receives support from MS.

It makes use of existing learning material, developed by the Kerala State Literacy Mission (KSLM) which has at least three learning centres in each Panchayat. The material needs to be updated and if necessary modified, as the content is not always gender sensitive.

The high level of education in Kerala makes information dissemination through the printed material easier. KMSS has printed a booklet on the process and steps of Sangha/SHG creation, its philosophy, its benefits and objectives and other formalities of applications, bank formalities, bye-laws and so on. This material needs to be appropriately adapted to cater to the needs of the tribal areas where literacy levels among women are low.

Adolescent girls, who form a special target group for KMSS, have expressed the need for special classes. Although most youngsters in Kerala will try to complete tenth standard, Mathematics and English are often the stumbling block. Several girls would like to go for repairs, for which they requested help from KMSS. Although the girls' groups have a weekly programme, mostly discussing issues related to adolescence, like health and friendships, they also participate in some of the vocational training activities for Sangha members.

Awareness Classes

Awareness classes are held on a regular basis in the Sanghas by the MS team. These classes provide information on a broad range of topics, mostly based on the request of the members. The chosen topics are often related to:

- Nutrition, like food, common diseases, breast cancer, AIDS, personal hygiene;
- Women's rights, legal rights;
- Environment, like waste management, vermi-culture and composting;
- Administrative skills, like accounting, preparation of reports and proposals.

A booklet that is prepared by the MS team contains elaborate and detailed information, which is provided through discussions and adapted to the local situation. Resource persons are invited for greater inputs on specific subjects. These experts are mostly government officials from the Health or Agriculture Department, the Food & Nutrition Board, and include NGOs like the people's science movement.

Sangha women value these awareness classes as an important channel of information. They often expressed a 'thirst' for knowledge, of which they feel deprived due to women's lesser participation in the public domain remains. The KMSS awareness classes enable women to access relevant information. The introduction to resource persons encourages them to access government services on their own. Officials from the Water and Electricity departments invited to explain the billing system. The Sangha women of Elkunnu requested a meeting with a Telecom official to address the issue of crank phone calls, which provided a platform for a discussion on sexual harassment. The class on breast cancer and self-examination was certainly an eye-opener for some women, who for the first time in their lives touched their naked body in front of the mirror.

One of the para-legal services provided by law college students of Thiruvantapuram for the groups of law students provided training on legal issues to Sanghas in the form of a book on constitutional and fundamental rights, personal law, labour law and related to Kuttanali block, a one-day seminar was held. These classes have been initiated only as part of the capacity building of Sangha members. These need to be sustained and should lead to greater discussion on these issues as they arise to enhance capacities of women to deal with these issues. Greater exposure to organizations and networks that deal

with such issues would also enable Sangha women to explore strategies to deal with such problems and to build solidarity with such groups.

2.3 Vocational Training

Vocational training activities are included in the project strategy as a means to address the high rate of female unemployment in Kerala, creating new avenues for income generating activities. Most of these training are given in co-operation with other institutes like *Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)*, *Samatha* of KSSP, the Agriculture University, *Mitra Niketan* and the Food and Nutrition Board. Vocational training courses include tailoring and embroidery, paper cover making, umbrella making, and soap making, bakery, mushroom cultivation, vermi-composting, fruit preservation, and masonry.

The courses offer practical skill training, combined with theoretical information, placed in a broader socio-economic context. The 2-day soap making training highlights the dominance of multinational companies in this sector, addressing the issue of globalisation, as well as focussing on the marketing aspects. The 40-day masonry training, which is an integral part of the Total Health Programme of UNICEF, reserves ample time for awareness classes to address health issues, women's issues, and the role of Panchayat.

The co-operation with other institutes highlights the role of MS as mobiliser and facilitator, creating opportunities to strengthen gender perspectives. The networking is mutually beneficial. It is an exposure for both Sangha women and KMSS, as it helps to build relations with various institutes and individuals, and enables women to cross village boundaries. Women have acquired new skills with which they are entering new areas of income earning, while KMSS moves on to work with them to address social agenda. Women who have participated in such training are more active in the other Sangha activities, due to increased confidence levels and interaction with different people.

Although the vocational training courses look at marketing strategies, more attention could be paid to the cost-benefit analyses, including social aspects such as the time-factor and possible social benefits (exposure, strengthening status in household, food security) to enable women, individually and as a SHG collective, to make an informed choice.

The KMSS strategy to promote vocational training has provided women the space to discuss their own personal issues and helped to form the Sanghas as distinct identities. Women now support each other in economic as well as personal problems. They have supported each other to deal with abusive husbands, to gain status in the community despite being unmarried, widowed or single parents. Other women in the community view them as a social group that solves women's problems along with addressing the economic need.

2.4 Capacity Training

MS provides capacity training courses for its own staff, for Sangha women as well as for other specific target groups, like female Panchayat members and SHGs. MS staff and Sangha women also participate in seminars and workshops organised by government departments and other institutes and organisations.

Capacity training courses for the MS staff include 3-day gender training by Sakhil; a Thiruvananthapuram based women's resource centre. MS organises resource training in preparation for a new programme activity, like adolescent girls and tribals. For these, KMSS also involves local resource persons, and includes Sangha women as participants. Experts are invited to facilitate specific sessions and to assist in the development of strategies, methodologies and training modules. Sevinis and resource persons view these training courses as an essential preparation, that provides them with the necessary information and

skills, thus giving them confidence and courage. Talking about their own experiences of adolescence for instance helped MS staff to overcome their own inhibitions. The participation of experts and resource persons opens avenues for future co-operation and networking. For instance the tribal activists, who participated in the tribal needs-assessment workshop, are now the entry-point and support group for the Sevinis. The long request list of training sessions¹², which was handed over by the Sevinis, expresses their need for further capacity building on various topics.

MS has organised sessions on the formation of SHGs, focussing on leadership and administrative capacity building, including minutes, reporting and accounts. Several Sangha groups now teach these skills to neighbouring groups who want to start a Sangha. A booklet on SHG is a useful reference for both Sangha women and Sevinis.

Elected women Panchayat members received general training, as well as participated in a workshop on WCP. The participants of Adimali block described the training as very useful, helping them to overcome their shyness, strengthen their communication and administrative skills in proposal and petition formulation. 'We are coming out of the house for the first time, as some people are saying things, there is still a resistance to women being in public office. But may we have overcome this insecurity, our inhibition to public speaking.' Although they already received several training courses by the State Planning Board and KILA, they stressed the need for an MS follow-up training, focussing on legal rights, the women component plan, and public speaking. Furthermore the women representatives also want their male counterparts to participate in some training sessions, since their own performance also depends on the support of male representatives. 'They should know about issues like alcoholism, because we need their support, otherwise the women get beaten up.'

MS Contribution to Reduction of Child Labour

Child labour has not been a significant issue that the KMSS has hitherto addressed as part of its work in Kerala. Given that most children attend school at least upto the primary levels, the issue of work opportunities for children as they grow into adulthood is in fact a critical issue for the state. KMSS has recently initiated work with adolescent girls as they lack employable skills to seek work opportunities and access to information for girls are very low. Through its interventions KMSS has been able to bring into focus the contribution of women and girls to the households economy and the need to provide adequate care for girls especially in the pre adolescent age group. In the tribal areas also potential exists to raise issues about the work that girls do and to provide opportunities for their development

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Findings with Government Departments and Agencies

Janila Somakhyia Kerala works closely with the Government of Kerala, i.e. with Secretary of Education as its chairman and primary decision-maker, owing to the fact that MS has been

¹² These include: child development & learning disabilities, legal awareness on women's rights, gender and media, violence against women, globalisation, personality development, communication skills and social skills, spoken English. Vocational training is imparted in journalism, production and editing of newsletter, repair of electric appliances, anthirium cultivation, and manufacture and marketing of ayurvedic medicinal plants and products.

established at the instance of the Department of Education. Although there is a need for the state government to 'own' the programme in the sense of providing active support, this should not limit the role of the programme and impinge upon its autonomy. The processes of decentralised planning can be addressed in the context of political awareness and participation in governance, but the programme must focus on its primary objective of education for women's empowerment in all spheres of life. The structures and systems of management need to be decentralised and powers devolved to the EC and the SPD in greater measure to enable it to function with a higher level of flexibility and agency to meet the needs of grassroots women. The Executive Committee needs to be strengthened to play a stronger role in the programme. Its present overwhelming government constitution needs to be balanced with adequate representation of autonomous women's organisations and a political grassroots groups from the state, committed to gender and empowerment of women.

The National Consultants have played a significant role in the inception of the programme and in facilitating the building of perspectives and capacities of the programme team. The National Office now needs to be more supportive and must negotiate for strengthening the position of the SPD, in ensuring the delegation of powers to provide greater functional freedom in project management. This is in the interest of the programme and its stated goals and in keeping with the principles of the project. Until now the linkages of the KMSS with the National Office have been for seeking direction, and the NPD has been negotiating space for the programme at various EC meetings, but systematic efforts are required to make this more visible. A greater supportive role is called for, drawing upon experiences and measures included in other states and exchange with other states, especially the Dutch assisted states.

Mahila Samakhya Kerala has hitherto sought to mobilize women to make demands on the system of governance of the formal decentralization structure. This indicates a level of autonomy in operations, implying that state ownership is not absolute and MS can determine its agenda based on women's needs. The secretaries of the Department of Decentralized Planning and Irrigation (former Secretary Education) however view MS as a potential state resource agency for social empowerment inputs and mobilization of women, to create an environment for greater participation, and involvement in delivery of other projects and missions. **Mahila Samakhya Kerala is seen as a key agency to facilitate the shift from Women in Development (WID) approach to Gender and Development (GAD) focus in all the planning processes.** Thus in the next phase MS is envisaged as a key player of the State government, embedded in the decentralization process, to facilitate a gender focus.

The two approaches need not however be viewed as contradictory. While KMSS should continue to focus on its primary agenda and build grassroots forums that address women's needs, it can also engage with the development processes in the state to facilitate a shift towards gender integration and mainstreaming across sectors. This would contribute to a more sensitive state and Panchayat system and create access to sectoral resource inputs for women, apart from the WCP as an earmarked allocation for women focussed initiatives. Such a two pronged approach, at least over the next two years would create an environment that is more responsive to women's concerns in the long run. In the context of the Water and Sanitation Mission, therefore, **MS could combine the role of implementers; on the one hand, catering to women's needs within it's limited area, and facilitate the convergence of inputs within the perspective of the MS approach. It could set up demonstration models, rather than extending its scope to mobilize communities beyond the MS programme area. Simultaneously it could serve as the resource team that provides gender integration and sensitivity inputs to the sector team at the district levels.**

MS is also viewed as an initiator for development processes in tribal areas, given the lower levels of literacy and politicisation and the potential for women's empowerment. Tribal people comprise 1% of the states population (300,000) and are concentrated in the hill tracts, whereas the state has allocated 2 % of its resources for the tribal sub plan to prioritise tribal development in the wake of the recent agitation. The Tribal Sub-Plan has been withdrawn from the Panchayat and a specific focus is sought for tribal development, as tribal populations in the governments view are currently not organized and politicised to channel development. The State government would like to see greater support from the RNE to Tribal Development in the state. Kudumbashree, a state SHG initiative, is viewed as the vehicle to carry Tribal Development plan to these new areas and to include new elements – roads, infrastructure to these areas (KS already covers more than 950 tribal women groups). According to Mr Vijay Anand, Secretary Decentralised Planning, "there is a need to bring about a basic level of improvement in their status to address and challenge government in their interest". Investment is required in building trust and facilitating people owned organisations, processes and forums before linear programmes such as Kudumbashree can be introduced.

