Mahila Samakhya 2014

A National Review

Ravi J. Matthai Centre for Educational Innovation
Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad
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PREFACE

ABBREVIATIONS

CRP: Cluster Resource Person
DIU: District Implementation Unit
DLSA: District Legal Service authority
DPC: District Programme Coordinator
EC: Executive Committee
ISL: Individual Sanitary Latrines
JRP: Junior Resource Person
KGBV: Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya
MGNREGS: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MS: Mahila Samakhya
MSK: Mahila Shikshan Kendra
NRG: National Resource Group
NPEGEL: National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level
NPO: National Project Office
OBC: Other Backward Classes
RMSA: Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
RP: Resource Person
SC: Scheduled Caste
SMC: School Management Committee
SPD: State Programme Director
SSA: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST: Scheduled Tribe

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAHILA SAMAKHYA 2014: A NATIONAL REVIEW

1.   MAHILA SAMAKHYA 2014: STATUS

1. MS covers 130 districts and 679 blocks/ mandals in the country.
2. MS covers 36% of the blocks/ mandals in the districts in which it is working. This indicates significant coverage on average.
3. MS has a presence in 44,446 villages, that is in about a quarter of the villages of the districts where it is present.
4. In the villages under MS coverage, there are 55,402 sanghas. About 32% of these (17507) are under autonomous federations. This is a significant number and reflects the move towards greater autonomy and independence for the older sanghas.
5. The sangha membership stands at 14,41,928.
6. There are 325 federations; 156 (48%) are autonomous. Some more federations are in the process of consolidation; it is expected that about 60% of the federations currently in existence would come under the autonomous label by April 2015.
7. There are 21,825 savings and credit groups, with 5,31,239 members (about 37% of the total sangha membership).
8. MS is involved in 102 Mahila Shikshan Kendras with an enrolment of 2989. Cumulatively, under the programme, there are 28,507 MSK alumni, and 17,606 of these (62%) have been mainstreamed into formal schools.
9. There are 16,864 alternative learning centres of various kinds in most states. In four states MS runs 187 KGBVs and in one state there are 802 NPEGEL centres.
10. There are 23,026 kishori sanghas with 5,23,701 members.
11. There are 481 Nari Adalats, which have dealth with, cumulatively, 30,410 cases up to now.
12. A total of 30,090 sangha members have contested panchayati raj elections, and 12,905 (43%) have been elected.
13. Sangha women also find representation on the school management committees: there are 30,377 SMC members who are also sangha members.
14. MS has successfully mobilized marginalized women; nearly 90% of the sangha membership is drawn from the disadvantaged sections of society. SC and ST constitute 56% of the sangha membership at the national level.
15. Support to sanghas from DIUs is mainly non-financial, with nearly 62% of the sanghas receiving only mobilizational (capacity building) support. While sanghas do see funding as of some importance, the desire to run a good sangha through voluntary contribution may be perceived to be more crucial.
16. MS is a volunteer-driven programme built on the contribution of sangha members. The contributions of the members has been significant. Case studies of five fairly active sanghas indicate that the average sangha member may be contributing about ₹ 3532 per annum to the task of women's empowerment. The average sangha member contributes about 31 days per

year, roughly two and a half days a month to the sangha institution. Assuming that only 50% of the contribution of Rs. 3532 applies to only 65% of the active and very active membership, a conservative estimate of the annual input may be a significant Rs. 168 crore. In brief, the committed contribution of the women to their own empowerment has to be recognized.

17. The sangha women who contributed to the discussions in the 72 sampled sanghas reflect MS's focus on the marginalized sections of society. The sample indicates that the inter-generational shift in favour of girls' education is strong. In the families of those members who do not have formal education, the younger generation of girls is doing well; 77% of the members with no formal education have all the girls in their families in the age group of 6 to 16 in school. Members with formal education, though, still seem to be at an advantage, but the picture with respect to those members without formal education is encouraging.

