


Mahila Samakhya Karnataka

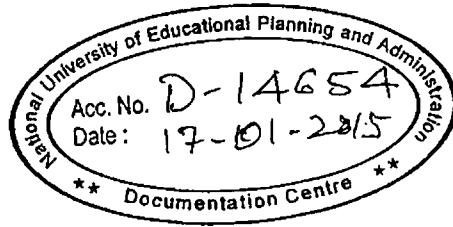
National Evaluation 2004

NUEPA DC

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Evaluation Team

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Introduction:

We, the members of the Evaluation Team of Mahila Samakhya -Karnataka, record our deep appreciation for the Vision, commitment and arduous work of Mahila Samakhya Karnataka (MS-K). We have been rejuvenated by our interactions with the Sangha members and enriched by our discussions with the MS-K team that has remained energetic, tenacious and determined through years of achievements and challenges.

We would also like to acknowledge the recognition of MS-K by other National and International agencies. It was awarded the NOMA literacy award by UNESCO for extraordinary achievement in the field of literacy education. UNICEF has commended the performance of MS-K in the Community Monitoring Programme (CMP) implemented in Raichur district and wishes to hand over two more Talukas to MS-K for implementation of the project. A case study of MS-K will be included in the Karnataka Human Development Report 2004, outlining the impact of the programme.

Above all, we wish to note, the high esteem with which the Sangha women in the programme areas hold MS-K, in all the field areas we visited, and this is the highest recognition of all.

This evaluation process has been an insightful journey – it highlighted very significant achievements of the MS-K over the years and at the same time flagged several conceptual and programmatic issues that need further examination. While some of our responses are related to the Karnataka Programme, a fairly large number of our responses are linked to the 10th plan and are also likely to be relevant to MS programmes in other states.

We acknowledge with gratitude, the support, efficient assistance and warm hospitality provided to us during the evaluation and the refreshing sense of humour that laced our field visits and discussions.

The Process:

The Evaluation Team reviewed the terms of reference and went over the points discussed during the pre-evaluation meeting held at Delhi. It was unanimously felt that the framework was adequate and it was also appropriate that the same framework (with minor modifications in the sequencing) be applicable for the report.

Our team carried out detailed discussions with the MS-K teams (Programme, Administration and Accounts) both in the State Programme Office (SPO) as well as in the three districts – Gulberga, Bijapur and Bellary, which we visited. The itinerary is at Annexure-I.

During the field visits, we also had discussions with the members of the Sanghas – representing various subject committees, Executive Committee members of the Federations, the Nari Adalat, Kishori Sanghas, students and teachers of Mahila Shikshana Kendras, Kishori Kalika Kendras, Child Labour Programmes, representatives of the Government and other agencies that MS-K works in collaborations with. We also

examined the documentation at the field level and at the District offices. We observed several training programmes and reviewed some of the training manuals. Before concluding the field visits, we debriefed the staff members of the District programmes and received their feedback to our responses. The District units expressed their satisfaction with the evaluation process and welcomed the suggestions and recommendations. They offered clarifications where required and those have been incorporated in the report.

Since the programme schedule did not permit field visits to the other 6 districts, our observations regarding those areas are drawn from the presentations made by the representatives of those districts at the SPO and the subsequent discussions as well as the information we have gathered from the publications and documentations.

In Bangalore we also had discussions with several consultants of the MS-K and collaborative agencies, the Director of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSK), Director of Department of Women and Children and the Education Secretary who is also the Chairperson of MS-K. (Detailed programme schedule annexed). Discussions were held in the State office with the State Programme Director (SPD), the representatives of the Programme team as well as the Administration and Accounts Teams. Since the peer review of the State Office has not yet been carried out, the members felt that this evaluation provided them with a welcome opportunity to discuss both programmatic and administrative issues.

In conclusion, we presented our initial responses to the MS-K team following which we opened the floor for discussions and responses. We closed the session after all responses were received and they figure in the report wherever appropriate. Subsequently, the SPD felt there were a few more issues she wished to raise and which was given in the form of a note

Objectives of the Evaluation

1. To assess the progress of the programme based on the evaluation parameters identified for the National Evaluation of 2004 and the progress made since 2001
2. To critically review programme strategies and interventions in terms of:
 - Expansion
 - Inputs/ strategies at field level for information dissemination, knowledge building, skill development on identified issues
 - Status of Sanghas and Federations
 - Strategies for training and capability building (both at field and organizational level)
 - The ability of Sanghas and federations to function autonomously
 - The impact of the alternative structures such as: non formal educational structures (such as Mahila Shikshan Kendras), forums for redressal of issues of violence (such as Nari Adalats)
 - MS linkages with mainstream educational programmes
3. To identify constraints and areas that need strengthening
4. To recommend next steps

Please note that in order to contextualise our recommendations, we have listed them under the appropriate sections.

III.1 Status of Sanghas / Federations

For the members, the Mahila Samakhya Sanghas embody a strong sense of empowerment at different levels – individual, community, village and also the Taluka level. At each level, individually and collectively, there is sense of accomplishment and pride at being able to improve the quality of their lives and work towards public good and social justice. There are many examples, in many villages, of women collectively addressing issues of caste hierarchy, of child marriage, of violence against women (both domestic and public), of accountability from the state, of corruption in the village Panchayats and so on. They have developed the capacity to speak up, to address gatherings and to talk to ‘important’ government officials. They also interface with other village level organisations and take up leadership roles in addressing common social issues. On the whole, they have a very positive reputation and recognition. Women repeatedly mention how their membership gives them a strong sense of identity and dignity.

The programme, as on March 2004 covers 1395 villages in 33 Talukas of 9 districts. It has facilitated the formation of 1629 women’s sanghas that have about 35,000 members.

Initially, when the idea of an MS Sangha with the goal of overall empowerment of women was mooted, the Sahayogini’s were asked “Other Sangha’s give money to their members. What will you give?” This was a big challenge. However, within a few years many of the other organisations wound up and MS continued to remain strong for over ten years. Now they are no longer asked these questions. However, in the last few years with the introduction of government sponsored Self Help Groups the picture has altered. (More details on page 11) The women in the villages have realised that they have, due to the MS initiated Sanghas, been instrumental in improving the quality of their own lives.

The members for the Sanghas provide several examples to indicate how their active involvement in the Sanghas has given them an enhanced status in their homes and communities.

“Now our husbands graze the cows bought from our loans”

They feel that they now receive more respect in their families than before and over the years have been able to convince some of the family members about the benefits of the Sangha. In Bellary, women said they are now allowed to attend meetings and their opinions are taken into account in their homes. Some of the women felt that one of the most important changes they find in their own families is the way they now treat their daughters – with deep sensitivity, understanding and respect. They have also taken a very strong stand ‘against’ child marriage and ‘for’ empowerment of their daughters. Encouraging daughters’ education was a uniform observation across the districts.

They also observe that they have gained tremendous confidence to talk to outsiders and have no hesitation in approaching even Members of the Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assemblies with their problems, demands and plans.

The Sanghas have also equipped them with information on various issues that have a direct bearing on their lives. Because of our Sangha “from having two eyes, we now have a thousand eyes” they say.

Their active involvement in public life has given them recognition and this makes them feel strong and powerful. In Gulberga, a brother of a Sangha member was murdered. The women submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister and played a major role in ensuring that the family of the deceased received compensation. In another incident, they met the District Collector to demand that the arrack shop is shifted from the village. For this they were able to mobilise a large number of women for *Dharana* and the officials were forced to recognise their presence. Shifting of arrack shops and agitating against liquor consumption in the villages was another uniform agenda of the Sanghas observed across the districts.

The Sangha women have a strong sense of entitlement when any wrong-doing against women or girls happens in villages. In Bijapur, a step daughter was raped and the Sangha women managed to initiate a long process with the police and the court to bring justice to the girl. The father was convicted and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.

In a bid to make Sangha's effective and to streamline the activities and linkages to the Federation level, MSK has initiated 6 subject based committees. They are 1) Education 2) Health 3) Economic Development Programme 4) Legal Literacy 5) Self Reliance 6) Panchayat.

The MS-K strategy is to facilitate members of the Sanghas to form these Subject Committees to take up action at the village level. For example, Health committee collaborates with the state machinery for immunisation programmes like pulse polio, aids the *dai* training programmes and imparts knowledge on nutrition to Sangha members. They also encourage women to grow greens and vegetables. In the Legal committee, the Sangha members take up issues of violence. In the Panchayat committee, women liaise with the Panchayat to enhance infrastructure facilities of villages and work as a pressure groups to access appropriate schemes of the State government. For example, the Bhagyajyoti scheme entitles every house in a village a free electricity connection. Sangha members have been active in availing this facility for homes in their villages.

One of the important collective activities of the Sanghas is to liaise with the Panchayats to acquire a space for Sangha activities. ‘*Sangha Mane*’ (‘Sangha’s home’ in Kannada) is a pucca concrete physical space where the Sangha meetings are conducted and most of the activities and action plans of the Sanghas are concretised. It is also a space that is used as a shelter for women at times of crises as well as a venue for other community activities. “The Sangha Mane signifies their newly acquired access to community resources and their ability to bring their views to the decision making processes in the Panchayats. The structure assumes added relevance, as it is a public declaration and recognition, of an

association of women who have been marginalized for generations.” (*Sangha Mane*, MSK, 2003)

In the Education Committee, there is an emphasis on ensuring education of girls by both advocating for enrolment of girls to schools and in preventing school drop out. They also feel that education of girl children will help reduce the incidence of child marriage. Some of the Sanghas are actively involved in monitoring the schools to some extent. In Gulberga, in one of the schools, the mid-day meal scheme was stopped without any reason. When the Sangha women got invited to the school by the village headmaster for the celebration of Independence day on 15th August, they collectively went to the village headmaster and stated that none of them would participate in this function as the mid-day meal scheme had been stopped without giving them a valid reason. The headmaster accepted his mistake and assured them that he would ensure that the mid-day meal scheme is immediately resumed. The women, then took part in the programme. The mid-day meal scheme has been running smoothly in the village since then.