Kudumbashree (KS) is the largest SHG promoting agency in the state and works in collaboration with NABARD. It is part of the Poverty Eradication Mission of the state government and operates on the belief that economic empowerment is an essential precursor to social and cultural empowerment. It is target oriented and aims at wiping out absolute poverty in Kerala state within ten years by mobilising women into community based groups for micro enterprise and group action to access services. Thus far, it has a total coverage in three districts of Kerala – viz. *Mallapuram, Wayanad and Kasargode*. Out of the 990 Panchayats in the state, 660 Panchayat have so far formed about 60,200 Neighbourhood Groups at the Grass roots level. The main activities have been savings and income generation through micro-enterprise, while other activities include housing and drinking water. The programme brings to bear the resources of the entire state machinery in promoting enterprises of SHGs and is thus an overwhelming presence in the state.

Kudumbashree has the wherewithal to undertake the task of Tribal Development in terms of infrastructure and resources at the block level. Its focussed on convergence of services and micro-enterprise may however not be adequately flexible nor does its agenda accommodate the multiple issues that may emerge, since it is an economic programme. It may therefore not be the appropriate model to initiate development in the tribal areas.

By contrast, *Jashila Samakhya Kerala* is viewed as an empowerment initiative. Its approach is responsive and based on the needs and priorities of women within a given community. It can therefore supplement state government initiatives while maintaining its priorities. It can focus on the needs of the people as they emerge and set up models of development in remote and neglected regions such as Tribal districts, such as *Idukki* where it already has a presence and is doing commendable work, and *Attapadi or Wayanad*. It can evolve appropriate strategies to create access for tribal populations to development through a woman-centred approach. **The MS strategy seems to be acceptable to the tribal women in that the mission interacted with.** Women pointed out that for the first time they had been permitted to participate in the development forums through *KMSS*. Education and information have emerged as the priority needs of women in this area. Once women are enabled to organise and articulate their demands, MS may then facilitate linkages with programmes such as *Kudumbashree* to address needs as they emerge.

Efforts to federate all SHGs under *Kudumbashree* will be detrimental, as this would imply centralisation and bureaucratic controls on what should essentially be a peoples initiative based on autonomous decision making, and rendering it unwieldy. The present scenario gives space for different groups to co-exist and learn from one another, while providing the space for linkages to be forged on a needs basis. Imposition of a single prototype with a

wide objective and limited agenda may well straitjacket the creative burgeoning of experiences and learning opportunities and put social issues on the backburner. **The scope does however exist for MS to play a role in building perspectives within the Kudumbashree programme towards gender sensitivity especially in the areas of social empowerment.** This would however require that the leadership of the Kudumbashree evinces interest and commitment to such a partnership and willingness to explore the means to integrate strategic gender concerns into the programme framework.

MS can provide the inputs to further engender the process of decentralisation as a resource agency and trainer for various state and district agencies including Kudumbashree, as it has done in the past. On the other hand, it should prioritise its primary task to empower women to create a greater demand through their own experiences and build models for demonstration of demand driven and people owned development initiatives.

3.2 Linkages with Panchayat Institutions

The Panchayat office at the village level is a major point of linkage and co-ordination for MS in the Kerala context of decentralised development planning and administration. MS seeks linkages with the Panchayat system to initiate work, to support Sanghas and to influence allocations to Sanghas. It has successfully forged linkages with women Panchayat members and has promoted greater awareness of Panchayat activities through participation. The massive mobilisation of women within the Panchayats in Self-Help Groups has occurred as a strategy to address needs of cash availability and access to credit. Self Help Groups advance loans against savings and play a crucial role in crises situation of poor households. While MS initiated its work by forming SHGs to establish goodwill in the region and acceptability with the Panchayats, it went a step further by creating linkages for vocational training for employable skills. Since this is the most visible output of MS in the area of its programme, therefore Panchayat members' perceptions also reflect these as their primary roles.

MS has established linkages with other government departments at the Panchayat level:

- To access services (health, education)
- For training for masons (sanitation mission)
- Kudumbashree (for materials on training SHG formation)

The Block Panchayat seeks MS support to mobilise resources for vocational skills for women. Some Panchayats have provided MS free space for a resource centre, for which the Panchayat pays the rent. Panchayats realise the need for continuing education for women, giving their 'social backwardness' and the lack of income opportunities. Panchayats are not aware or would rather ignore the role of the MS in mobilising women around issues of social empowerment, such as violence against women. MS therefore needs to build a ground swell with women and communities, rather than take direct action to compel Panchayats to confront and deal with this agenda. There is also evidence of instances where Panchayats have asserted pressure to undermine the autonomy of MS in the appointment of staff or selection of villages etc. MS has resisted such pressure, sometimes in the face of threats and has continues to function in the interest of women.

Women representatives, on the other hand, see MS as a support institute for themselves as well as for the Panchayat. They view facilitating training as the major role of MS and they stress the need for more capacity training to be able to function better in public office. The women members seek MS support also in dealing with violence, participation in development initiatives and ensuring greater access of women to resources. The Block President of Idukki block in Adimali views MS as potential nodal agency to bring about the empowerment of women. She draws strength from her association with MS and prioritises the constituency of women. However, she too expresses constraint in dealing with cases of harassment and violence against women due to the political face that every issue acquires.

She and other women Panchayat members were of the view that an agency like MS could bring women together to address these issues outside the political space, and this would also enable them to deal with such cases more effectively.

The women representatives express a need for networking and a platform to tackle issues that affect women's lives, like alcoholism, violence against women and counselling, thus acknowledging the potential of collective strength. By facilitating such a common platform MS can create a basis for advocacy and networking, enabling women to address issues together. A non party women's political platform at block level would enable MS to address more sensitive issues, and open venues for more consolidated linkages with the women's movement.

3.3 Linkages with NGOs and Women's Movement

Various programmes and initiatives for women have been mushrooming in Kerala. They range from autonomous feminist groups, women's programmes within NGOs, welfare-oriented Mahila Samajams, women's employment generation programmes, Micro-credit and Self Help groups and so on. While all profess their aim as women's empowerment, the perspective and strategies vary. The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), an NGO, organises self employed women in various occupation groups like fish vendors and basket weavers for addressing their needs for credit, markets and other issues affecting women's personal lives. Kerala Stree Vedi is a feminist network of Kerala's autonomous women's movement and has taken up issues on violence against women.

Collaboration and linkages of KMSS with Organizations and institutions:

Sakhi: Gender training for functionaries, orientation for staff. Issue based inputs, on health violence, etc. Involvement in core group as key resource

Kerala Saksarta Sahitya Parishad: Perspective development for functionaries and Sangha members. Health training for functionaries and Sangha members through Samatha women's wing. Livelihood analysis and vocational training/IGA for groups & sevinis, through IRTC

Kerala State Literacy Mission: Literacy materials for illiterate and neo-literate members. Monitoring training and use of its education centres (JSS) for Sangha and Vanitha Sabha meetings as post literacy follow up.

Mitra Niketan & Kerala Agriculture University: Trade specific training- vermi-culture, mushroom cultivation etc

Kerala Institute of Local Administration: MS provides inputs as resource agency on governance and gender (potential for future collaboration to engender decentralised planning process and strengthen gender budgeting)

Kudumbashree: MS uses manual for training of its groups on SHG operations. (potential for MS to provide gender training inputs and collaborate for strengthening of Social Empowerment inputs with Kudumbashree groups in its area of work to demonstrate this strategy)

In terms of programmatic linkages Sakhi, a women's resource group, and KSSP of the People's Science Movement in the state, have played a significant role in the training of MS personnel and Sangha members. Mahila Samakhya has had to tailor their Sanghas on the model of Self-Help while attempting to keep the agenda of social empowerment alive. Self Help Groups have gained an overwhelming popularity among the poor women in Kerala, who's priority is sustaining their livelihoods in the face of declining employment opportunities in the cash and food crop sector in Kerala.

In future MS should establish linkages prioritising issues of violence against women. Stree Vedi would be a potential partner, despite its politicised image. It could provide special expertise and knowledge that MS currently lacks, which needs to be channelled to grass-root groups to strengthen their perspectives and outward linkages, given that they are already expressing the need to tackle

issues of violence and counselling. The risk of MS becoming politically branded can be overcome through its engagement in facilitating the emergence of local women's forums such as an all-party elected Panchayat members' platform and the Vanitha Sabhas.

3.4 Added Value and Linkages with RNE Sectoral Approach Priorities

Within the sectoral approach framework and the goals of GAVIM, the RNE sectoral priorities identified for development assistance for Kerala State include support to the water sector, and support to decentralisation processes towards good governance.

RNE support to the state's Water And Sanitation Mission is viewed as a significant initiative to facilitate a process of service delivery with greater involvement of communities with expectations of greater ownership. The potential for convergence of MS with the Dutch assisted water scheme needs to be strategically built into the programmes to complement each other. "MS is a programme that addresses the virtual reality of women's lives, and its vision needs to be integrated with every other department of the GoK" in the view of the Secretary Dept of Irrigation. The potential of the MS as a consulting agency, providing gender inputs and resources on development issues is a perspective that seems to be much easier for the state to grapple with than the primary agenda of MS organisation of women for empowerment. While the MS could evolve into a consultant agency to address gender inputs within the sanitation and other development programmes, this may be at the cost of its own primary goals. It would strategically be desirable for MS therefore to prioritise its work towards building women's organizations; with integration of educational agenda so that they can address these needs as and when they arise. MS could collaborate with the Water scheme based on a locational convergence i.e. that the scheme include areas of MS coverage, so that MS groups may then explore the potential of engaging in the implementation of such schemes or participating in their management etc.

The empowerment of women towards effective participation and agency within the decentralization process is a common priority for MS and the RNE. MS has hitherto worked at two levels-that of creating awareness among women about the development processes and procedures, and enabling them to prepare proposals to access works and benefits; and training and orientation of women representatives and strengthening their linkages with the Sanghas. A concerted effort is required to strengthen women's understanding of gender budgeting and women's component plan to address their needs. Gender budgeting needs to be undertaken as an area of strengthening throughout the decentralised planning process to effectively integrate women's interests. Towards this end, MS should seek to work intensively with the Sanghas and Panchayat members in one district to demonstrate the efficacy of an engendered budgeting process, while collaborating with state planning department and training institutions to integrate gender issues into all development sectors. Additional resources besides those allocated under the programme may be required to draw upon external resources and inputs and develop their own capacities towards this end.