2.   EXPANSION AND COVERAGE OF THE PROGRAMME

1. MS has expanded from 83 districts in nine states at the beginning of the XI Plan period to 130 districts in 11 states (counting Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as separate states). While this number is marginally short of the 132 (excluding Madhya Pradesh) expected by the end of 2012, the number of sanghas and the membership have shown a steady and significant increase.

2. MS functionaries have played critical roles in sangha formation; but 40 per cent of the sampled sanghas attribute the key agency role to themselves, indicating that MS functionaries have played key catalytic roles while helping local women play mobilizational roles.

3. The average sangha starts with a fairly standard size, around 24 to 25 members. Over time, about 14 members seem to get added on, with about two leaving. On average, there has been some growth. If one considers the per annum addition per sangha, it is 1.5 members; also there is a correlation of -0.20 between age of the sangha and members added per annum—member addition slows down as sanghas age. In short while growth is there, it is limited, given that the mean village size is 417 households. Growth slows down with the age of the sangha.

4. 'Membership' is a fluid concept—formal membership registers are usually not taken very seriously, sometimes attendance in meetings is more than the formal membership. Membership record keeping may be stressed in the future as an indication of a formal organization—even if it is a volunteer-driven group.

5. The patterns of expansion in the 72 sanghas reveal four types of sanghas. The first with clear evidence of inclusion of other social groups (15%); the second category does not show this evidence, though in some cases a few women of other social groups may have been included (13%). A third category is made up of sanghas that claim that their membership has theoretically been open to all women—such sanghas, like the others, do have the option of expanding vertically—deepening their own community membership, or expanding horizontally, across other social groups (50%). The last category includes sanghas which were set up in socially homogeneous settings—these are primarily single social group sanghas (22%).

6. In the sample villages, 52% of the women added to the initial membership have been from other social groups; there has been a movement from a focus on the initial group to a more inclusive agenda based on identity as women.

7. At the same time, 28 of 68 sanghas have not augmented their membership. This reinforces the point about limited expansion made earlier.

8. Expansion within sanghas, though limited, does indicate a horizontal spread across social groups which are different from the ones that initiated the sanghas.

9. Within MS there have been frequent references to the need to be more inclusive when it comes to participation of other social groups. This movement seems to be in evidence.

10. MS began with a strong focus on the most vulnerable women—women who were at the receiving end of multiple modes of discrimination. The older sanghas show clear evidence of leadership from the formerly most vulnerable sections of society. That there is now some horizontal expansion is interesting; one way of interpreting this pattern is that MS by and large reveals a bottom-up approach to empowerment, where the initially most vulnerable have to close in upon themselves till such point as they develop enough power and confidence to be able to relate with some confidence and measure of equality with other social groups.

11. MS's approach to empowerment, which begins by addressing multiple modes of discrimination first has held MS in good stead and should not be given up when new sanghas are formed in the future. In other words, there is no reason to change the initiation process that MS has followed up to now.

12. New members have joined for three reasons. First, the possibility of increasing their financial savings. Second, the desire to learn more, "gain knowledge", and improve levels of awareness, including a chance to step out of the village and break the "purdah system." A third set of reasons include the motivation provided by the existing sangha members.

13. More than three-quarters of the sanghas sampled did not have any formal eligibility criteria for admission. Most of the remaining sanghas have age-related rules for exclusion. Nearly 55% of the sanghas do not allow adolescent girls to become members. In a couple of sanghas they are allowed to attend sangha meetings.

14. Fifty six out of the 72 sanghas (nearly 78%) have been involved directly or indirectly in the formation of new sanghas. For a volunteer-driven programme, this is an impressive achievement. Most of these sanghas do so because MS may request them, but in six out of the 56 sanghas, the women have initiated sangha formation elsewhere on their own because of social ties.

3. THE MAHILA SAMAKHYA SANGHA: INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTH AND LOCAL IMPACT ON ISSUES OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

1. The MS programme seems to have had a significant imprint on local issues of gender and development.

2. While it is not possible to attribute this to MS alone, there is little doubt that sangha women have developed empowered identities and voices in most MS communities.