In Ernal village of Bijapur district, a Sangha member took the initiative to form the Social Justice Committee of the Panchayat to address domestic violence against women. The impetus for this came when men questioned the Sangha women’s right to intervene whenever an incidence of violence occurred within the four walls of their homes. Women informed the Panchayat that it was mandatory to have a Social Justice Committee in the Panchayat. Having set it up, they went on to become a part of it. Through their membership in the Social Justice Committee, they gained an ‘official’ status and legitimacy to intervene whenever required, which they use very promptly and effectively.

The need to articulate a ‘Rights’ Framework

However, with many instances across the district, where rights issues were squarely addressed arising from a sense of wrong and injustice, women did not internalise their actions in terms of women’s rights. All the members of the evaluation team noticed the absence of the ‘Rights language’ in all our discussions in the field. The use of rights as a concept and a language is a very powerful tool in the field that needs to be recognized, emphasized and concretised as an important mechanism to leverage present activities and to take them to a different level by the Sanghas.

The two committees that were consistently weak across the different Sanghas in the districts are the Economic Development Programme (EDP) and Self Reliance. The EDP and Self-Reliance Committees have little clarity on their mandate and their activities. In the case of EDP, as most Sangha women are wagedworkers, there is an eagerness to start some income generation. However, lack of time and resources has meant it has not really taken off. Using an English abbreviation has led to many confusions among the women. Most women could not pronounce EDP and called it EDT or DDT or ADP.

The MS-K process recognises that it is important for members of the Sanghas to make inroads into the local government. In all MS-K districts, women were briefed about the processes, procedures and rules related to contesting in elections. A large number of women have contested in the previous elections and a significant number of them have

also been elected as ward members, *sarpanches* and *upa sarpanches*. In Afzalput Taluk of Gulbarga, 15 women were elected unopposed. The women say that this was achieved because they went door-to-door requesting people to not contest against their candidates.

Right now, the Sanghas are divided into 'Strong', 'Medium' and 'Weak' Sanghas. Each district develops its own criteria, as it is recognised that local specific parameters are required. The broad criteria for such categorisation developed is at Annexure-II

On visiting the field in Bijapur with the criteria spelt out in these three categories, it was observed that it was a very mechanical way of categorising Sanghas – with no scope for a nuanced understanding. In Bijapur, for example, a Sangha categorised as “weak” has been very strong on many aspects, and has a strong history of addressing caste and gender issues within the village. But right now, because the membership is reducing and meetings are not taking place regularly, it has been categorised as ‘weak’. In Bellary too, the criteria appeared very drastic and in some cases very misleading since some of the very effective Sangha’s fell into the ‘weak’ category since they did not fulfil the ‘literacy’ requirement of the Sangha members.

Sanghas are complex and multidimensional entities – with both strengths and weakness and this kind of categorisation neither does justice to the work of the Sangha over many years, nor gives a realistic picture of the organisation. In this scheme of categorisation, the benefits like Sangha honorarium and Sangha Mane get linked and assume an unfair practise. While criteria for categorisation are important for keeping track of the Sanghas, and can be useful, a more realistic and appropriate system has to be developed.

The membership of Sanghas presents a very mixed picture across different districts in terms of class and caste backgrounds of members. While some Sangha have mixed caste groups, other have women from different class backgrounds – in a relative sense of the word – as most women continue to be wage labourers with very few owning land.

In Bellary District, the present MS-K strategy is to form mixed Sanghas. These are Sanghas where women from different caste backgrounds become members of the Sangha in the same village. It is a powerful indicator of breaking entrenched caste hierarchies within the village and the capacities of scheduled castes women who initiate the Sangha to break these and assume a position of power.

However, in Mixed Sanghas – the group dynamics of the Mixed Sangha depends on the initial strengthening that takes place, i.e. when homogenous groups of women from the scheduled castes initiate and consolidate the Sangha over time and assume position of power within the village and later open up the membership for women from other groups, they are able to ensure positive dynamics within the Sangha.

For an upper caste woman in Atnur village in Gulberga, life was very secluded before joining the Sangha. She was living in *Purdah* and was not allowed to walk alone. She was not allowed to step out of the house even for worship. Her house had a huge courtyard with different Gods placed so that she and the other women in the family could worship here.

Now this woman is an active member of the Sangha and takes on issues related to all the women of the village.

In terms of age, MS-K is divided into diametrically opposite tendencies. On one hand, are the greying and older women who form a majority of the members and on the other hand, is the burgeoning of the adolescents in the Kishori Sanghas. This was especially noticeable in Bijapur and Gulberga.

In Gulberga most of the Sangha and Federation meetings that we attended comprised of old women. When we enquired about the younger women and their daughters in law the women told us that it was not possible for the daughters in law to attend, as they had to look after children and the household chores. In these Sanghas we did not find any efforts to expand the base to include younger women. When asked, the Sahayoginis informed us that they did not encourage the younger women to become part of the Sangha as they could not attend the meetings on a regular basis and if they did not attend these meetings regularly or travel outside the village to attend other District and Taluka meetings, the time they invested would be wasted as these women would not be able to contribute significantly to the programme or even understand it. It should also be noted that such compulsion to attend meetings had also affected over-all membership.

It has to be borne in mind, that this observation also comes from some of the very old Sanghas. The women, when the Sangha started in the early 90's were relatively young (in their mid forties). In these Sangha's there is an age vacuum – women in their 20's and 30's are hardly present. This indicates several things: a lack of autonomy of the younger women to join groups like MS that offer no personal 'visible' benefits (like loans and so on), preference for other income generating groups like Strishakti or Swashakti and multiple burdens at home that give them little time. It also indicates a lack of initiative on the part of the older women to mobilise the younger ones of the village. The concern now is that some Sanghas are totally 'grey' indicating a lack of new blood in the Sanghas.

There are two issues here: one, the older women who are part of the Sanghas are mothers and mothers in law and view the membership of the Sanghas as being unique to them. Among them there is an enhanced sense of ownership, belonging, identity and peer solidarity (intra generational). This, for want of a better word, could be a barrier to entry of younger, literate women. Two, various government schemes with accent on credit and savings draw younger women and these programmes do not place sufficient emphasis on overall empowerment.

MS-K has established contact with children and adolescents through its education programmes. But the Kishori Sangha component in the MS-K programme is a very nascent one. In Bellary, for instance, children had met twice during the year for inputs, but had not discussed the idea of forming their own Sangha yet. Strong intention to enable children and young women to get organised was expressed in all districts, especially Bellary, but no clear plans or thoughts on this matter were presented to us. However, there is a lot of openness to seek suggestions to help Kishoris to build their Sanghas, but there is also anxiety about the increase in the workload that it will surely bring in.

It is critical to note that the Sangha building environment has changed over the years. Within India, every state government through its Social Welfare Department (with directions from the National level) has initiated self-help groups (SHGs) for women. Since the main activity is around savings-credit and income generation, it has managed to draw thousands of women as members in every state. Karnataka is no different. Two main programmes initiated by the state are the Strishakti and Swashakti which are result and target oriented and emphasise economic empowerment of women as their main objective. This is unlike Mahila Samakhya, an innovative programme of the Ministry of Education that stresses education in a broad sense of the term for social empowerment and is process oriented.

We were informed that when the government programmes function alongside MS-K programmes, there is a problem, as Strishakti/Swashakti programmes do not allow its members to become members of other organisations. By implication, Strishakti precludes women from MS-K joining them if they continue to be MS-K members. This has created a division within the village and thwarted individual freedom of women to be members of multiple organisations according to their needs and interests.

It has to be noted how such economic activity oriented programmes have managed to fragment existing Sanghas in groups of 20 or less – and have created an environment that is hostile for Sanghas that are evolved around the concept of total empowerment. We were informed that MS-K initiated Sanghas that had close to 50 members, over-night split up into smaller groups to take money from these economic programmes – thereby drastically reducing their political power. MS-K is trying to find ways to keep all the MS-K initiated Sanghas together through one common monthly meeting at the least – but it is not clear how such attempts will be able to surmount the compartmentalisation and the unhealthy competition that has already set in some of the sub-groups.

We need to examine the framework of economic programmes such as Strishakti and Swashakti cautiously and thoroughly. They may be indicative of two well-meaning government departments and their programmes working at cross purposes with each other. They may also be part of an overall strategy to undermine the political strength and purpose of women's Sanghas and Movements.