In this context Kudumbashree is considered a significant player to strengthen women's position in the decentralized planning process, since it has the backing of the state machinery as part of the State Mission for Poverty eradication. The programme follows the micro-finance and enterprise model tested in other parts of the country, but as mentioned earlier, brings to bear the support of the state machinery for establishment of enterprises and of convergence of government services. Mechanisms of implementation are hierarchically structured, with the neighbourhood groups and the Community Development Society (CDS) following a prescribed rather than an organic pattern across the state. Convergence and access to services are viewed as the wherewithal of empowerment. Discussions of the mission team with the Project Director revealed little understanding of the processes needed to facilitate the expansion of opportunities for women to gain self confidence, or to have greater agency within the systems of governance or on issues that effect them in the community etc. What seems to be overwhelming concern is the harnessing of women's productivity through savings and credit to contribute towards poverty eradication, based on the fact that investment in women would avoid leakage. Thus Kudumbashree addresses only the economic empowerment aspect in an instrumentalist target oriented approach, which may not lead to strategic gender interests being addressed. Given that this is a large programme with coverage already extending to two-thirds of the blocks in the state, it would be important to influence and restructure programme processes to adopt a responsive approach that also incorporates other aspects of women's empowerment

It is important that decentralised planning processes are informed by women's issues and choices and provide the flexibility for people to define processes as best suited to them, in order to be truly empowering. Hence MS could play a significant role in informing the development processes through its own experiences and through strengthening women's voices. Special resources may be allocated for MS and its partners to play this facilitative role in decentralised planning processes, and to sensitise programmes such as the Kudumbashree to strategic gender issues. However the MS programme should continue to remain a centrally sponsored education programme, to strengthen its autonomy and prevent it from becoming a delivery agent of development programmes in the state. Opportunities to strengthen these perspectives exist in MS collaboration with training and policy institutions such as the CDS and KILA through training of functionaries and Panchayati Raj representatives. The secretaries in the State Irrigation Department and the Decentralised Planning Board also recognize the strengths of the programme as being a "deep" and "process oriented" programme. These linkages may enable MS to influence the paradigm of development adopted for the Kudumbashree and other state programmes, to focus more effectively towards empowerment goals.

4.REPORTING AND MONITORING

Details of the following sections on Reporting monitoring management and financial systems are enunciated in the general report, since practices are by and large common across all the Dutch Assisted MS state Programmes. However, the state specific variances and good practices are highlighted as part of this report, along with areas that need attention by the State office.

KMSS has been producing a fairly high volume of monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual reports, which capture all the activities being performed within the programme. Reflections, analysis and feedback on these reports are carried out in day-to-day interactions among programme functionaries. However, there is a need to add greater analytical depth so that the reporting captures not only the itinerary of events, but also assesses problems, hurdles and learning. Follow up on previous reports is not part of the reporting process, therefore it is advised to include an 'Action Taken' component as a standard feature. The process of feedback on reports should also be formalized.

The documentation covers a wide spectrum of the MS programme. It includes reports on meetings, process documentation, workshop reports, special event reports and a broad range of training material. Some of these documents have immediate use and therefore have shorter shelf life, whereas others have a potentially long-term usage and could benefit a wider community. To ensure the use of available documentation for future planning and a wider dissemination a greater systematisation, analysis, indexing and utilization are required.

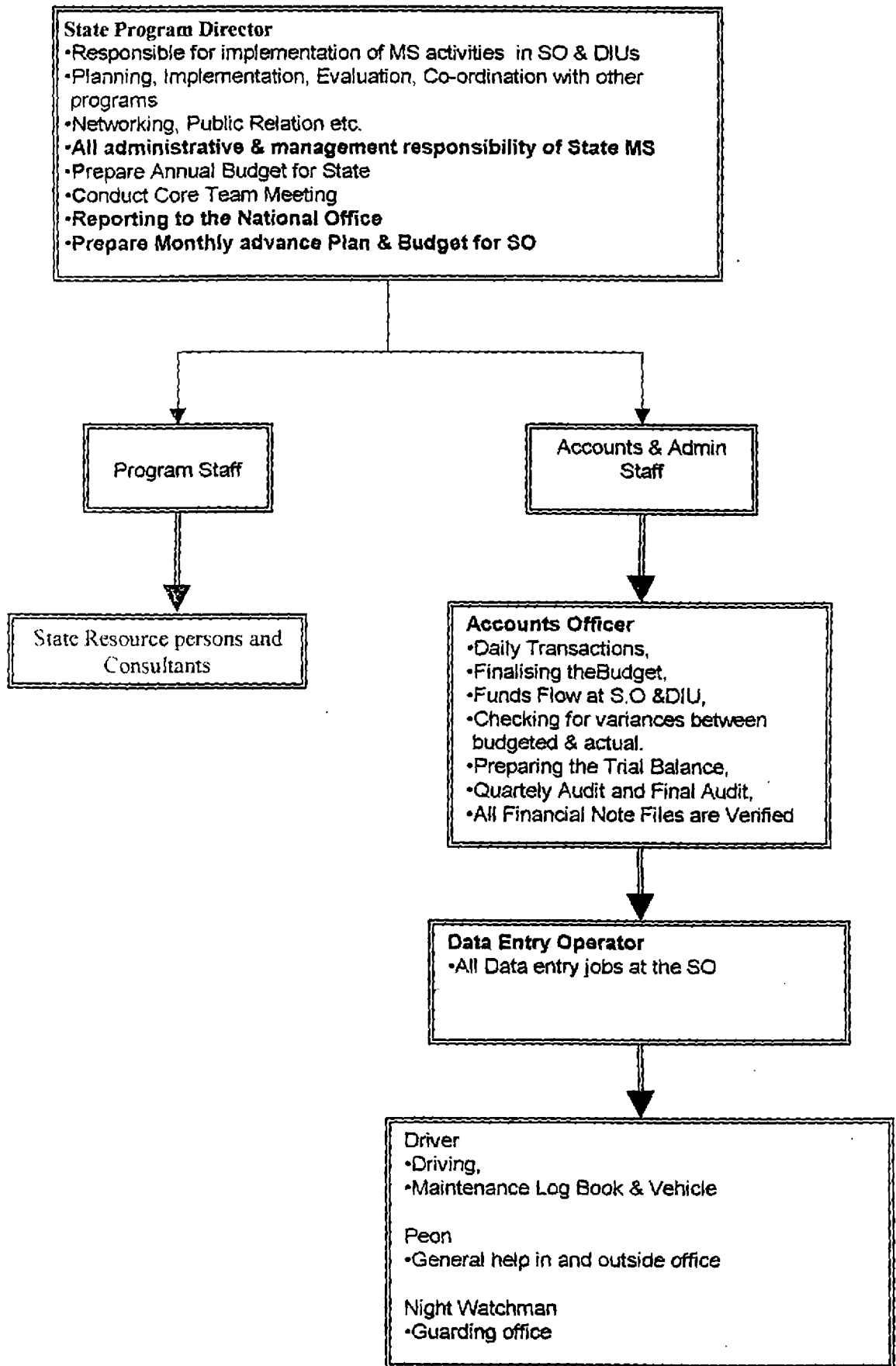
An external audit is carried out by the Chartered Accountant on a quarterly basis, for both the State as well the District level accounts (100% audit of all vouchers is carried out).

Recommendation

- Skill development for the staff is required regarding the Management Information System (MIS), focussing on:
 - Strategic Planning
 - Financial Management
 - Documentation skills
- The present reporting system should be redesigned to enable usage for future planning. Formats need to be redesigned to also capture more quantitative details, in line with the State level objectives as recommended under Planning & Budgeting.

EXHIBIT 1

KMSS ORGANISATION STRUCTURE -STATE



BIT 2 KMSS ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE - DISTRICT

District Program Coordinator

Admin & Management of DIU

Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, Co-ordination with other programs

Networking, Public Relation etc. in District.

Link between State Office & DIU

Resources support to Sevinis & Select local Resource Persons

Conduct training programs, Participate in Sangha meeting

Give leadership and directions at DIU level

Organize District Resource Group

Participate-Panchayat, Block and District level meetings/ programs.

Prepare Annual Budget for DIU, Prepare advance monthly program of DIU

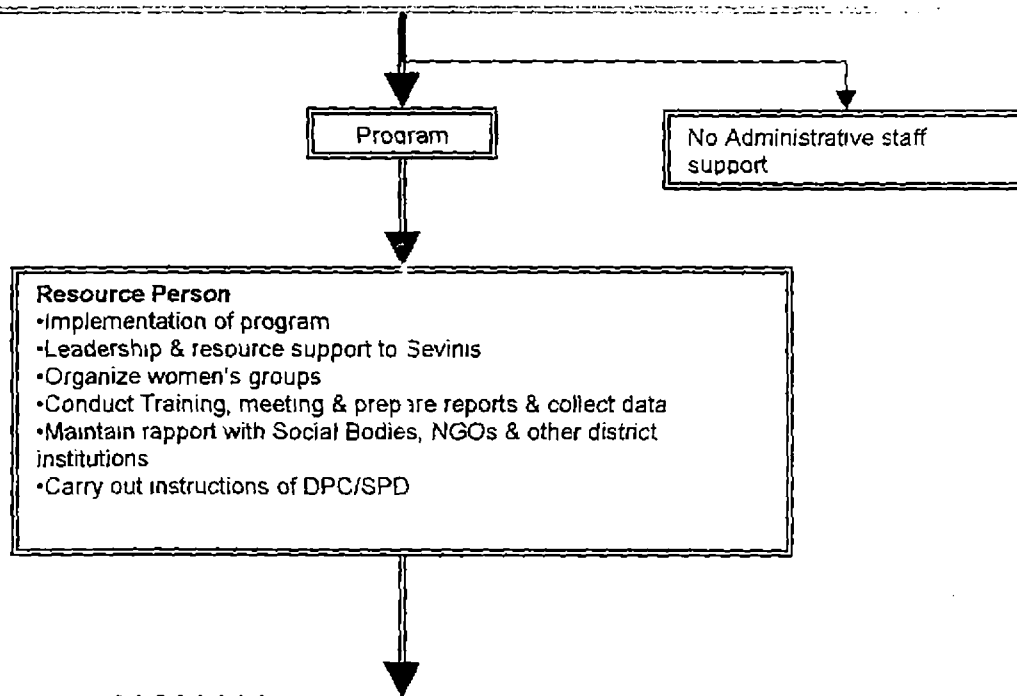
Contact with Panchayats, Panchayat visit at least twice a month

Maintain accounts, correspondences and keep records.

Conduct Review Meeting

Reports in respect of Sevinis activities to SO, Prepare monthly activities reports for SO

Furnish expense statements with supporting documents for approval



Sevinis

Organize women into Sanghas at village level

Supervise & strengthen activities of Sanghas

Ensure representation of poor women in Sanghas

Co-ordinate MS activities at Panchayat level

Ensure co-operation & linkages of Local Bodies, Govt. organizations and NGOs

Resource support to District and State level offices

Organize meetings, Melas and training at Panchayat

Proposals for meetings, training etc. required by the Sanghas to DIU

Maintain Daily Reports, Minutes of meetings etc.