3. The signs of success are not necessarily evident in the resolution or elimination of problems that have particularly impacted marginalized women—although several such examples were also identified—but in the contestation of spaces from which these women have been historically excluded and the challenges to discriminatory practices.

4. The contestation of gender-based discrimination has occurred at several levels, including visibility in the public sphere--acts like collectively singing songs, or through more obvious acts like rallies and protests.

5. There is evidence of change in the private sphere as well, through greater voice in household decisions as well as increased mobility.

6. There is strong evidence of high levels of participation in institutionalized democratic spaces by sangha women; 96 per cent of the sanghas rated their participation in gram sabha meetings as regular; 86.4% of the individual members surveyed report regular participation in the gram

sabha. This picture is corroborated by non-members as well. The importance of this participation is best realized when placed in the context of the narratives of historical exclusion of women in public spaces that were cited during the study.

7. Eighty-one per cent of the old sanghas and 58 per cent of the newer sanghas replied with specific examples on the action they have taken to demand access to government services and benefits from the authorities/panchayats.

8. In over 55 per cent of surveyed sanghas, sangha members have competed in elections and gone on to win posts like Sarpanch, membership in Ward Committees and Panchayats.

9. The social and institutional challenges that sangha members still face is evident from the fact only 27 per cent of sanghas report members of sanghas being part of the PRI committees. Even among sanghas where members have not stood for elections themselves, a majority report participation in the conduct of the electoral process.

10. The high levels of participation by sangha women are also reflected in the fact that over 80 per cent of sanghas were able to articulate explicit issues that had been raised by sangha women in gram sabha meetings. The issues raised by sanghas include those related to local infrastructure and government services and schemes.

11. Sanghas have contributed to the provision of local public goods. In addition, several sanghas reported working with local governments on election cards, relief work and the pulse polio programme.

12. Most of the sanghas emphatically stress that their enthusiasm and willingness to participate has either been maintained or gone up over the years. Where they have gone up the reasons seem to be success in taking up cases related to harassment of women, development work related to education and agencies like the public distribution system, and the increased confidence while talking to government functionaries. In addition, the feeling that knowledge and awareness have increased also adds to the motivation.

13. Collective processes can often be exclusionary by privileging those who are able to participate in the process and ignoring others who are voluntarily or involuntarily excluded. But sangha women have been able to use their "empowered" positions to bring about changes in their communities that challenge historical gender-based exclusions. In a few sanghas, women have formed issue-specific committees or taken up activities that have benefited all women or the entire village.

14. The diversity of issues raised by the sanghas speaks to the non-target oriented nature of MS. It is evident that the issues being raised were context dependent and locally demanded. Thus, a clear contrast to sector-specific, target-oriented programmes is observed. However, the process of change has been helped by broader changes in society in recent times which have supported the principles that MS has emphasized right from its early days.

15. The status of a sangha as an independent collective entity of marginalized women puts it in a unique position to handle cases of violence against women. The sanghas often see taking up such issues as a matter of responsibility. This is perhaps one of the most significant social interventions that the sanghas have made.

16. The sanghas' work often puts them in conflict with powerful local actors, but by and large, the sanghas have persevered in their efforts.

17. MS's emphasis on working with marginalized women has interestingly implied that challenges to discriminatory norms and practices have not been restricted to the sphere of gender alone. There are a few examples of this extending to caste discrimination. This is to be expected given MS's focus on multiple modes of discrimination and oppression.

18. The activities of the sanghas—their songs and issues—have specifically resulted in visibility; as a result the activities are known to a fair degree among other sections of the village society. The importance of the symbols used to promote visibility, whether it is a song or a rally, is evident. Almost all the sanghas report a leadership structure that is open to all women regardless of caste, class or any other social background.

19. Participation in almost all the sangha meetings the team personally attended was engaged and open.

20. Around 58 per cent of the sanghas report that they have a system of annual programme planning and creating an annual calendar of events. The older sanghas are much more likely to report doing this (68 per cent) compared to the younger sanghas (48 per cent). The Sahyoginis mention that in some cases the CRPs and JRPs provide support even in fully autonomous sanghas.