Recommendations:

1. Rights language and Rights framework have to become an integral part of MS-K's programme articulation. The rights framework helps women to move and access new socio political worlds. It will also broaden their actions to not only fight for entitlements and provisions, but also to realise all their rights – including their right to participate in all arenas of their lives not only as 'women' but also as 'persons' and as citizens.
2. A critical review of the impact of programmes such as the Stri Shakti on women's Sanghas and on attempts to start women's Sanghas built on social, economic and political empowerment of women has to be carried out.
3. It is recommended that the categorising Sanghas as Strong, Medium and Weak be altered for a system that allows for richer, nuanced and elaborate method for

monitoring and evaluating Sanghas. For example, a suggestion is to develop a ranking method on a continuous scale of 1 to 10 for a Sangha – which takes into account a set of indicators – both qualitative and quantitative. These should be developed in consultation with the Sangha members. They may re-visited and reviewed to take on board the new targets set by the Sangha for itself. The advantage of this method would be yearly monitoring and would enable better planning for Sanghas that score less. This needs to be developed with experts who understand the philosophy and work of Mahila Samakhya. These criteria can be a very useful tool for planning, monitoring and to document the work of the Sanghas, the Sahayogini's and the Cluster Resource Persons.

4. During the discussions, sometimes women referred to themselves as 'illiterate and ignorant'. It is important to appreciate and value women for the knowledge and skills they already possess and the work they do and to create an environment where their self-worth is enhanced.
5. Within the context of MS wanting to encourage younger women into its fold, we have to showcase achievements, and importance of the empowerment process with examples of tangible improvements and changes in women's lives.
6. A strategising process to assist children and adolescents to form Kishori Sanghas has to be set in motion.
7. We appreciate the fact the gender is a cross cutting issue and is part of every Subject Committee. However we suggest the setting up of a Gender Committee to ensure that the core focus of MS is preserved and not let the other issues overshadow the key programme concerns/process.
8. In order to further enhance the political presence of the Sangha members, the Panchayat elections may be a very good opening. Detailed plans have to be developed to work on the criteria for choosing Sangha's candidates, to build in accountability for the candidate and to support her during and after the elections.
9. It is likely that the political parties will try to co-opt the Sanghas in order to achieve political success. The Sanghas will have to equip themselves to recognise such moves and to counter them effectively.
10. The compulsion on women to attend meetings is at cross-purposes to the fundamental assumption that women form Sanghas to fulfil their own requirements. This will have to be reviewed.
11. As it has been done in Bellary, there is a need to ensure that the most marginalised groups of women are first strengthened before they consider the option of opening up their membership for other groups of women to form mixed group Sanghas.
12. Many of the Sanghas are ready to take the next step – to gain access into decision-making structures at the local level. Strategies to enable this need to be developed.

At Federation level

The Taluka level Federations of Sanghas have been formed in 33 Talukas of the 9 MS-K districts.

MS-K facilitated Federations are fairly new in some Talukas, where they were constituted during the past six months and in others, they have been active over a longer period.

Through the Federations, women have gained recognition at the Taluka level. They have been able to learn from the experiences of other Sanghas and to enhance their skill and knowledge base. They have increased access to Taluka level offices and officials. The women travel to the Taluk Head Quarters for the Federation meetings and this mobility has expanded their horizons.

In Indi taluk of Bijapur, when women were asked what they understand about the Federation and the linkages to the Sanghas, they said, "It is a place (forum) for identifying issues at the village level and addressing it at the Taluk Level". In this spirit, they have successfully reoriented the Anthodaya scheme by rectifying the list of beneficiaries. In order to achieve this, they contacted the *Tahsildar* and reworked the list of beneficiaries who deserve the subsidized grains. They also streamlined the process of distribution thereby ensuring both transparency and accountability of the scheme to the poorest of the poor within the Taluka. The 'status' they derive from the reputation of Mahila Samkahya in the district, stood them in good stead and the *Tahsildar* extended his full cooperation to them.

The membership of the Federation is left to the individual choice of the Sangha women. Those who can pay for the membership become a member and it is an **individual and NOT the Sangha that can become a member of the Federation**. This reflects an organisational structure of a Trade Union that enlists individual workers. The idea is to facilitate women to shed their individual Sangha identity and merge with the identity of a larger organisational structure, the Federation, in order to grow into a women's Movement.

While this can be a positive step, the issue of 'choice' leaves some questions unanswered as to what happens if many women from the Sangha decide not to be a part of the Federation and continue as members at the village level. The evaluation team could not probe whether this is happening, but it is a strong possibility and contradicts the vision envisaged for forming the Federation.

The 'general body' of the Federation elects an Executive Committee where older women are encouraged because of the inability of younger women (with children) to cope with time required for the EC activities at the Federation. A Core Team is also set up – to guide the implementation. The Core Team consists of members who are senior and who have taken on leadership roles and responsibilities in the Sanghas.

The term of the EC is only 1 year as of now. The major reason stated for keeping the EC's term short is to allow other women to take on leadership roles and to prevent some women from assuming hierarchical and powerful leadership positions. While this is a genuine

concern, the short EC term can become counterproductive from the point of view of the growth of the Federation as an organisation.

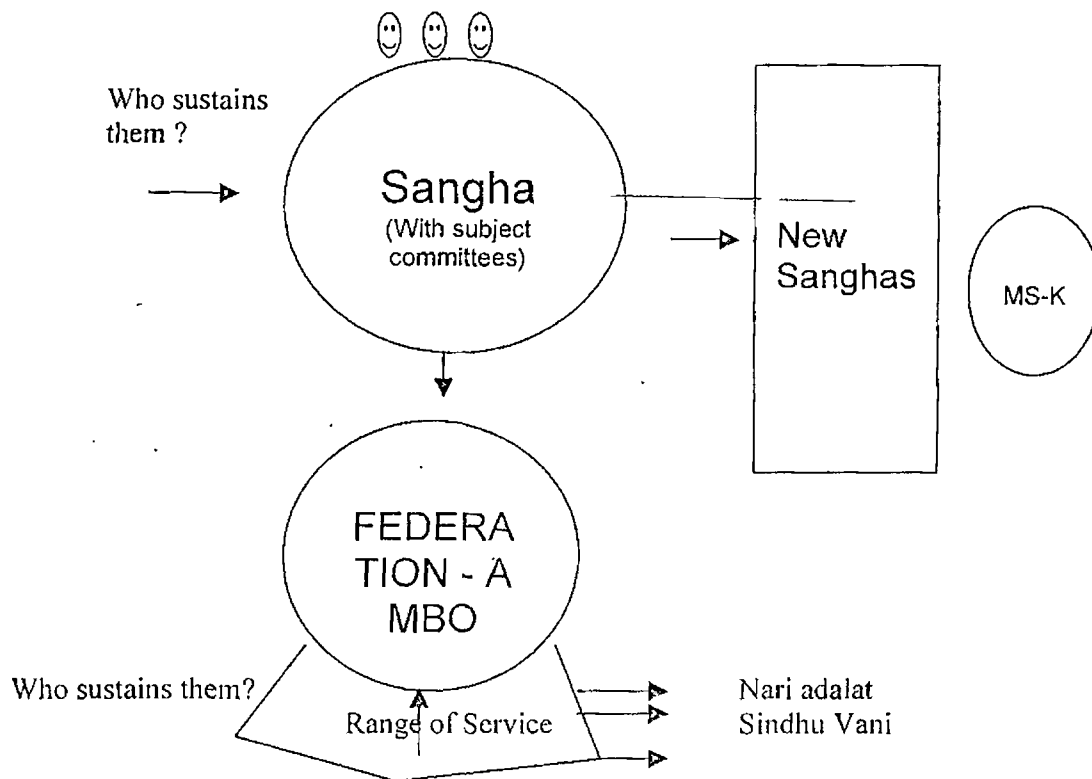
Women who gain leadership skills in the EC over the year have to leave and make way for others to step in within a year. This has negative implications for long-term functioning of the Federation as new members have to start afresh and that is a drawback for programmatic continuity. For example, EC members work closely with Taluka government officials like the Police and *Tahsildars* and learn how to interact and influence the system. After a year, this gets disrupted. The relationship has to be renewed every year by the new members.

A strategy developed by MS-K to address this is the setting up of the Core Team. While the term of the Executive Committee is presently one year, the Core Team has a three-year tenure so as to ensure continuity in the planning and programmes. However, during the field visits and the discussions, many of the Sahayoginis and the District Coordinators expressed serious concern about the one year term of the EC as they felt it was not adequate for the Federations to achieve results that were concrete, tangible and noticeable.

It is important to note that women who are older, and who have no stigma attached to travelling frequently have most often become members of the EC. (There are exceptions to this and Bellary District is one such.) At present, this may even be viewed as strategically viable in the interface with govt/state including the police and the community at large because of the respect and distinction that age can bestow on the older women. As a long-term strategy, it needs to be reviewed as certain gender norms ('good and chaste women do not occupy public spaces') associated with public life of women in the reproductive age group need to be challenged.

If Sanghas are federating, we envisage that

1. Women will be members of Sanghas
2. Sangha will be members of Federation
3. Together they could be built to be Mass Based Organisation (MBO) for women's voice/concerns.
4. These Federations provide myriad services for women being a platform/springboard for social entrepreneurship. This would need MS philosophy to build them simultaneously building mechanism to make them self sustaining at a faster pace, but not moving out completely and stronger networks built.
5. The key area for strategising would be to identify and build up structures and processes that would sustain these – in terms of capacity building as well as resource management.



Federations have been constituted as a step towards self-reliance for the MS programme as outlined in the 10th plan period on the one hand and on the other to make the MS movement stronger and provide greater strength and visibility.

It is understandable that the formation of Federations is an important part of the Exit strategy of the MS-K and the Federations can develop into a mass movement. (Please refer to the section on 'Expansion' for more reflections on this issue). The question that arises is, are all Federations ready to take on the responsibilities envisaged for them in the 10th Plan? The Federations in Bijapur and Bellary, for example, are not at a stage to function autonomously and have to grow significantly before they can so.