Prepare Advance Program Report for next month

Reports/Registers/details to produced by Sevinis at Monthly Review Meetings:

Daily Report., Monthly Report. Meeting Register. Other details collected

5. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

All budgeting and planning has been undertaken at the state level for the programme. This budgeting is done largely on an ad-hoc basis, although inputs from programme staff at state and district level are taken into account. However, neither the programme functionaries nor the administrative staff receives an orientation or training in budgeting and planning. They have limited knowledge as to when the requested funds would be received (e.g. the funds for the financial year 2001-02 were received on the 12th of December 2001). There is also no formal structure on the basis of which experiences of the previous year are factored into the budget and plan of the next year, since no formal budgeted versus actual expense and activity analysis is undertaken at the end of the year. This could help in formulating the next year's Budget and Plan.

The agenda for the Executive Committee meeting on the annual budget, including the annual proposed budget is sent to the national office. If needed the national office in turn suggests changes on the budgetary allocations under various heads to the state office. The actual meeting of the Executive Committee takes place once this procedure is completed. The minutes of the meeting are recorded and approved by the Chairperson, i.e. the secretary of the department of Education. The Executive Committee finally approves the Annual Budget Plan.

Recommendation

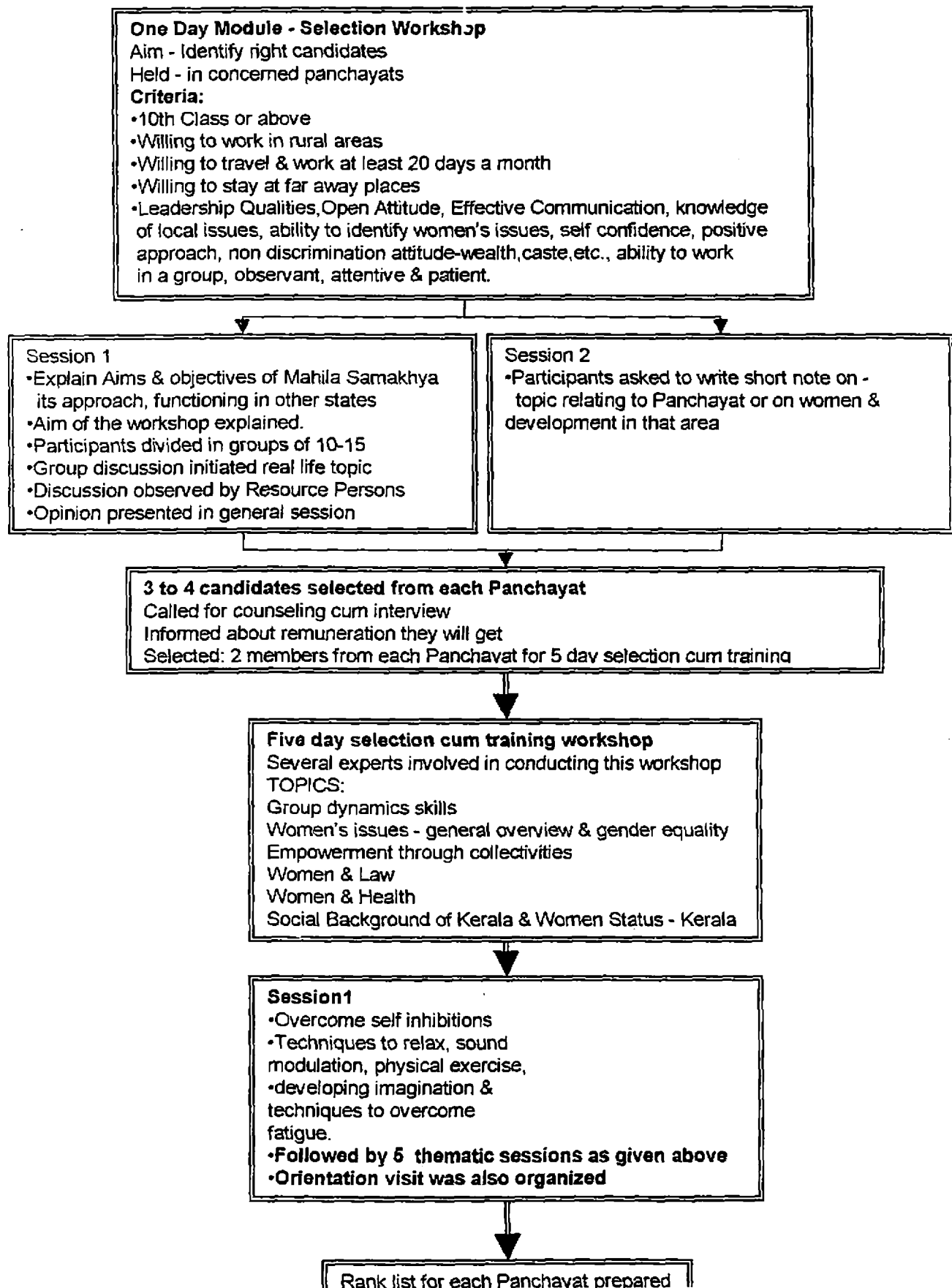
- The state team requires more exposure to the practices in planning, budgeting and financial management, and administration of the programme in other states like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.
- The MS objectives as mentioned in the Green Book should be taken as the National Guidelines and based on these guidelines state specific objectives and aims need to be formulated along with milestones, determined by the State KMSS itself. Outputs can then be agreed upon through a democratic bottom-up process of consultation, in which beneficiaries and programme staff participate. On the basis of the above milestones, reporting should also be output/result based. Even though MS is a process-based approach, the output and outcome need to be articulated, however intangible or qualitative this may be, to capture achievements of the programme.
- A periodic review and analysis of budgeted versus actual- plan and expense, which could throw up reasons for variations which could then be factored into the next year's Budget and Plan. The accountant should present a monthly review of the budgeted amount against activity v/s the actual to the SPD. This can then be shared with the state team and DPCs and resource persons to analyse and identify the reasons for variations in order to establish better management practices for the programme.
- A periodic variance analysis is important to ensure that the conclusions are factored into the next year's budget, since RNE and GOI release funds on the basis of the projected budget for next year.
- All the functionaries should be trained in the use of an effective Management Information System. This would go a long way in strengthening the programme.

6. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The State Executive Committee (EC) is an empowered body that takes decisions relating to governance and programme direction. The plans approved by the EC are put into action by the State Programme Director (SPD). The SPD is responsible for overall execution and smooth running of the programme within the state (see Organisation Chart at the state and district levels at Exhibit 1 and 2).

EXHIBIT 3

HIRING PROCESS OF SEVINIS



The EC needs to be strengthened to play a more positive and effective role in steering the programme in the state. The majority of the representation in the EC comprises either governmental ex-officio members or their nominees. It would be in the best interest of the programme that its autonomous nature be fortified through a broader representation. i.e. by including more representatives of local NGOs and public figures with credentials on women's issues related to the MS programme. EC meetings hitherto have focussed more on administrative and financial matters, and have been all too brief. These meetings need to be held more regularly with greater discussion on the progress of the programme and its qualitative aspects, and decisions regarding the direction of the programme and key policy concerns need to be addressed at this forum.

There is an overlap of job description in case of some positions at the state and district level and a lack of clarity in the respective roles (e.g. the roles of the State Resource Person and the State Consultant). This may lend flexibility in the short term but could cause problems in the long term. There is a need to review and rationalise these job descriptions and roles. Furthermore, reduction of the administrative and accounting workload of SPD and DPCs is called for, as these tasks consume more than 50 percent of their total time. This excess administrative & accounting workload on the SPD as well as the DPC is due to non-fulfilment of the already existing posts of the accounts clerk and stenographers.

Recommendation

- The representation on the EC should be broadened with the induction of more professionals and representatives of women's organizations and NGOs committed to similar goals. This would also positively direct the EC towards greater attention to the programme perspectives than merely attending to administrative matters.
- Both the SPD as well as the DPCs should be provided with adequate secretarial assistance, so that they may be able to devote greater attention to the programme aspects in the field as well as to concentrate on establishment of appropriate linkages to strengthen the programme. It is recommended to rationalise the number of posts in the budget structure, while maintaining the number of personnel. Pending appointments and renewals of programme and support staff should be made at the earliest to facilitate effective programme management.

7. HUMAN RESOURCES

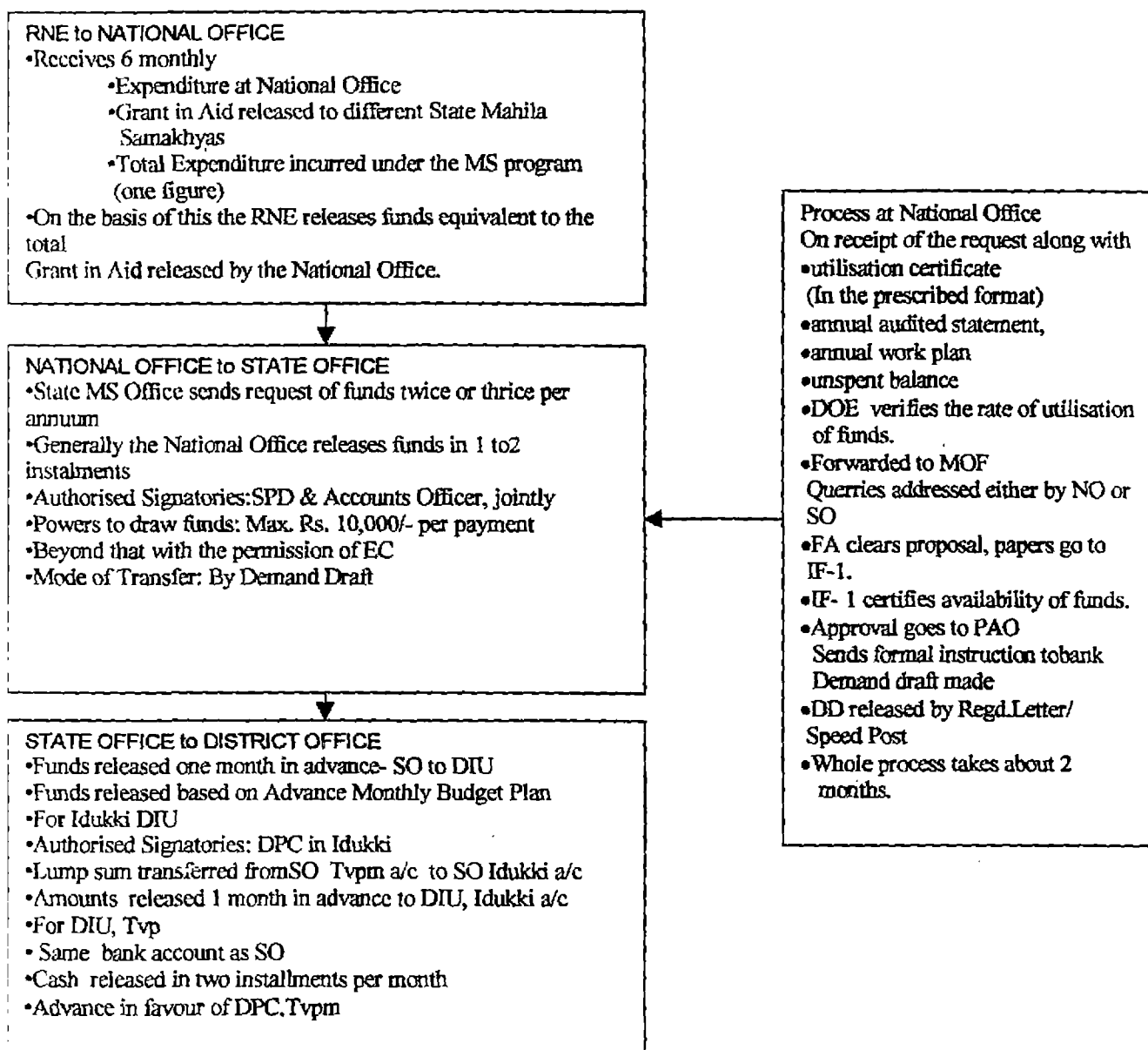
KMSS has developed an elaborate process of staff recruitment, especially with regard to its field staff, i.e. the Sevinis (See exhibit 3). Training cum selection sessions are organised in the various areas of operation as field staff is recruited locally, to strengthen the relation of the programme with the Panchayats, since local governance plays an important role in the programme. As in other states the programme puts strong emphasis on personal commitment, in line with the philosophy of the programme. A basic gender training for Sevinis and other team members was only conducted by *Sakhi* in June 2001, and not at its initiation. No formal induction and orientation procedure is in place for the SPD, and the DPCs.