During our discussions with the Federation members, we noticed the lack of vision at the level of the Federations regarding the larger role of the Federation beyond addressing issues that are of immediate concern to them. In the life-line of MS-K, Federations are a recent addition and will need time to evolve their vision collectively. However we are deeply concerned that the pressure on Federations to become self-sufficient in a short duration may come in the way of providing them the space and time required to evolve their own vision and to internalise the concept of the Federation.

One of our observations was that the Sangha members had difficulties conveying the different structures between the Sangha and the Federation. Confusions do occur when institutional systems and structures are re-organised at different levels. Even EC Members of one Taluka were confused about the relationship between their Sangha and their Federation and the structures that were in place at the Taluka level. This is also strongly indicative of the lack of ability to conceptualise different tiers of structures as well as the genuine confusion when simultaneously many organisational structures coexist. Memory aids for orientation and training along with constant reiteration could be the solution.

As a part of MS-K programme, several programmes have been initiated and the Federations are expected to be totally in charge of some of them, such as the Nari Adalat, the CMP and the Sindhu Vani. (Please see later sections for details related to these programmes). It is clear that at present, the Federations are not equipped to carry out these programmes. In the future, in order to take the full responsibility for these programmes, they will have to acquire high skills and knowledge related to documentation, reporting, accounting, proposal writing etc which may not be the key areas of their concern.

This brings us to the critical area of ensuring that the plans and programmes of the Sanghas are developed around the issues raised by the women – with their concerns right in centre. State determined programmes should not divert the Sanghas from these core issues.

One of the key areas of concern of the District Coordinators was that since the members of the EC have a high level of visibility and their leadership skills need to be developed for the tasks at hand, they might become the focus of the programme instead of the development of collective strengths of members. They also notice a tendency among a few EC members to become authoritarian and de-facto power centres.

Recommendations:

1. It is clear that the term of the Executive Committee should be more than 1 year. We suggest that it could be 2 or 3 years and should be reviewed based on the experience of the existing Federations.
2. For the ECs of the Federations to be able to function autonomously, MS-K should provide them a very strong support for 5 years, especially in areas such as documentation, capacity building and advocacy. A plan to phase out this support should be developed in consultations with the Federations.
3. Federations can provide many services to women as they develop into a mass organisation. For this, it is very important to visualise and develop structures that are able to assist them in the long run.
4. Federations have enormous potential to inform and influence the Gram Panchayats and the Taluka Panchayats. They have to develop specific strategies to realise this.
5. To deal with the confusions related to different organisational components and memberships at different levels, a mapping exercise for familiarising women is recommended. Training tools or memory aids to indicate the different levels of organisational structure will be useful.

6. Issues of democratic functioning and participatory leadership have to be consciously factored into the capacity building programmes and the day-to-day functioning of the Federations.
7. At present, the *Maha Sanchi* (Resource mobilisation by the Federations) concept is being formulated. A strong emphasis has to be given to not only develop self-sufficiency, but also good resource management. Successful economic programmes of organisations such as Agrammce and Mahila Milan may provide insights in this matter.
8. Efforts should be made to develop the social entrepreneurship of the EC members of the Federations and Sanghas so that they are equipped to provide supportive facilities to their members as appropriate.

III.2 Expansion & Reach:

At the outset it must be noted that the present coverage of MS-K field presence is significant. The Santhwana and Nari Adalat programmes have also increased the reach of the programme because non-Sangha women also use these services. Sindhuvani is ready to take off in a few weeks time and will also help increase reach. The MS-K is in contact with a large number of Kishoris and through the Kishori Sanghas, they can further expand their reach. In Bellary, the CHARCA programme has assisted MS-K to widen its scope to include all the members of the community.

The Sanghas have been very successful in negotiating for more space for women within the family and the village. 'Sanghas' of women has been MS's strategy to provide an opportunity for women to grow from strength to strength. Time has shown that this strategy is sustainable and the potential seen therein realised.

Process and quality are the strengths of MS. Its policy always emphasised on the qualitative aspects rather than quantitative and over the years they have become the key words of the MS strategy. Any expansion plan has to consider these issues as fundamental. However, the emphasis of the 10th plan to reach targets seems to create a high level of pressure and that is undermining processes and emphasis on quality.

One of the important aspects of the 10th plan has been the roll-back from the direct programme implementation. In some Sanghas there is the required level of preparedness for this. But not all Sanghas are able to keep pace since the roll back. They say, "We are ready for expansion. But don't leave us – stay behind us and support us".

One of the structural changes involved is that in the older areas, the Cluster Resource Persons will over-see 25 villages instead of 10. Due to this, in some areas we perceived a sense of insecurity at the Sangha level. Initially when the programme started, the Sahayoginis were mobilisers who provided issue based knowledge inputs from a gender perspective. Over the years, the Sahyoginis have enlarged their role and today act as facilitators. So, the members of the Sangha are concerned about having less contact with them than before.

The roll back and the process of inducting younger, literate women are also linked. In some Sanghas since none of the members are literate, they require support in areas related

to bookkeeping and documentation and are dependent on the Sahayoginis. This comes in the way of their totally autonomy even though they are vibrant and experienced.

In the new expansion strategy, the old Sanghas have to get federated now. The Sahyoginis are also not very receptive to this idea. There is also a sense of anxiety and concern in the Sanghas regarding this as it is not clear to them what the Federation actually entails.

Though the Sanghas have expanded horizontally and increased their activities, they have not yet been able to achieve the critical mass that would be required to create a social transformation in the villages concerned. Federating old Sanghas at one level is an important step forward in this direction. Through the Federation, the Sanghas will get propelled into public life and become civil society institutions with possibilities to accrue, secure political participation of women, responding collectively to structural violence, and changing norms in public and private arenas.

The 10th plan is very ambitious in its vision and role for the Federations. In Karnataka, structurally the Federations are in place. The expansion – and exit strategy presently depends on the assumption that the Federations will be able to take off on their own. But they are very new structures still grappling with their multiplicity of tasks. At present Federations are unable to perceive organisational and geographical expansion and their implications on their work.

Some Federations are too young to become autonomous. For example, in Bijapur district, the Federations are just a few months old and they are still grappling with their new responsibilities. The 10th plan is very unrealistic in expecting a uniform trajectory of phasing out of the Sanghas even in areas where they are active for at least 10 years.

There are also anxieties about how the EC of the Federation will mobilise new Sanghas and support the old Sanghas without additional resource and financial support. It should be borne in mind that the present expectations of EC members of the Federations require them to devote at least 20 working days in a month to fulfil all their responsibilities. The opportunity costs of this for wage working EC members are enormous. Without monetary compensation they will not be able to sustain their work. This approach may also result in a compromise of quality, process, time and content for women in new Sanghas.

The crucial question that needs to be answered is should the withdrawal of MS and the transition into Federations happen at the same time? If not, what is the appropriate time lag to ensure a smooth transition?

The idea of the six Subject committees, though meaningful in the long term, has led to a sense of uniformity in the short term, diverting from a purely need-based approach. For example, some villages are not ready for Self Reliance at the moment.

Every Sangha has its own strengths; some have excelled in education, some in awareness building and others in health initiatives. Earlier each Sangha took up issues based on the local needs of the village and formulated their programmes and strategies around these.

Women have, in countless ways, conveyed their growing faith in themselves and in their widening worlds as a result of MS-K's approach. Their expressions range from lifting to stark, from dry to mushy sentimental - thus energising new thoughts and processes for them to explore, learn and grow. Both their personhood and their worlds have matured/evolved and grown for themselves first. This has led them to decide and evolve what paths they need to take.

In the past, Sangha women's empowering processes were not carried out with a goal of equipping them to build more Sanghas in future. Those inputs were given largely to Sahayoginis. In the new plan, the Sahayoginis are expected to play a supervisory role, while the Sangha women are expected to go to new areas and to set up and support the new Sanghas. It is also not clear if the Sangha women themselves feel the need to give their time and energies to set up new Sanghas. If not the new imposition will be a dilution/a contradiction in the basic philosophy of MS.

If the Sangha members identify the need to extend support to form new Sanghas, they can and will support MS to do so, but they should not be expected to meet the State targets.

Recommendations:

1. Right now the membership size of the Sanghas are being limited to less than 20 due to the framework set by the micro-finance programmes. In a single village it is not uncommon to find more than one MS-K facilitated Sangha with less than 20 members each. This is hampering their progress towards forming a women led movement that is socially and politically empowered. Strategies should be developed to ensure that the members of the MS-K facilitated Sanghas work collectively and do not get fragmented.
2. One of the core groups/committees of Sangha/Federation should be of women who will uphold and safeguard the principles of MS. It should ensure that the real concerns of the Sangha women are kept central to all their activities.
3. Strategies are required to increase the membership of younger women in the Sanghas.
4. It is strongly recommended that the two ministries – Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Welfare – discuss the issue of 'membership' exclusivity and change the rules for membership to Strishakti and Swashakti. Basically, any woman should be allowed to be a member of as many organisations as she wishes, without having to deal with bureaucratic rules and barriers for her engagement with organisations and institutions.
5. There is need for more autonomy at the District level – programmatically and administratively to enable effective expansion. This is necessary to ensure that individual characteristics are retained and local needs are reflected in the programmes. This will counter the tendency to follow a uniform programme that is centralised.
6. One of the concerns from the Districts units was that there were times when the District plans were altered/changed if the State or the EC did not approve of them. The foundation for Mahila Samakhya programmes lies in the village Sanghas and the Talukas and the districts coordinate that. When a need-based plan is made at the village, Taluka and district level, efforts must be to make minimum changes to

- such plans, unless it contradicts the philosophy and objectives of the Mahila Samakhya programme.
7. Trained and committed staff of MS-K has to be retained and strengthened to work in new and changing field realities.
 8. A very detailed review has to be carried to evaluate the preparedness of the Federations for the roll back and to arrive at a realistic timeframe for the exit strategy.
 9. There is a need for planning and a better focus on the nature and quality of programmes to enable the formation of Kishori Sanghas.
 10. MS-K should continue to be aware that while implementing the concept of mixed Sanghas, the members of the more marginalised groups need to be strengthened before upper caste/class women become part of the Sanghas
 11. Monetary compensation to the EC members of the Federations who have to work at least for 21 days a month (if not more) for realising the vision of the Federations and to give up their breadwinning activities for the purpose should be considered.
 12. With the increase in the levels of organisation, the programmes are likely to get increasingly hierarchical. Efforts to develop appropriate mechanisms to bridge gaps and create systems and structures that allow decentralisation of decision-making and responsibilities would be useful.
 13. MS needs to strengthen networking efforts with other organisations, both at the district levels and extend these links and facilitate a long term, continuous, coherent and effective collaboration.
 14. With increased networking with NGOs at different levels (local, state and national). MS can actively translate its field level presence, insights, and understanding of poor rural women to impact on policy discourse at all levels. The resource centres can become active advocacy support centres.
 15. In Bellary district, the entry of MS-K was also linked to the micro planning programme of the District Primary Education Programme. The MS-K facilitated active participation of women in the micro-planning programme and in that process began with a clear identification of critical issues. This was an effective 'entry' strategy. Such strategies have to be developed for all the new programme areas.
 16. At present baseline surveys are being conducted to identify the key concerns of women and children. The results of the survey are awaited. Based on the results, the most appropriate entry strategy has to be developed.
 17. MS-K is a large programme and right now its human resources are being stretched beyond staff capacities. This will lead to counterproductive outcomes as multiple tasking expected of staff reduces their competency over a period of time. There is a need to look into human resource potentials and problems within the MSK. Support may be sought externally from persons or organisations that understand the philosophy and scope of MS-K to design appropriate non-hierarchical systems and structures.
 18. The communication and monitoring systems need to be streamlined in tandem with the above point.
 19. The EC members and the Federations need to be facilitated to arrive at a vision of what the federation can evolve into through participatory processes. Until these processes take place, it will be tantamount to abandonment if federations are

expected to function on their own. Therefore at least a period of five years from now, which might go beyond the 10th plan period, needs to be envisaged and implemented. There have to be clear growth phases marked, with the last stage being that of handing over and autonomy.

20. A mapping of Sanghas in different Talukas, and concurrent mapping of Federations (old, new) and their capacities need to be assessed before phasing out. Sahayogini should continue to play a role with the Federation rather phasing out completely.

III.3 Resource Centers

Over the years, the work experience of MS and its interactions with the Sanghas have created a large body of knowledge, skills and experience in the area of gender. There is a felt need to establish a resource centre to pool together a variety of communication material, training modules, newsletters, posters, reports and audiovisuals that capture these and the latest thinking in the area of gender around the world. Such materials should be available for use to develop a cadre of resource persons who can provide inputs on gender issues to Sanghas, subject committees, Federations and also to the MS teams.

The MS experience can also be shared to enhance the learning of other organisations and people's efforts towards women's empowerment. Such a resource base, along with competent resource persons would also be of immense help to various other organisations, both governmental and non-governmental from time to time. We visualise a Gender Resource Centre which may facilitate the process of mainstreaming gender initiatives in various interventions of different organisations and programmes.

This centre may cater to the needs of MS-K and other organisations to develop the capacities and perspectives on women's issues. It can aid planning, facilitation, management and capacity building of MS programmes across the country.

This can also become a component of the outreach strategy for mainstreaming MS philosophy. The centre may also lobby for policy interventions for women and development issues. We also hope that this resource centre would act as a nodal agency for the exchange of ideas and material throughout the different MS programmes in the country. It could work closely with the National Resource Centre. Such collaborations would also make the Resource Centre cost effective.

Recommendations:

1. The Resource Centre should provide facilitate the women to develop the Vision for their Sanghas, Subject Committees, Federations and Movement.

2. At the district level, the District Resource Centre should take the responsibilities of designing and conducting the training programmes.
3. The responsibility of networking and advocacy should lie with the Resource Centre.
4. MS-K and other state programmes already have an impressive collection of training materials and studies. These may be shared much more systematically among each other and with other organisations that seek such materials.
5. Plans may be drawn up to develop additional resources and materials to aid the capacity building. The materials being developed by the Bellary District regarding HIV have a lot of potential in this regard.

III.4 Inter-linkages / convergence with National/State level programmes & organisations

The expansion of MS-K has also been determined by the NPGEL, the CMP and the CHARCA programmes. The Bellary team felt that their decision to implement the CHARCA programme in their district was a very sound one, as HIV is an area of serious concern for the Sangha women. There is an acutely felt need to address the issue in a broad based strategy that involves men and youth. Hence the district programme has seized the opportunities and resources provided by the CHARCA programme and the implementation strategy is being developed with vigour.

The Deputy Director of Public Instruction (DDPI), Gulberga felt that as far as the NPGEL was concerned, the MS had yet to prove itself because the programme has commenced recently. They were willing to provide support to MS since both NPGEL and MS were concerned with women. He was also keen to see MS focus on both girls and boys. In fact he felt there was a need to concentrate more on getting boys to school since the girls can easily be brought into schools.

The MS-K was initially expected to take on the NPGEL in 78 clusters. Finally after assessing the field realities, they decided to work in 21 clusters where they already have a presence. The Education Department expressed disappointment about this reduced coverage. However, when the reason for this was explained, they readily accepted them. This however clearly points out to the increased expectation from the MS programme and its ability to integrate gender interests in other development programmes.

Furthermore, as the underlying objective of MS was social empowerment that entailed 'preparing' the ground for girls' education and enrolling girls in the school, MS's involvement in NPEGEL and KGBV are likely to divert energies from this valuable process towards 'administration', 'infrastructure creation' in terms of overseeing construction and so on.

While there have been significant strides in recognising the need to focus on the formal education for girls, many of these programmes view education in a highly stereotypical fashion. There is hardly any effort to address the structural factors that impede girls' education or to change the approach of education to be meaningful to the lives of the children.

The SPD pointed out that the learning from the CMP programme has been carried to the Gender and Health Equity programme – and is also reflected in the CHARCA. She mentioned that the UNICEF programme officer has stated that they will adopt the strategies adopted in CMP in all their projects. This way the methodology, strategies and philosophy of MS-K has spread across MS districts and outside MS areas as well. The NPEGEL programme also hopes to adopt some of the successful field strategies used in MS-K.

This in the long run is likely to give rise to uniformity in approach and method of implementation. While positive examples and learning should benefit all the programmes, there is need for caution to ensure that either in the short-term or long term this does not lead to uniform strategies that are far removed from the field requirements.

In our discussions with the State Programme Director of the Sarva Shikshya Abhiyan and the State Education Secretary, it was clear that there is a strong expectation that MS takes on more of their programmes (NPEGEL and KGBV). However, they also opined that MS should define its own priorities with a greater clarity and define the scope of its involvement in these external projects.

One of the important issues raised by the Mysore District Programme is that as the members of the Sanghas have established their ability to assess the quality of governmental programmes and critique them when the situation demands it, there are deliberate efforts by the local government to keep them out of the local committees.

The evaluation team held discussions with programme consultants and media persons who have been closely involved in reviewing certain aspects of the MS-K programmes and developing media materials such as the audio series – *Angaladinda aakashakke* (from the courtyard to the skies) for the MS-K. They found working with MS-K very inspiring and were highly appreciative of the remarkable achievements of MS-K in the field, the high level of staff commitment and the efficient logistical support they received in all stages of their project.

Recommendations:

1. Sustainability issues of programmes such as the NPEGEL should be addressed. Assessment is required to review how these programmes contribute to the MS philosophy and to examine the future direction of these programmes.
2. The Sanghas, in all the districts have been able to effectively access a large number of facilities and services due to them. They are now ready to move on to the stage of influencing the nature and quality of those services. This should be facilitated.
3. The capacity building programmes of the Sanghas could include inputs on how to interface with government departments in a critical manner, yet without getting excluded from public decision-making arenas.
4. Creating accountability of the State and local governments to the people of the villages and the Sanghas should continue to figure high on the agenda of the Sanghas.

5. It is observed that MS-K, especially the State and the District offices, could play a pro-active role in developing local and state level networks with other NGOs and organisations. This would also enable MS-K to have a stronger presence at policy debates and discourses.

III.5 Monitoring, Reporting and Documentation

The MS-K has a well-established system of monitoring – that starts at the field level, going right up to the State Office. The records of the staff meetings are well minuted and were available for review. The documents in Bellary included important decisions and detailed reports of important events and training programmes. In all the Districts and in the State level, the annual reports were well-prepared and included case studies and reflect the field realities well. However, at present there is an increasing emphasis on quantitative monitoring – one of the implications of taking on departmental programmes and the ‘target’ setting framework of the 10th plan.