The salaries of staff are very low, especially when compared to other projects running in the state. Furthermore sound staff policies and personnel regulations are yet to be formulated, for which learning is available from other state programmes. The MS personnel have erratic work timings, since the work requires them to often work till late hours. There is no process in place for regulation of leave or for any compensation for long hours of work. Proper personnel appraisal systems also need to be formulated, given that the programme is more than 3 years old.

The procedures for renewal of contracts are ad hoc and lack transparency. Every recruitment currently needs approval of the Chairman of the Executive Committee, due to which several problems have arisen, such as:

EXHIBIT 4

KMSS- FLOW OF FUNDS



- The renewal of contract of SPD has been held up for the last 6 months,
- The state Accounts Officer is hired on an ad hoc basis, the post is still not regularised,
- The data entry operator is hired on daily wages, since the Chairman has not approved hiring on full time bases,
- A time consuming delay in appointment of the accountant for the Idukki district office. As this position was only to be hired from the applications available in the state office, all applications were filed for an accountant's post in Thiruvantapuram. Thus all candidates were based in the state capital, which is an 8-hour drive from Idukki district. Now a fresh approval of the Chairman would be required to advertise for an accountant for Idukki.

Recommendation

- Salaries across the board should be increased by at least 100 percent, with a provision for revision on an annual basis.
- All employees are eligible for payment of Provident Fund & Gratuity (assuming that KMSS would continue for more than 5 years for the purpose of Gratuity).
- A proper induction and orientation procedure should be formulated for the SPD, DPCs and all other programme functionaries. This should include an orientation to the requirements of the programme as well as training in management skills.
- The personnel appraisal form should be used for renewal of contracts and training needs as well as to provide opportunities to staff based on their assessments done through the said appraisal form. The latter would make the selection process more transparent and objective.
- Training for accountants and all other project personnel in computers is urgently needed with regard to computer-assisted accounting and the development of a Management Information System.

KMSS has the advantage of learning available from other state programmes, which should be tapped into and used effectively for strengthening its management systems to facilitate effective programme implementation. Hence KMSS should actively seek and develop linkages and organise exposure and learning exchanges with the other MS states, particularly Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Fund flow has to be regulated to ensure efficient programme implementation. Funds have to flow from the Centre to states and onward to the districts so that programme activity can be implemented on the ground as planned and scheduled. The flow of funds from Centre to states usually takes two months from the date of receipt of request for funds¹³ to final issue of draft (see Exhibit 4 for Flow of Funds). The Centre¹³ makes use of factors such as the amount requested, utilization certificates, audited statements and the rate of utilization as the basis of determining the amount to be released. States send requests every quarter based on the projected quarterly expenditure that is submitted to the Centre. Generally the National Office releases funds in 1 or 2 instalments.

The mission received information that at certain points of time KMSS was not constrained from carrying out its activities due to delays in release of funds. The referred case occurred at a time when there was no SPD and therefore funds released to KMSS were deposited into the State Government treasury account, which led to a lot of problems in the flow of funds.

The mission noted some inadequacies in general financial management rules:

- No separate bank account is maintained for the Thiruvantapuram DIU, which shares the office premises with the State office.

¹³ Centre implies National Project Director's office, Dept of Education, as well as the Financial Advisors office of the GOI

- The policy of maintaining surplus funds in Term Deposits has not been followed.
- The control exercised on utilisation of funds both at the State Office and DIU level needs to be reviewed. At present, at both these places next month release of funds is strictly based on the Advance monthly budget prepared by the DPC at the DIU and SPD at the State Office.

Recommendations

- The release of funds for both the State office as well as DIU should be based on quarterly budget & plans. The budget should however be flexible to enable the respective offices to carry out any new activity, which was not considered at the time of preparation of the quarterly budget and plan. The Executive Committee and the Chairman need only be involved in approving the annual state plan.
- The mission recommends separate savings bank account for the State Office and the District Offices. As a standard procedure surplus funds should be invested in Term Deposits with the bank for periods ranging 46, 60, 90 days or one year, depending on the availability of funds.
- All states need to be informed about the process followed at the Centre in adequate detail in the interest of transparency and to enable States to plan their funds in a better way.

8.1 Accounting

The following books of accounts are being maintained: CashBook, General Ledger, Journal Voucher Register, Asset Register, personnel register & Inventory register of consumables. There is only one set of books for the State Office and the DIUs, as columnar books are maintained. All accounts are maintained manually, following the double entry and accrual system of accounting. All the expenses are recorded on the basis of activities carried out. All the vouchers are receipted and revenue stamped for payments in cash above Rs.500/- and above. Most of the payments are made in cash. The vouchers at the State Office are authorised by the SPD and by the DPC at the DIU level. At present only the vehicle is insured, as the insurable amount of other assets is too low.

At the State Office level only one savings bank account is maintained for the State as well as Thiruvantapuram district account. One separate savings bank account is maintained for the state office in Idukki district.

Community contributions, if received, are not being accounted for in any manner. Community contribution could include soft drinks and snacks or transport or materials for meetings etc. Accounting of these contributions would enable the State MS prepare a more realistic budget and thus make its future plans in a more informed manner.

- All payments above a limit of Rs.500 should be made by cheques and not in cash, as far as possible. The authorisation of expense vouchers should be delegated to the level of Resource Person depending on the person who has incurred the expense. Only a limited number of vouchers should come to the SPD/DPC to reduce their administrative workload. Therefore a ceiling amount could be fixed above which vouchers would need approval of the SPD at the State Office and the DPC at the District Office.
- Manual accounting should be completely dropped at the State Office as well as DIU level in a phased manner with effect from 01/04/2002. This would ensure reduction of workload as well as speedy and accurate analysis of the variances in the financial data.
- Separate Bank accounts and books of account should be maintained for the State Office and all the DIUs.
- Insurance of all assets, e.g. computers, furniture, etc is recommended as a prudent practice, both at the State as well as the District Office.
- Community contributions received by KMSS for meetings, training and other activities should be valued at market value or unit cost as mentioned in the green book, whichever

is lower. These should be factored into the preparation of the annual budget for the next year.

8.2 Purchase Procedure

All purchases below Rs. 500 per item are made directly from the market after making simple verbal enquiries regarding prices and quality. All purchases involving amounts above Rs 500 but below Rs.20, 000 are made from the market after receiving sealed quotations from dealers/shops. Alternatively, they may be purchased from any of the State or Central Government Corporations, handicraft boards, khadi and village industries etc. without any other quotations being taken as per procedures of D.R.D.As. In case the office wants to decline the lowest quotation, the reasons for deviation need to be recorded in writing before placing the order. Purchase of items involving more than Rs.20, 000 may be made after inviting open tenders. However, the procedure of calling for sealed quotations seems too cumbersome keeping in view the scale of operations of KMSS.

- All purchase procedures should be standardised across all the States. The basic underlying principle for an effective purchase procedure is to be able to carry out all purchases under practical conditions of transparency rather than be burdened by procedures and system followed by the Government.
- A simple purchase procedure is recommended for purchases up to a limit of Rs. 10,000/- , i.e. one of the programme functionaries should survey the market and get 3 quotations from reputed shops. She should then make a detailed report about her recommendations after discussion with the SPD. This note along with all the quotations and analysis of the same should then be handed over to the Accounts Officer, who should screen and confirm that, the prices mentioned in the quotations are appropriate. After this the same note along with the process followed for verification and findings of the Accountant should be put in front of the SPD for approval.
- After the approval of the SPD, there should be a formal purchase order placed with the selected dealer in writing detailing all the terms and conditions agreed upon between the dealer and KMSS. Payments to the dealer should be released on the basis of the above purchase order.

8.3 Disclosures

Specific tied grants from GOI for Mahila Samakhya are shown as income to the extent utilised in the same year, where as the balance is transferred to the capital fund in the liability side of the Balance Sheet. Bank interest and other miscellaneous incomes are shown as income in the Income & Expenditure account. Treatment of purchase of capital asset is not shown as an expense, but only the depreciation is calculated every year as per the Income Tax Act, 1961. This is shown as amount expended every year in the Income and Expenditure account. It is recommended that the treatment of Capital Asset should be standardised across all the states.

8.4 Payroll System

Currently the payroll system across the state and its districts is done manually. This leads to a lot of waste of time and could also lead to clerical mistakes in maintaining and calculating details of all personnel records, especially as the scale of the project increases.

- It is recommended that all the payroll records be maintained on computer in order to streamline the printing of receipts, generation of letters of payment to the bank and also to update these records online. No salaries should be paid in cash.

8.5 Income Tax

At present no income tax returns are being filed. All societies are independent NGOs and therefore need to file returns with the Income Tax Department.

- It is recommended that KMSS should file income tax returns unless such are exempted under any Indo Dutch Bilateral Agreement or covered under any other specific exemptions.

8.6 Internal Control

A proper organisation structure should be put in place to ensure proper internal controls. At the DIU level the DPC spends the money and also authorises the same. This is because of the small size of the Kerala MS and also because there is no administration/accounts help available at the DIU level. The State level accountant ensures that the amount expended is not more than the amount sanctioned.

- It is recommended that the state and district resource persons should be involved for handling the administration and accounts workload till such time a person is hired for the purpose of accounts and administration work.
- The SPD should get a monthly review of budgeted amount and activity v/s the actual amount and activity and analyse the reasons for variations through this process in order to ensure better management of the programme.

8.7 Utilisation of Funds

The mission noted a lot of variation between the actual and the budgeted activity costs as can be seen in the tables below.

Table 3:KMSS Budget versus Actual Expenditure of Funds (Total) 1998-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1998-99		4.063	
1999-00	99.51	14.97	15%
2000-01	56.38	17.18	30%
2001-Till 30.11.01	69.31	12.17	18%

Table 4: KMSS Budget versus Actual Expenditure (Management Cost) 1998-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1998-99		4.063	
1999-00	30.79	13.51	44%
2000-01	32.95	10.38	32%
2001-Till 30.11.01	24.25	7.43	31%

The main reasons for variation between the actual and the budgeted activity costs, could be:

- Limited experience in budgeting skills.
- Lack of formal variance analysis between the budgeted versus actual – expense and activity, which could help in formulating the next year's Budget and Plan.
- Community contributions for meetings and training are not valued during the year and thus are also not factored into the budget for the next year.

Table 3:KMSS Budget versus Actual Expenditure (Activity Cost) 1998-2002

Financial Year	Budget	Actual	Actual / Budget
1998-99		0	

1999-00	68.72	1.47	2%
2000-01	23.43	6.8	29%
2001-Till 30.11.01	45.06	4.74	11%(till Nov).

The Management Cost as compared to the Activity Cost is very high. This could be attributed to the additional cost that needs to be incurred in the beginning of the programme. This may also be attributed to the fact that programme activities are approved by the state Education Secretary as Chairman of the MS Executive Committee, and EC meetings are held for short duration with little deliberation on programmes. Staff are also uncertain about the future of the programme and its continuation after 2002 March. They did not have any indication of the term of the current phase of the project being upto the period ending December 2002, and were apprehensive of the continuation of the programme based on the initiative of the state government. The position of the SPD is insecure as the extension of her term is yet to be approved. ¹⁴

Table 4:KMSS Management Cost, Activity Cost and Management Cost as ratio of Total Cost 1998-2002

Financial Year	Management Cost	Activity Cost	Management Cost / Total Cost
1998-99	4.063	0	100%
1999-00	13.51	1.47	90%
2000-01	10.38	6.8	60%
2001-Till 30.11.01	7.43	4.74	61%

D. NEW PHASE

KMSS is a relatively new programme, with only two years of field activities in a small area, and geographically dispersed in two terrainically distinct parts of the state. The period of inception of the KMSS took a long period, since processes of placing it outside the state administration and appointments and training of staff for the two districts took over a year. Hence fieldwork has been in progress only since 2000. This however has laid a strong foundation for the programme, and should enable it to expand and extend its programme efficiently in the next phase. **Despite its limited outreach, the programme has been able to demonstrate the value of a process oriented women centred approach. It must therefore be reinforced with support from various quarters within the state, and the State Project Director, notwithstanding the extension of her own term, needs to take action to plan activities towards preparing the programme for the next phase, with the support of a strengthened EC.**

Action needs to be taken to ensure continuity of the team that has been built up over the past three years so that it can work towards the fulfilment of the goals of the programme.

¹⁴ The secretary Education,GoK was not available in the Office for insights or comment on this issue.

In the next phase therefore the following strategies and actions are recommended for growth of the programme of KMSS in the state, and for formulation of a Programme strategy, apart from the measures mentioned above which need urgent attention:

1. Strengthening and extension in Present districts
2. Expansion to 2 new districts
3. Emerging as a Gender Resource Agency at State and district levels

1. Strengthening and Extension in Present Districts

The programme urgently needs to expand and deepen in the districts where it is currently working to strengthen women's status and for greater influence on mainstream governance processes. Therefore MS should concentrate of broadening its basic foundation, i.e. formation of Sanghas, to establish a visible presence. A major constraint in this has been the large areas to be covered by the Sevinis, due to which the intensity of their interaction with the Sanghas is constrained. The mission is of the view that additional Sevinis/resource persons are required within each block and flexibility for the same may be provided based on the population coverage in each Panchayat¹⁵. *Immediate focus is required on strengthening of Sanghas and Vanita Sabhas, followed by the strengthening of linkages and collaboration with the Women representatives of Panchayats on the one hand and women's organizations on the other.*

The programme also needs to *streamline its administrative and management systems by strengthening its Executive Committee*, and reducing the burden of these tasks on the SPD and the DPCs through the measures suggested above, so that they may focus on the programmatic requirements in greater measure. *Greater transparency in appointments and revision of staff salaries are critical for the efficiency and sustainability of the programme and need to be addressed forthwith. Learning from other state programmes from good practices in these and other aspects is critical to facilitate programme strengthening.* Exchanges should be planned at the earliest, apart from issue based workshops (on issues of violence, Sangha and cluster formation, etc) for which representatives from other states may also be invited.

In the coming year KMSS needs to focus on extending and deepening its work in the districts of current operation to cover a larger number of blocks and thereafter to at least 2 new districts. Programme expansion in the tribal district of Idukki is required for more than one reason. MS has already started working in tribal settlements in the district with some commendable results. Being a remote and neglected area, it is less politicised and the impact regarding women's empowerment will probably be much greater. With tribal development having become a priority in the state, MS work in this area would be more visible and could demonstrate viable strategies for other programmes, and to promote engendered decentralised planning processes from their inception in these areas. MS may consider working in collaboration with the decentralised planning department to sensitise the process towards gender integration within that district, while strengthening women and communities towards the same at the grassroots level through Sangha formation.

However, MS should not solely focus on one specific group. Expansion in mainstream areas is necessary to further develop and strengthen its activities with regard to social empowerment linked with SHGs and the decentralisation process in Kerala. Expansion of MS activities to other blocks of Thiruvantapuram district is also required to generate a critical mass to influence social change in favour of women and towards engendering of

¹⁵ Flexibility has been provided in norms for recruitment by other states, based on the justification being validated for such measures to be adopted by the EC in the state. Since Kerala does not have villages of a similar entity, being more urbanised and therefore characterised by contigious habitation. The coverage of each panchayat includes a much larger population and may therefore justify additional staff requirement especially in the initial period. Such staff can then be transferred to new blocks and districts as and when the Sanghas become stronger and support weaker ones and do not require such intensive support from the programme staff.

development and governance. MS should prioritise catering to the needs of grassroots women, thus gathering experience in the overall empowerment process, but also regarding specific areas of concern within the Kerala context. Specific attention should be paid to strengthening the position of girls and women in the public domain through enhancing capacities for meaningful employment, while focussing on the issue of violence against women, and providing capacity training for grassroots and elected members to strengthen people's participation in the decentralization process.

2. Expansion to New Districts

Once programmes in the current districts are extended and deepened, KMSS should also consider expanding to at least 2 additional districts in the state, and should initiate its activities in at least 2 blocks in each district at the inception itself. Expansion to one more tribal district should be prioritised, given the greater need, and the second district for expansion may be selected based on the criteria established for the programme. New districts should be contiguous or in close proximity to Idukki and Thiruvantapuram respectively, to facilitate administrative efficiency in communication and minimise overheads as well as to establish a consolidated presence for greater visibility and impact.

Strengthened Linkages with Panchayats: MS has realized the need to work with the panchayats and build a niche for its role in the context of governance and the Women Component Plan. It is however necessary to gradually build sensitivity to gender issues with the Panchayats where the programme is being implemented to create spaces where women's issues can be addressed as well as to generate support for women and their concerns. While the initiative has been taken to work with women representatives has been taken, follow up has been requested by them, apart from training for the men within the Panchayats. The strengthening of the platform for networking at the state level as well as within Panchayats between Sanghas and WPRs is likely to facilitate mutual support.

3. As a Gender Resource Agency at State and District Levels

MS strongly emphasises gender and social empowerment via needs based approach, which should be shared and promoted with other government and non-government programmes¹⁶. This can be done through provision of gender inputs to other organisations, as MS has already been doing, complimenting existing programmes and supporting Panchayats through its local resource centre. Gender integration can also be demonstrated in the areas where the programme is operational and where women are demanding such input as programmes have to offer towards needs based convergence of such services. In the future this work could be extended, drawing support from external resource persons and organisations. The establishment of a State Gender Resource Centre in the next phase should serve to facilitate establish a well-defined working relationship with state-wide programmes such as Kudumbashree. As a gender specialist agency MS should also nurture linkages with other potential partners regarding women's development and gender issues such as KILA, CDS and various departments to facilitate the integration of gender in their programmes, such as the Department of Irrigation (GoK/RNE Sanitation project) etc. It would also be necessary for MS to develop strong linkages and perspectives with the agency for Tribal Development in the state, to enable them to function and facilitate processes in a synergistic way in the tribal areas.

MS could also extend its co-operation with students through networking, involving them for special classes (as with the law students), surveys and documentation support. This helps to lessen the burden of the team, creates an interest among students in women's empowerment issues, and could form a potential pool for future staff and supporters.

¹⁶ A point that was reiterated by Secretaries of Depts of Decentralised Planning and Irrigation, as well as expressed by Addl Secretary Education GoK

Abbreviations

CDS	Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvantapuram
CE	Continuing Education
DoE	Dept of Education
DIU	District Implementation Unit
DPC	District Programme Co-ordinator, Mahila Samakhya
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
D.R.D.As	District Rural Development Authorities
EC	Executive Committee
GOI	Govt. of India
GoK	Govt. of Kerala
GON	Govt. of Netherlands
GAD	Gender and Development
JSS	People's Science Movement
KILA	Kerala Institute for Local Administration
KMSS	Kerala Mahila Samakhya Society
KS	Kudumbashree
KSLMA	Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority
KSSP	Kerala Saksarta Sahitya Parishad
MS	Mahila Samakhya
MIS	Management Information System
NHG	Neighbourhood Group
NPD	National Project Director
PPC	People's Plan Campaign
RP	Resource Person
RNE	Royal Netherland Embassy
SPD	State Project Director
SC/ST	Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe
SHGs	Self Help Groups
SPD	State Programme Director, Mahila Samakhya
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens Fund
WCP	Women Component Plan
WID	Women in Development
WPRs	Women Panchayat Representatives

Glossary

Crore	10 million
Dias	platform
Gram Sabha	Village general body
Lac	100,000
Onam	religious festival in Kerala
Panchayats	Local self-governing unit at village level
Sangha	Collective of women
Sevini	Grassroots fieldworker of Mahila Samakhya, facilitates the formation and supports the functioning of Sanghas in one Panchayat

Annex 1: Itinerary of Review Mission in Kerala

Monday 10/12/01

12.00 am	Arrival Thiruvantapuram airport via Chennai
2.00 pm	Discussion at KMSS state office postponed due to hartal
3.00	Preliminary meeting with state PD and accountant MS
4.00	Meeting with Secretary Decentralised Planning GoK, Mr. Vijayanand
7.00	Dinner meeting with Mr. K. Jayakumar Secretary Irrigation (ex secy. Education)

Tuesday 11/12/01: Field visit Vamanapuram Block

10.00 am	Meeting with Block Panchayat members Vamanapuram
11.00 am	Meeting Adolescent Girls group Nellanadu
2.00 pm	Meeting Panchayat members Nellanadu & visit masonry training
2.00 group	Meeting with Sangha women of MS Sangha & Kudumbashree group
5.00	Visit village households - community members and women