MS-K has also initiated several programme reviews on topics such as the ‘Federations’, ‘Home and the World’, and ‘the Sangha Mane’ that have been used extensively at the field level. The District Coordinators unanimously felt that such studies were very useful and contribute directly to their planning and programming exercises. These studies have also contributed to a better understanding of the macro issues and for strategising at the state level. In some areas, the District offices have initiated their own innovative studies to gain a better understanding of their field realities – the random survey initiated by the Bagalkote District is one such.

However, within the Sanghas, as pointed by the team members of MS-K in its internal reviews, the documentation abilities of the Sanghas and Federations are inadequate. In some areas, documentation of the Sangha meetings not up-to-date as women depend on their husbands, sons or an outsider to assist with documentation. Illiteracy still remains a major barrier in achieving certain organisational maturity. In Bellary, the records and documents were well organised and up-to-date with the assistance offered by the Sahayoginis.

In Bijapur, almost all Sanghas depended on either the sahayoginis or in her absence, some literate young person to document meetings. At times, the documentation was done through recall in retrospective way. The registers were not well maintained in some areas even though meetings were fairly regular.

In Gulbarga we saw none of the women who conducted the meetings make any notes. Though the women of the Sangha were conducting the meeting, it was the Sahayoginis who noted the minutes. In Kalanur village in the meeting of the Sangha there were two boys from the village who noted down the minutes since all the women were illiterate. Most of the Sangha women thought it was sufficient to sign their name. However they were very keen to educate their daughters and see to it that they were sufficiently literate.

The present age profile of the Sangha members, with a rather greying population leaves out the possibility of making these women fully literate – due to lack of time, multiple

burdens and so on. It is recommended that every Sangha identifies young women from the village who are literate and who can play this role.

Recommendations:

1. The annual reports could include a section on lessons learnt and challenges met so that they can also be used effectively as resource materials.
2. There is a need to develop – documentation strategies, including literacy skills to assist Sangha and Federation women do their documentation. Young girls from the Sangha or from the Kishori Sanghas may be enlisted to help the Sangha and trained to carry out documentation.
3. Review studies on topics that are relevant should continue to be carried out and used effectively.
4. There is a need to re-establish emphasis on qualitative indicators and to develop such indicators for the more recently developed programmes.

III.6 Inputs/strategies at field level for information dissemination, knowledge building, skill development, and creation of alternatives for women/girls empowerment and learning

Capacity building is undoubtedly an area of expertise in MS-K. The training materials reviewed by the team are very innovative, knowledgeable and developed with a very good understanding of local culture and sensibilities. The training materials are highly gender sensitive and have been designed to ensure that those who are not comfortable with the written word are not disadvantaged in the training sessions. The manuals include collection of appropriate songs and role-plays, many of them developed by the Sahayoginis. One such is a song that explains how an FIR has to be filed in the police station!

The processes of developing these training are highly participatory. Teams are formed with representatives from various districts to develop the outline. If required, people with expertise in training are invited to facilitate the process, but the actual development of the materials is done by the MS-K team. The draft manual is pilot tested in all the areas before the final version is prepared. Each of the manuals contains session plans that provide clear guidelines for training and are excellent reference materials.

The book 'Sothu geddavaru' (Those who lost, yet won) documents a unique capacity building exercise. In the previous Panchayat elections, a large number of Sangha members who contested in Bellary lost. Soon all the candidates were invited to a training programme where their efforts were celebrated and lessons learnt were discussed and internalised. In the process, an event that may have demoralised the Sangha members was converted into a collective learning exercise that was highly empowering and joyful.

These training manuals also include many case studies and examples and hence are a very sophisticated form of programme documentation as well.

One of the concerns regarding the training manuals expressed by the District Coordinators is that in areas where they have several years of presence, the existing training manuals are no longer adequate. Hence there is a need for manuals that deal with the next level of information.

During the course of the Evaluation, we observed several training programmes.

In Bijapur, MS-K is collaborating with the regional office of the Singamma Sreenivasan Foundation (SSF), in the networking and capacity building of Elected Women Representatives (EWR) in the district. This unique initiative is linked to other districts and States in South India. In Bijapur, women who wish to stand for elections and are MS members are also encouraged to join to prepare themselves as leaders of the grama panchayat. On observation at a meeting held in district headquarters, there were at least 100 women attending the one-day capacity building workshop. It was a meeting point for sharing experiences of EWRs with women from MS and others, desirous of being one. The meeting had facilitators from SSF and MS-K, Bijapur and issues of sustainability, confidence-building measures of EWR to negotiate the political system were discussed.

In 1998 when the MS programme in Gulberga noticed that a large number of women were receiving training, but none of them were emerging as leaders, they once again strengthened the Subject Committees and divided responsibilities clearly. Also interlinkages between the committees were clearly established.

For example, in many of the training programmes related to health there is an attempt to establish a linkage between the Sangha, community and the government in order to create a group that can function as a pressure group and obtain health services. One of the successful training programmes has been related to traditional plant based remedies. This has created a group that can provide basic health care to the poor women who do not have any access to the Government run primary health care system. It has also empowered women by recognising their traditional knowledge building their confidence to prepare and dispense medicines from medicinal plants.

The Purusha Sabha where trainings are conducted for the husbands/fathers/siblings of the Sangha members is a much-needed step towards addressing gender gap. The Sangha women have moved ahead in their sense of entitlements, but not their husbands or male members of their families with whom they have to deal with every day. In Bijapur, Purusha Sabhas are convened to address this lacuna. Some of the issues taken up are alcoholism among men and violence against women, including domestic violence. Some strategies have led to men 'reforming' themselves. An interesting exercise for men was to encourage them to save the money they otherwise would have spent drinking in a *hundi* (a pot used as a bank). It had a positive impact on some of the men when they realised how much money they spent on liquor.

In Bellary, four training sessions were observed. Two of them were conducted by the Cluster Resource Persons for members of the Subject Committees, one related to reproductive health and another related to domestic violence. The sessions were carried out efficiently and effortlessly. Information was provided through role-plays, charts and

narratives. Intense discussions were interspersed with light-hearted banter and the women were engrossed and attentive during the entire period.

The other two sessions were for men. One of them was to introduce the participants to 'gender' and the other on HIV. A very senior team that included the District Coordinator handled the training session on gender. It was an example of an excellent capacity building exercise. However a few new members handled the training on HIV and it required many improvements. So one of the immediate challenges for the CHARCA team is to equip itself with a good capacity building team and the District office informed us that this process is underway.

The District teams are concerned about the difficulties they are facing to enable Sangha members to become literate. Understandably, due to the multiple burdens women bear as workers, wives, mothers and care-givers/nurturers at home and the struggle for making a living, they have little time or energy for literacy classes. The members see their 'achievement' in literacy in being able to 'sign' with proper signatures. Most Sangha members are able to sign their names and have a sense of pride vis-à-vis their husbands on that score who are unable to sign yet. This achievement is laudable, but literacy skills need to be enhanced on an incremental basis.

Subject committees have frequent meetings during which their training programmes are carried out. The number of women at such meetings goes up to 200 and is likely to rise. The implications of such large numbers in terms of effectiveness of training programmes needs to be looked into.

The members of the Subject Committee who receive the training are expected to take back their learning to the other Sangha members in the village. Whether the training provided to Subject committee members is adequate on the one hand and on other, to what extent they are enabled to transmit knowledge back to the Sanghas are areas of concern. The District Coordinators share this concern.

Another crucial area is the capacity building of the field level workers. They need to be constantly updated on analyses, social, development and rights discourses at various levels and its impact on local initiatives, livelihoods, etc. An enhanced understanding of the interlinkages between various issues concomitantly with networking at district, state and national levels will help them to formulate effective field level advocacy strategies, campaigns etc.

Recommendations:

1. It is suggested that focused planning is required at the district level to develop a strategy for coordination and training of the Subject committees. There is a need to leverage and optimise the efforts put in at all levels, without duplication.
2. Some of the senior staff members felt that they require additional inputs and capacity building to enhance their knowledge and skill base. With this they feel that they can contribute more to the programmes.

3. The new staff members too expressed need for specialised inputs. These requests have to be reviewed against job requirements and met accordingly.
4. There is a need to develop next level training manuals for the use of older MS-K areas.
5. Training materials for facilitating Kishori Sanghas have to be developed. These should also include materials on organisational development, social justice and democratic leadership.
6. In the absence of literacy, developing CDs as an interactive learning tool can be a very powerful educational medium. A project to enable this is underway. This needs to be closely monitored and evaluated for impact assessment.
7. Accent should also be on audio visual aids along with written manuals. Use of community broadcast and/or AIR can create materials that may be used in Sangha meetings.
8. More review studies may be carried out on appropriate subjects. These studies/projects should definitely factor in a component of capacity building of the MS staff themselves.

III. 7 Effectiveness and impact of alternative structures such as Nari Adalats, Mahila Shikshan Kendras, Health centers, kishori sanghas/ kendras

Mahila Shikshan Kendra

Mahila Shikshan Kendra is a special initiative of the Mahila Samkhya programme in backward regions where overall female literacy and education is low. It aims to provide educational opportunities for young girl children from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In Bijapur district, the only Mahila Shikshan Kendra, the focus is on dropouts of high school girl children. Here, in a 10 month specially designed course, residential facilities and training is provided to enable the girls complete their school education.