Wednesday 12/12/01 State officials, resource persons and Staff level meetings

9.00 am	Meeting with MS staff state office and Sevini of Thiruvantapuram district
11.00	Meeting of financial consultants with SPD & accountant
11.00	Team leader meeting with additional secretary Education GoK, Ms. Nalini
12.00 am	Meeting with friends of MS-core team members, resource persons, women block Panchayat representatives
2.00 pm	Lunch with staff & friends
3.00 pm	Meeting with Director Kudumbashree GoK, Mr. T.K. Jose, IAS
6.00	Departure for Kottayam, arrival 11 pm

Thursday 13/12/01 District level meetings and field visit in Adimali

9.00 am	Departure for Adimali, Idukki
1.00 pm	Meeting MS district staff
2.00	Lunch with staff and President Block Panchayat
3.00	Meeting with Sevini continued
3.00 block	Meeting with elected women Panchayat members of Adimali block
7.00	Discussions with SPD and DPC .Night stay Munnar,

Friday 14/12/01 Field visit Adimali

10.00am	Sangha meeting Vellathooval
2.00pm	Lunch, meeting block Panchayat chairperson & local officials
3.30	Meeting Sangha women tribal settlement
5.30	Departure for Munnar, night stay

Saturday 15/12/01

9.00 am	Departure Munnar for Cochin airport
7.00 pm	Arrival Delhi airport

Annex 2:
Overview of available training material, modules for awareness classes

➤ **Women & Society module by KMSS, 1999**

Introduction training module for Sevinis and Sanghas on MS, in booklet format also

used as reference, focussing on:

- Equality through education
- Objectives and aims of MS
- Vision of MS
- Women's issues, status of women and women empowerment
- Women empowerment and social development through Sangha
- Personal development
- Women and Health
- Legal Rights

➤ **Self Help Groups**

➤ **Health**

- General introduction & common diseases
- Rat Fever Disease
- Breast cancer
- Food & Health

➤ **Adolescent Education**

- Case studies Caring and Counselling, like the bad influence of peers, struggling with an abusive uncle
- Marriage

➤ **Soap making**

➤ **Gender training by Sakhi**

➤ Adolescent education training at state level, with support of various experts

➤ Women Panchayat representatives training

➤ Women's Status Study of the Peoples Planning Campaign

➤ Women Component Plan (WCP) workshop

➤ Training for resource team members (total health programme)

➤ Workshop on Needs Assessment Study in Tribal Areas

INDO-DUTCH JOINT REVIEW MISSION OF MAHILA SAMAKHYA
December 2001

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Progress And Impact In Terms Of Empowerment Of Women.

Outreach

The MS programme encompasses the needs of poor rural women, their life struggles for economic and social survival, their quest for identity and status within the community and public forums, and now in the establishment of their own networks and organizations. Sanghas have created depth as well as expanded to new districts and blocks, although a critical mass in numbers is yet to be achieved. Outreach in terms of sectoral linkages has steadily expanded. For each Sangha woman it is estimated that at least 20 other women are impacted¹. Other women and girls benefit in the block and vicinity, as discriminatory practices are curbed, as cases are reported and dedication rituals are stopped, "Yatras" motivate women to come together for justice. Sanghas have linked up as clusters and Mahasanghas to network and work on collective agenda.

Strong Sanghas show an accelerated pace of learning and transference to action especially in the older districts with enhanced capacities to move to new organizational, managerial and decision-making roles. Sanghas seek to work together on common solutions through institutional means: through collective farming, and through the Nari Adalats in Gujarat and UP and Karnataka to secure their legal rights. Sanghas have emerged as credible local organizations providing space for greater autonomy for women. Issues have been negotiated with reasonable success with communities, state and other agencies based on emerging needs. Women have engaged with the electoral process in Panchayati Raj elections by standing as candidates, or by negotiating with candidates and have forged links with women Representatives. They have increasing agency and influence on mainstream processes. Knowledge of health has brought about a new strength in women across Sanghas: they are aware of health services that exist and know how to access them. They are also questioning and resisting discriminatory social and traditional practices. Women are no longer silent. They now dare to speak out, among themselves, within the family, to village elders, landowners and government officials. All women cherish their little and big 'victories'. Sanghas have increased their networking on issues like alcoholism, violence, wages, land rights etc.

Strengths of processes

MS achievements lie in the quality of outputs, generated through a systematic follow-through of processes to facilitate learning as well as the attainment of results. Activities are analyzed for their potential to impact on the lives of women, options are explored, and likely outcomes are assessed. These steps are essential to the process of learning and cannot be circumvented for the achievement of goals of social transformation. Belonging to collectives has brought knowledge, and has increased the sense of self worth among women and raised their status in their households and communities. Women are now negotiating for more space, beyond limited traditional roles and making increased demands for government services as well as monitoring and influencing their delivery. Sanghas demonstrate increased autonomy by being far less dependent on Sahayoginis. They are the new role models for young girls and other women in the community. The formation of Kishori Sanghas and Yuvati Shibiras are significant initiatives that enable girls to find space to assert their rights, to meet peers and to develop negotiation skills and self-confidence.

¹ Estimates shared by the Karnataka MS team, indicating the outreach of the Sanghas. This figure may vary across the states and districts, depending on the intensity of Sangha processes and the quality of facilitation.

Tribal women in AP and Kerala express a high level of trust in MS workers, as against their previous experience of development functionaries. MS has also sought involvement of community leaders- an approach appreciated both by women and the community. In Gujarat, MS has yet to establish field presence in Dangs district and can learn from MS Kerala and AP.

Foundation for a Grass-Root Level Women's Movement

Although MS perceives itself as a women's movement its links with the larger women's movement and with autonomous women's agencies have been fairly weak. A broad-based women's network has yet to materialise, although the recently established federations are a step in that direction. Paradoxically, while more villages have been covered in Gujarat and UP, indications of the foundation of a movement are more evident in some areas of MS AP and Karnataka as evinced by the depth of analytical processes and well articulated collective actions of Sanghas. The intensity of processes is a key factor in bringing about social change and empowerment.

An increasing participation of Sangha women in village meetings and greater interest in village affairs, with women keen to claim benefits are tangible outcomes of the MS processes. Building the power of women across party lines, and promoting alliances among women elected representatives across political barriers are challenges that the programme has contended with. Sangha women have brought social justice issues to the fore and are influencing larger decision making processes. The Sangha network now supports and informs the women who have won elections. Elected members have been able to address and voice the issues that affect women – schools, education for girls, drinking water, housing, roads, bore wells for agriculture, health care, immunization and income generating programmes. Post elections, MS has been offering capacity building training for elected women representatives in all five states. This exercise has helped in bridging the lack of experience of women's public exposure, and creates a common platform for women's issues.

Women's Legal Rights

Women in Karnataka, UP, Kerala and AP report that conflicts, harassment and violence within the family have reduced, due to women's participation in meetings. Women visit Police Stations to get acquainted with Police officials and have complained about violence against women and received assistance. Several rallies have been organized by Sanghas for mobilizing women from surrounding villages on social issues. Women report a heightened level of awareness on legal rights through the legal literacy inputs.

By bringing the women's perspective to the solution of women's problems, Nari Adalats have challenged the patriarchal structures and increased the participation of women in the process of obtaining justice. Nari Adalats provide space for women to articulate problems of violence and harassment and have imbued them with confidence, besides creating a new identity for women in the family, village and community. They have also impacted the way people perceive the problem of violence against women and have brought the women's perspective to the concept of justice and punishment. Nari Adalats support the formal law agencies - police and judiciary – indirectly and have been recognized for their effectiveness.

Caste and Class

The focus on the poorest households resulted in a dominant representation of women from Scheduled Caste, backward and disadvantaged groups in the Sanghas. Sanghas cross the caste boundaries by eating together, holding meetings in various caste houses, etc. The alternative justice system of the Nari Adalats demonstrates this with its broad outreach, also catering to the needs of Muslim women and upper caste women. Sanghas try to

overcome the divides of caste and class to bring women together by stressing common concerns. **Issues of violence are the most 'unifying' common concerns, and have the greatest potential to bring women from all backgrounds together.**

Participation of women in local governance and networking among elected women representatives enables women to bridge the caste and class divide and focus on gender concerns. Agenda like water management and installation of hand pumps facilitate inter-caste interaction and have been pursued more systematically in some states such as AP and Karnataka, whereas the strategies for action are less explicit in Gujarat and UP.

2. Women's Education

The MS Programme has been able to redefine education, informed by the women's perspective emerging from the grassroots. The programme now includes adolescent girls, with specific programme initiatives designed to cater to their emerging needs. Education has emerged as a need as Sanghas have evolved and women's visions about themselves have developed. The Sanghas have demanded literacy and education for themselves and their daughters as they attempt to address social problems. Literacy needs have also emerged from Sangha women's involvement in activities like Nari Adalats and Federation. MS offers them a safe learning space and gives new opportunities to venture out into public domains. Strategies employed to provide literacy and continuing educational opportunities include training in residential camps which have reported greater impact; literacy classes in the villages and peer teaching.. Specialized curricula have been developed for groups for issue based learning.

Mahila Shikshan Kendras (MSKs) have reached out to drop out and non-literate girls of a wider age range than initially envisaged, with innovative curriculum models. Parents and communities are more willing to send girls to MSKs even if they are located away from the village. Girls have been mainstreamed systematically into schools, while some are in leadership roles in communities. Despite their relatively insignificant scale, the MSKs have established an identity. It is unfortunate that the MSKs in Gujarat have become dysfunctional.

Proposals for the 10th plan period reflect greater recognition of the roles that women can play in the management of education in Village Education Committees and in the parents' forums, as well as in the mobilization efforts for girls' education, areas in which MS is already engaged. At the National level, the programme has gained recognition for the innovations in girls' education and organization of women through education, which has also enabled it to retain autonomy. MS however, continues to be showcased in the 10th plan period, albeit with assigned resources. There is little evidence that its key learning have permeated to other programmes and policy initiatives of the Department such as the CE programme and the initiatives for Girls and women's education planned for the 10th Plan period despite MS being located within the same line department.

3. Linkages

As A Resource Agency MS is sought after by state and NGOs for the enhancement of capacities and perspectives on gender, group processes, health and violence issues, as well as on issues of governance and formation of federations. The state authorities acknowledge the efficacy of MS to create a safe and conducive environment for girls in their MSKs, and view them as potential demonstrations for effective implementation of the Adult and Non-formal education programme. Participation of MS in the Village Education Committees and in state programme committees, in the preparation of learning materials for education and literacy bear testimony to the fact that MS is recognized as an agency with specialist skills that adds value to educational initiatives. **MS should prioritize its**

primary task to empower women through education and should focus on generation of demand for these services rather than undertake implementation.