While following the general syllabus of the Karnataka board, MS Kendra attempts to encourage overall development of the girl-child through many extra-curricular activities like music, tailoring and crafts making. The attempt is extremely laudable as young girls from remote villages who would otherwise have no opportunity whatsoever for school education (and driven to marriage at an early age) are given a chance for education and literacy. MS Kendra, becomes one strategy for addressing the issue of child marriage in rural areas by keeping the girls in school and giving them a new perspective of life.

However, in our interactions with ex-students of MS Kendra it became clear that their new found literacy and education is not opening up avenues in terms of further education or new job opportunities. As the girls come from extremely deprived backgrounds, (wages being very low in this region), parents are unable to afford further education. Worse, the young girls are driven back to do hard waged work for a pittance (Rs.20 a day) due to poverty.

The education provided in MS Kendras, while sufficient as a first step is not geared to broadening the horizons of the young girls, nurture their aspirations and inculcate a social perspective of their lives.

In terms of the syllabus, there is no space for vocational training geared to needs to employment within the villages the girls come from nor special needs of girls' health and empowerment issues addressed in a consistent manner. The teachers are not trained in these issues, and due to low salaries (as compared to other government schools) the turn over can be high. The teacher's responsibility in MS Kendra is round the clock and hence needs high degree of commitment and motivation coupled with attractive salaries.

The girl children used to be given a stipend of Rs.100 per month, half of which was used as a deposit by the MS Kendras for their future studies and activities. This stipend though sanctioned, has been stopped for the Kendras.

Recommendations

1. A follow up strategy for girls passing out of the MS Kendra has to be developed to enquire how their educational and literacy skills can be put to use. One recommendation is to have a vocational training course for the girls, in areas that are viable occupations in the village. Technical training for simple electrician's job, computer skills for job-typing are some of the suggestions. There could be more based on a mapping exercise done within the district.
2. Coupled with above, vocational guidance to be given and opportunities for continuing higher education for the girls in other parts of the state with scholarship support from the state needs to be investigated. There are many scholarship schemes and residential training programmes for girl children from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds.
3. Special and new subjects like sexual and reproductive health and rights are important given the background of rising cases of HIV/AIDS in North Karnataka. While Bijapur district at present may not be a high prevalent state, neighbouring districts like Koppal are and given high migration due to drought, it assumes importance. However, teachers are not trained to deal with these sensitive issues and therefore, need to be trained.
4. Stipend of Rs.100 a month per girl child at the MS Kendras needs to be re-instituted.
5. Home science as a subject needs to be looked into. Instead, Social Science with subjects like "social analysis" – that help girls analyse their lives by locating themselves and their identities within their homes, their family, their community and the village will be more appropriate.
6. There is a pressing need for upgrading teachers' skills to deal with the special needs of the girls in the MS Kendras in the subjects mentioned above. Guest lecturers could also be employed for this.
7. Teachers salaries needs to be enhanced substantially on par with government schools taking into account the special training needs of the girl children and the extra hours of work.

8. As an initial step, five computers may be provided to MS Kendra for training girls in handling computers with both English and Kannada software. This could also help in using the educational CDs being prepared for Kishori Sanghas. The computers could be donated from head office (as Bangalore has many IT companies that willingly donate computers to NGOs), but care should be taken that they are in good condition and there is back up service in the district head office.

The Child Labour project

Children in the residential centers of the child labour programme of MS-K have unique needs. The Sahayoginis express difficulties in engaging their attention and making a significant contribution to their lives. They have to find imaginative ways to work with working children. The members of the MS-K also feel that the impact of these centers is weak. The bridge courses have not been effective as children are able to attend the centre only during summer months.

Recommendation:

1. The Child Labour Project in Gulberga has to be viewed holistically and a strategy has to be developed.
2. Assistance may be sought from organisations working on the issue of child labour to arrive at a strategy that not only addresses the immediate needs of the working children, but also their long-term requirements.
3. This strategy should also pay attention to the root causes of child labour.

Kishori Kalika Kendra

The Kishori Kalika Kendra in Bellary is an efficiently run centre providing bridge course education to young girls. During their nine-month stay at the Kendra, children try to catch up with the academic requirements commensurate with the class they are likely to get enrolled into on their return to their villages.

The children at the Kendra were very well settled and eager to share their thoughts. They appreciate the education, the affection and the appreciation they receive at the Kendra. They feel that now they have been able to overcome their difficulties in subjects such as English and math. They have very good line of communication with the senior staff members at the District office.

While the centre functions smoothly and is cost effective, there are concerns in the MS-K District office about the follow up required once the children return to their homes. Immediately after their return children are eager to continue their education and are also academically geared up to do so, but the problems at home and in the school system remain unattended and make it difficult for them to retain their enthusiasm. Many children also pointed out that the high schools are far away from their villages. A child said that the bus to and from the area where the high school is located comes only twice in the day - at 9 am and at 9 pm.

Most of the children prefer to stay on and continue at the centre even after the nine-month period. The programme cannot accommodate that. At present the thoughts in Bellary are to direct the children to residential hostels where they may study further.

Recommendation:

1. Kalika Kendra is a good short-term strategy. As in the case of Mahila Shikshana Kendras, unless a long-term strategy is worked out, they will not be able to fulfil the objective it sets out to meet.

Nari Adalat

Nari Adalat (NA) is a path breaking concept and strategy to bring social and gender justice for women, more often being a service – allowing access to people/persons who represent humane understanding of women's histories, lives and oppression. They aim to facilitate justice delivery since other known institutions of justice have failed the women - reasons for these failures being - access, cost (social & economic), and lack of faith in formal known institutions like courts, gram Panchayats and caste Panchayats.

The Nari Adalat in Gulberga has emerged as a strong voice of the community. The evaluation team witnessed the Nari Adalat there. On the same day, a large team of women from Koppal were also present to observe its functioning as they intend to start a Nari Adalat in their area. The Sahayoginis, the women Judges and the other members we spoke to were very positive about the Nari Adalat.

Minor family disputes are solved regularly in the Sangha itself and only complicated cases are brought to the Nari Adalat. A fee of Rs. 350 is collected per case. The judge of the Nari Adalat informed us that there is a moral pressure on the parties to abide by the judgement of the Nari Adalat. The Nari Adalats are neither counselling centres nor regular courts but the women present there believed it has more power and justice than the court. In contrast are the regular courts, which they felt were corrupt, unapproachable and delivered delayed justice, if at all.

Women refer to the Nari Adalat as a court where they get quick and inexpensive justice. They find processes in the Adalat much more patient and understanding as against the brutal treatment and corruption they face in the regular courts. The Adalats in different districts have tackled problems like bigamy, rape, abandonment of girls after marriage and domestic violence. They often provide practical and quick solutions. They also act as a deterrent and a pressure group in the community.

It must be noted that work such as Nari Adalat can be very self-satisfying, so may resist any review/reflection on the approach itself. Feedback often is 'emotive'. This work needs both the head and the heart to work simultaneously under challenging circumstances. It has the potential of creating hierarchies if special attention is not paid to foresee this possibility and work at mechanisms to avoid pitfalls.'

Today when the reach of the social services in general and in the rural areas in particular is limited, Nari Adalat and Sindhu Vani, in spite of their limited resources, are support

systems that are highly sought after. However, important questions that need to be asked within the context of Nari Adalats are: Are these alternate/parallel justice delivery mechanisms? If so what is their legitimacy? Where do they derive their legitimacy? What is the notion of justice that they operate from? Are they not vulnerable to questions of accountability? These questions/processes need to be initiated at the institutional level along with expert inputs.

Recommendations:

1. There is an important need to have clarity about the principles of Nari Adalat and its objectives. This should also lead to more clarity on its future direction.
2. The elements that will maintain quality and integrity of this service have to be enunciated and adhered to.
3. People involved in it should be able to work/address simultaneously at two levels – one the individual women’s needs and two, the systemic needs which include the family and Criminal Justice System/ Administration. Issues of sexuality, violence, man-women issues within the family – and equations within the homes need to be addressed.
4. NA is presently a socio-legal service, a little outside the rights discourse. The Jury system could be explored to draw/harness mechanisms and principles to suit our present environment nonetheless having the potential to work towards our vision of Social and Gender Justice.
5. Since it is positioned as an ‘Adalat’ it should also assist and facilitate women to access mainstream institution, if they so desire, as well as impel/convince the system to understand women’s histories and position of violation so as to lend itself to gender justice.
6. This effort needs to be strengthened by inputs on understanding of justice, law, procedures, literacy and documentation within its work. Women approach Nari Adalat with complex and multiple problems. They need to have a Resource bank to refer to.
7. Nari Adalat should have ongoing access to new knowledge, information and approaches to social problems.
8. The Nari Adalat Judge’s expectations, ideologies, beliefs have to be observed and mechanisms should be in place to ensure that justice is not coloured by those.
9. Linkages between Nari Adalat, Sindhu Vani and the Legal Committee have to be developed. Nari Adalat is a paid service, but Sindhuvani is not. This should be considered when linking up the two.
10. Sustainability of the Nari Adalat and Sindhu Vani are issues of concern. They have to be looked into.
11. Procedures at Nari Adalat have to be streamlined. Case presentation and discussions may be emotional and may also involve children. The protocols for questioning women and children have to be developed so as to ensure that the rights of the women and children are not violated.
12. Networking with similar grassroots/MBO and also at different levels of interventions may provide many insights.
13. MS-K should form linkages with mainstream legal institutions, services, debates and critiques and make efforts to improve them.

III. 8 Organisational Issues

The evaluation team found there is a very high level of commitment both at the state and the district level – both among the programme and administration teams. The scale of the programme is large and its programmes cover a wide range of issues in several geographical, socio-political milieus.

MS-K has 8 out of 9 District Programme Coordinator's positions filled as on date. All JRP positions are filled and CRP selection process has been completed. Accountants are present in all except the two new districts of Bagalkote and Chamarajanagar. SPO functionaries have also been identified and posted a few months ago.

The following committees are presently set up at MS-K to review administrative issues:

- Administration and finance subcommittee looked into fixation of honorarium. This committee includes DPCs, EC members, representative of finance dept of Government of Karnataka, Accounts Officer, Accountants, and SPD.
- Inter district transfer committee includes DPCs of concerned districts, EC members and SPD.
- Selection committees are formed periodically for selection of functionaries.

However, with the expansion of the MS-K programme to 9 districts and through several additional projects and programmes, the staff, though working hard, has been overstretched and burdened.

According to the State office, while formation of subcommittees and inclusion of EC members in all processes is mandatory, the availability of EC members is a situation to contend with. Most EC members are engaged in other activities and are not easily available for involvement in MS activities. Coordination of dates between the different committee members such as EC, NRG, NPO, DIUs is difficult and leads sometimes to delays and postponement of activities.

The position of Accounts Officer at SPO and accountants at new districts have been kept vacant in view of the new guidelines for outsourcing of these services. There is no clarity yet on this matter at the State Office. The budget earmarked for the secretarial services and accounts services also limit the scope of hiring competent and expert people on full time basis.

In the 10th plan budget, the administrative staff is not given any designations. This has been demoralising for staff who have been involved in MS-K for several years previously held designations. Outsourcing of contracts is the new strategy of the organisation for office and other work. Accounts related work that needs a high degree of trust and regular availability. They also include crucial administrative responsibilities such as signing the checks it could be highly risky to outsource such jobs.

Not being able to find the people with the right expertise for the salaries being offered is a major problem leading to a huge deficit of staff at the state level.

Recommendations:

1. 10th plan document should be re-visited since there are several mistakes and inconsistencies in it.
2. In addition to the existing administrative subcommittees, it would be useful to revive the Programme Committee of the MS-K EC to review programmatic goals and progress.
3. Wherever vacant, the post should be filled at the earliest. Salaries need to be reviewed with expansion and expectations within the programme.
4. Due to the new strategy, some of the Sahayoginis have been asked to leave. At the District level, this has created some tensions that require careful handling.
5. The expertise and experiences of external consultants should continue to be drawn upon whenever appropriate. A committee should approve consultancies and guidelines regarding consultancies should be developed.
6. Some of the staff members requested for clearer job profiles and job expectations. So, in order to ensure more role clarity, responsibilities of the staff members have to be communicated explicitly.
7. There is also a need for clear guidelines about the 'Field time' required for various job responsibilities.
8. Systems and mechanisms for increased transparency and effective communication have to be developed within at the State and the district levels.
9. A code of conduct may be collectively developed to ensure mutual accountability.
10. Information flow across should be both horizontal and vertical.
11. A work culture that will challenge hierarchy, foster humility, and appreciate individual as well as collective contributions – in keeping with the MS principles should be nurtured.
12. Grievance redressal systems need to be developed. They should be preventive and pre-emptive rather than punitive.
13. For conflict resolutions, there is a need to create systems and structures for redressal mechanisms and mediation procedures.
14. Accounts and Administration should have a clear demarcation of job responsibilities.
15. For new projects, at least 10 - 15 % of the budget should be set aside for administrative and account related overheads.
16. Orientation and induction programme for new staff have to be reviewed and strengthened.
17. There is a need for a clear plan for the capacity building of the staff members. Professional fatigue among the functionaries is evident. There is a need to rejuvenate the functionaries in terms of knowledge, new techniques, training in management skills, new technologies and leadership roles.
18. The MS personnel work under very difficult circumstances and their safety and security concerns must be given a high priority. There is a need to set up organisational arrangements in the form of transport and insurance cover. The contract system has also led to a lot of insecurity and this needs to be looked into.

Annexure 1 Itinerary of Evaluation Team

- 13.12.04 Evaluation team internal meeting
Presentation and discussion of MS Programme at SPO
- 14.12.04
to
- 16.12.04 Field visits to Bellary, Gulbarga, & Bijapur
- 17.12.04 Interaction with NGOs
Discussion with State Team
- 18.12.04 Interaction and discussion with MS teams from districts not visited
- 19.12.04 Review of documents and report writing by Evaluation teams
- 20.12.04 Feedback at State level

Field Visits

Bellary Kavita Ratna

- 14.12.04 Interaction with DIU team
Zilla Samithi Sabhe
Visit to DC and DDPI's Office
Visits to 2 villages

- 15.12.04 Visit to Hoovina Hadagali
Health Committee Training
Legal Literacy Training
Education Committee Meeting
Visits to 2 villages

- 16.12.04 Visits to 2 villages
Gender Training for Men
Visit to Kishori Kalika Kendra
Visit to CHARCA office
Reflection session

Gulbarga Anjali Dave & Rekha Pande

- 14.12.04 Interaction with DIU team
Visit to residential child labour learning center, Gulbarga
Visit to Day care child labour learning centre and Kishori Sangha, Gulbarga
Visit to Okkutta office and SSR committee meeting, Pattan
Visit to 2 villages, Gulbarga Taluk

- 15.12.04 All women panchayat and sanghas meeting, Atnur
Zilla samiti meeting, Gulbarga
Visit to Kishoti camp, Bulbarga
Visit to Chincholi and Chittapur villages

16.12.04 Visit to Jewarji
Nari Adalat, Gulbarga
Meeting with Unicef Officer

Bijapur Vanita Mukherjee & Indu Subramaniam

14.12.04 Interaction with DIU team
Visit to MSK
Village visit

15.12.04 Village visit
Discussion with SSR & EWR federation, Bijapur
Training for prospective election candidates, Bijapur
Interaction with Okutta EC members, Chadchan, Indi Taluk

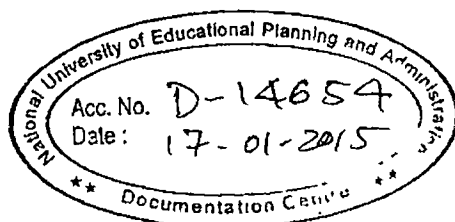
16.12.04 Visit to Baswan Bagewadi & Sindagi
Zilla Samti Sabhe, Bijapur
Reflection session

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING A SANGHA AS A STRONG SANGHA

1. Ability to conduct weekly meetings without the support and facilitation of sahayoginis.
2. The issue-based committees must be formed and the committees must be functioning effectively.
3. The sangha must be recognised by the villagers.
4. Savings activities must be conducted on a weekly basis.
5. There should be at least 15 members in the sangha.
6. Loans must be regularly repaid.
7. The sangha must be a member of the federation and must have paid the required membership fee.
8. There must be conceptual clarity regarding, the federation and the sangha members must have overall information about the federation.
9. All members must attend the taluka level committee meetings without fail.
10. Documentation must be up-to-date (meeting minutes, general ledger of loan and savings, pass book of incomes and expenditures)
11. There must be transparency in the financial matters of the sangha.
12. The sangha must have the capacity to solve problems as also to face difficult situations with courage.
13. The sangha must be involved in fighting against oppression and harassment of women or sangha women must have the capacity to do so.
14. The membership in the sangha must be an increasing number.
15. The sangha members must have an efficient communication network with the officials of the various departments.

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING A SANGHA AS A MEDIUM SANGHA

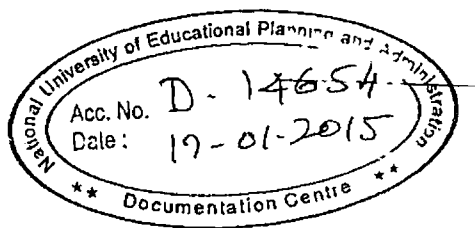
1. Though weekly sangha meetings are regularly conducted, neither are in-depth Discussions held at these meetings nor are important decisions taken.
2. Though members attend the committee meetings, not all committees perform their roles and responsibilities effectively. Further, even within a committee, not all members carry out their duties and tasks.
3. Follow up on the decisions taken at the sangha meetings is not carried out.
4. There is non-uniform development of leadership qualities among sangha women. In fact, very often there is a single person with leadership qualities in the sangha, who is at the forefront in all activities and decisions of the sanghas.
5. There is a roller-coaster movement in sangha membership.
6. Though the necessary books of record are maintained, necessary entries are not made in all these books. Entries are made in some books only.
7. There is no follow-up on the action plan decided upon at the sangha meetings.



8. Non-participation of the sangha in village developmental activities.
9. Though the sangha members have knowledge about the federations, only some of them are federation members.

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING A SANGHA AS A WEAK SANGHA

1. Sangha meetings are not conducted regularly.
2. Non-participation of the women in programme.
3. Sangha members are of the opinion that the sangha has been formed for economic purposes, especially for earning profits.
4. Sangha meetings are conducted only when the sangha is visited by the MSK functionaries.
5. Non-functioning of the sangha committees.
6. The sangha members desire various facilities but to this end, they make no efforts to meet the conducted officials.
7. Non-participation in developmental activities by sangha members.
8. Decrease in membership in the sanghas.
9. Non-maintenance of books of record and lack of documentation.
10. Members carry forward personal fights and animosities to the sangha thus preventing the smooth functioning of the sanghas.
11. Lack of interest among sangha women in sangha activities.
12. Lack of unity in the sangha.



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