At State level, in the three concentration states for Dutch Assistance, governments and other agencies increasingly recognize the training capabilities of the MS programme and view its potential to build GAD perspectives. The State governments and NGOs draw upon MS gender training inputs and capacities. MS in turn sporadically draws on individuals of the women's movement and networked with grassroots organizations to build pressure groups for advocacy and lobbying. **The tendency to look inwards for resources and rely on intra-programme capacities may cause stagnation of ideas and strategies and may deter Sanghas from building sustainable networks with the outside world.**

The empowerment of women towards effective participation and agency within the decentralization and local self-governance process is a common priority for MS and the RNE. Women seek to address land and water and agriculture towards sustainability and food security, as a rational approach to the utilization of these resources. *Strategies for water management planned in Kerala and AP could be dovetailed in the MS areas, but would need to follow the course of need-based prioritization and perspectives that inform the MS process.* MS should be strengthened to play a resource support role for the inclusion of a more holistic framework for empowerment in economic programmes such as Swa Shakti and Kudumbashree and DPIP. It should function as demonstration and trainer to influence such initiatives towards ownership by women. Mainstreaming women's perceptions and strategies from the experiences gained by women in the MS programme has implications for sector reform and institutional change processes, and may well have the potential to inform economic growth models with women's experiences.

4. Management Structures

While MS in most states is fairly autonomous, the obstruction of functional autonomy of MS in some states is largely attributable to the constitution of the EC, where the majority representation is of State agencies. *The interests they present create extraneous compulsions on the programme, often negating or in conflict with the strategic interests of women.* While systems of reporting are fairly systematic at all levels, and contain a wealth of information, this needs to be archived and organized for retrieval for future reference through an MIS strategy. Greater emphasis is called for documenting progress around issues that emerge and the learning that ensues thereof, than on the achievement of targets. The infrequency of NRG meetings and the shift in focus towards programme achievements from issues is a matter of concern.

A **National Resource Center** was proposed in the last plan period but is to be established in the 10th plan period.

5. Human Resources

The level of commitment of the staff especially at the field level is amply evident. There is an urgent need to enhance their compensation package in adequate measure in recognition of the enormous grit and dedication to their tasks and to the goals of the programme. **Staff turnover implies a loss of people who have shared fundamental perspectives that are essential to the programme and its expansion to new districts. The high turnover and problems of recruitment are directly attributable to the low remuneration, far below the market rate. Retention and appropriate compensation to the staff are fundamental to the programme.**

MS programmes in the Dutch assisted states have provided a space for critical reflection and for women to arrive at an alternative framework for understanding and engaging with development and social change. It has gradually sought to challenge gender and

class/caste biased paradigms and, in seeking alternative frameworks poses challenges to the mainstream structures.

Exposure visits and exchange forums facilitate learning across regions between grassroots women. Apart from sharing practices, this would also enable women to analyse issues and evolve new perspectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT PHASE

The Current Policy Context

A positive indicator of recognition at the National level of the MS programme is the proposal for provision of Rs 120 crores under a separate budget line in the 10th plan period. MS has been identified as a separate National programme with a unique approach, and has been retained as a separate programme at a time when all programmes of the Department are being dovetailed under the umbrella of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan .

Proposed actions and recommendations for the 10th plan period reflect greater recognition of the roles that women can play in the management of education in village education committees and in the parents' forums, as well as in the mobilization efforts for girls education. MS however continues to be showcased in the 10th plan period, with little understanding of its key learning and principles influencing the mainstream efforts towards literacy and education. Mainstreaming of gender concerns and appreciation for strategies and issues highlighted by the MS programmes should be advocated with greater rigor by the National Office and by the NRG.

Learning from the MS programme on strategies for women and girls' education need to be culled out and highlighted. These need to be shared for incorporation in other programme and policy initiatives of the Department such as the CE programme, the Innovative Education Programme and the initiatives for Girls and women's education planned for the 10th Plan period.

The challenge to sustainability of the MS approach looms large from recent initiatives such as the DPIP, Kudumbashree etc, given their economic thrust and focus on targets, and matching resources for groups. Such programmes also have a limited focus on SC/ST women, thereby threatening to split Sanghas and communities along caste lines instead of building solidarity among women of all denominations. **MS needs support to intensify its processes in current areas while providing perspective building and capacity development inputs as a resource agency to such programmes.** The ground reality of multiplication of SHGs and schemes for economic empowerment calls for a new approach for expansion in the states of RNE concentration, where MS positions its value addition in the mobilization of SHGs and other groups around issues of social empowerment.

Towards Empowerment

The formation of federations should be supported, with greater inputs to facilitate agenda for social change through exchange and exposure and workshops to define the possible strategies for women's organization. Nari Adalats need to be expanded systematically and strengthened to play a role in creation of a gender sensitive justice system.

Group processes need sufficient time and space for deepening before groups are provision of resources for "Mahila Thikanas" or collective farming etc especially in the new districts. Indicators need to be identified to assess group's internal processes and preparedness to absorb external resources.

In new districts the programme is reaching out to SHGs through an umbrella approach, indicating an enhanced outreach potential to groups that are already in existence. MS offers an opportunity to bring women together across religious groups, to work in solidarity for social transformation towards equality and justice. Greater efforts to address caste class dimensions along with gender in Umbrella Sanghas will enhance the outreach of the programme to the most marginalized communities. The pattern of staffing should also be strengthened to be more broadly representatives of class/caste/ religious groups to demonstrate cooperation and sisterhood among women.

In each district, positions for five 'Issue Based Coordinators' (IBCs) should be created at par with RPs/JRPs in organizational hierarchy, responsible for guiding and building capacity of Federations and new Sahayoginis in their areas of expertise. This is visualized to operate much as the issue based committees of the Sanghas in the Karnataka model.

The mobilizing potential of MS has been recognized by various government departments, which call on the Sangha women for implementation support. **However Mahila Samakhya should be consciously alert to the risk of becoming merely a service delivery machine for other programmes and should instead strive to influence their perspectives while maintaining its own autonomy and adherence to its principles.**

Education sector

Mainstreaming of gender concerns and appreciation for the MS programme should be advocated with greater rigor by the National and State Offices and by the NRG in the 10th plan period. Efforts also need to be pursued with greater vigor to integrate gender and incorporate strategies of MS in other programmes such as the CE programme and the new programme for Women and Girls' education.

Given the increasing demand and environment for education of women and girls, literacy inputs need to be systematized in MS, and combined with inputs for enhancing analytical thought processes to facilitate the route to empowerment through education. Multiple strategies and options need to be provided for intensive and continued learning. Curricula for literacy at the Adult Literacy Centres need to be developed systematically based on women's expressed interests, to provide learning towards capacity development as well as perspective. Structured learning strategies need to be shared across states and with other agencies engaged with the issue. Systematic efforts to strengthen the educational component of the programme are likely to contribute significantly to the achievement of empowerment goals. A planning exercise is required in each state to address the emerging needs for women's education more effectively, to generate curriculum and materials and share strategies with other programmes engaged in literacy and Continuing Education interventions. This acquires greater significance given high expectations from the line departments at state and national levels from MS to evolve and demonstrate innovative strategies for women's education. MS has to effectively manage expanding outreach and ensure that education does not get subsumed in the larger social empowerment agenda of women.

MSKs fill a niche need and should be up-scaled in all the states, and revitalized in Gujarat. MSKs should remain located within MS and curriculum and materials need to be developed to address the needs of different age groups in the MSKs. More professional support for teachers is required for better transaction of the curriculum through capacity development in each state. Future links of MSKs to District Resource Centres need to be planned, so that MSKs can be more effective in influencing mainstream education programmes. MSKs should also cater to the continuing education needs of Sangha women.

Linkages

MS programme needs to forge links and network with organizations and forums of women, and issue based networks to continually enrich and challenge its perspectives and efforts. **Spreading MS activities to implement programmes, including those that may be RNE supported, needs to be negotiated with caution and based specifically on women's own analysis of needs, priorities and strategies and within the framework of the non-negotiable principles of the programme. Otherwise MS stands the danger of being reduced to a mobilization role for numerous target-oriented interventions.**

Management Structures

The programme needs to fortify its autonomous nature by increasing the local non-government representation in the EC. The National office should ensure the linkage of the MS programme to the women's movement and development agencies and facilitate dissemination and sharing of experiences between States. Greater initiative is required from the national office to render the educational elements of the programme visible through advocacy within the department itself.

At the National level:

- Mahila Samakhya should play a strategic role in building competencies and facilitating adoption of gender sensitive processes of development
- **The National Resource Centre for Women and Girls** proposed in the 10th Plan period should draw upon the human resources and experiences of the MS at the state levels as well as the NRG to meet its goals. It can provide a space for synergistic learning. RNE may consider support to the NRC as a mainstreaming opportunity for the learning and experience gained from the MS programme, and thereby ensure that the NRC is rooted in the experiences gained from the MS programmes in the Dutch assisted states.
- The National Consultants/ Resource Persons should be reinstated with immediate effect, and the National Resource Group revitalized with regular meetings and focus on the substantive issues towards programme goals.

At State Level a greater role is recommended for the **State Resource Groups** to facilitate linkages of the programme with other networks and to provide state specific technical support and advice. Some SRG members may also be inducted in the State EC to strengthen its substantive capacities. The **State Gender Resource Centres** could engage with the women's movement and networks towards women's solidarity and empowerment, as well as serve to influence the discourse on gender and development in the state as they emerge.

Currently the programme goals laid out at the national level are used to guide the planning processes in the states. Based on these goals, each state needs to evolve its own objectives to address the common goals. Planning by objectives would enable the programme at the state level to focus on the outcomes to be achieved and processes to be nurtured more sharply in the context of the state.

A formal and regular evaluation cycle for evaluation is required, based on a study-design suitable for social science research. It must assesses the 'empowerment-construct' in the program over a time series as well as differences with control groups which have not received MS inputs.

Organization and Human Resource

NRG meetings are desirable at least on a six monthly basis to focus clearly on the strategic developments of the programme, especially in view of the proposed establishment of a National Resource Centre for Women and Girls (NRCW). The revitalization of the NRG is essential to ensure strong linkages with the women's movement as well as to provide

direction to the programme and inputs to the proposed NRCW to ensure its strong linkage and to embed it in the MS programme in the 10th Plan period.

The most urgent requirement is that of revisions in the remuneration to the programme functionaries based on the current situation in the development sector and taking into account the fact that no such revisions have been made in the last 5 years. In the view of the mission an increase of $\leq 100\%$ is warranted, with provisions for future annual increases and taking into account inflationary trends. This should be done without further delay (from the commencement of the 10th Plan Period).

Exchanges and exposure visits promote learning among grassroots groups that accelerates the learning and transfer of experiences most effectively. These need to be undertaken more regularly between districts and state programmes, as well as with other projects. Participation in Women's conferences and people's campaigns will serve to sharpen perspectives, and facilitate networking around key concerns.

Budgeted activity/amount v/s actual verification and analysis, need to be carefully analyzed to identify variations and reasons thereof and to make planning more realistic.

Finally, the programme need to move towards:

Consolidation in existing blocks, covering new villages and including more women to develop a critical mass in these areas.

Expansion of area beyond the present districts in the 3 concentration states, by forming its own Sanghas as a nucleus for its activities and towards the formation of Village Sanghas and cluster Sanghas where there is a saturation of groups already.

Diversification of its roles from an implementation organization to a resource agency, informing the formulation and implementation of educational programmes and policy, and initiatives in various sectors.

The New Phase marks an enhanced role for the programme in the states and at the national level, and a shift to dual roles as **implementing and resource organization** for the period 2002-2007.

DETAILS OF STRATEGY RECOMMENDED AND BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS ARE IN THE MAIN REPORT