21. Only around half the sampled sanghas mentioned that they had received some training on financial management. The training has been received from both MS staff (JRPs or CRPs) as well as Federations. The receipt of training is associated with the sanghas having independent initiatives for raising funds.

22. Regarding capacity building for political awareness, 73% of the old sanghas (10 years or older) and 39% of the young sanghas (less than 10 years) report receiving training.

23. Sanghas have fairly limited ability to raise funds independently. While we do find evidence of activity and continuing impact in many of the autonomous sanghas, this happens in spite of their inability to raise funds. MS sanghas seem to survive on the contribution of the time of the volunteers as noted in Chapter 1.

24. Forty six per cent of the old sanghas and 41 per cent of the new sanghas shared specific efforts (primarily in the newer sanghas) and articulated plans to raise funds on their own initiative.

25. The sanghas fall into four categories, depending on their internal management practices. (1) None—no formal evidence of thinking on management of the sangha. (2) Low: Most don't report formation of annual plans, the key activities are vaguely articulated or appear to revolve purely around financial transactions. The activities also appear to be driven largely by external inputs. Most have not initiated or articulated efforts for independent fund raising. (3) Moderate: Most have annual plans. Compared to those categorized as high, they have limited articulation or prioritization of activities. (4) High: There is progress in codifying leadership and organizational structure. There is an explicit articulation of preparation of annual plans. Most sanghas fall in the low-moderate range. Very few of the old sanghas appear to be in a position to manage their activities in a manner that would be considered well-organized by modern definitions. This has not necessarily limited their ability to create an impact as most of the other evidence points to.

26. Given MS's exit strategy, it is important to note that the capacities that have been built up at the Sangha level to negotiate formal institutional structures still remain fairly limited.

27. All sanghas report a functional relationship with the federations. Only seven of the 72 sanghas could cite an instance where their work was held up due to lack of timely support from the MS programme. Overall, the sanghas seem to rely more on their own resources and lack of support hindering their work does not seem to be a major issue.

28. The impact on local development can be illustrated with the example of MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh. While women participation rates are consistently low in the state, they were lower to start out with in the MS blocks compared to non-MS blocks. However, the increase in participation rates over time has been greater in MS blocks than it has been in MS blocks. This

difference in relative performance is a fairly strong affirmation both of the claims that Sangha women had done in obtaining their rights under MGNREGA as well as the potential of the MS programme.

29. The DIUs believe that sanghas should be rated on eight dimensions:
    - Internal management processes like regular meetings, including all women, documentation and record keeping, networking
    - Handling women's issues, especially violence related issues
    - Awareness of gender discrimination and striving for equality, importance of collectivization
    - Accessing government resources and facilities for participation in panchayati raj and economic empowerment
    - Children's/ girls' education including women's literacy
    - Problem identification and solving, ability to spot women's issues and local issues and take action
    - Internal leadership processes, rotation of leadership, democratic functioning
    - Health issues: ability to identify issues and take action

While the sanghas show evidence of doing well on handling women's issues and generating awareness of gender discrimination, and on education and health, the evidence on internal management and accessing government resources is mixed.

4.   THE MAHILA SAMAKHYA FEDERATION: STATUS AND ABILITY TO FUNCTION AUTONOMOUSLY

Assessment of federations

1. Most of the leadership at the federation level reflects the early focus of MS on the most marginalized sections of society—the leadership provided now by dalit and tribal women has to be recognized. This is a significant outcome of MS.
2. All the federations visited have the standard organizational structure prescribed under MS, and have received financial management training like some inputs on managing and utilizing funds. All of them have a plan of functioning that includes monthly meetings, training sessions for sanghas, running other bodies like the Nari Adalat and Information centre, evaluating sanghas which want to join, and engaging in some fund raising activities. The initiation of the formal structures seems to have gone according to plan.
3. The federations particularly note the importance of the Information Centres they run. These provide information regarding various government schemes, facilities available for the backward classes, and related matters. It should be noted, however, that Information Centres are present in only four states.
4. The federations have launched various campaigns to fight against gender stereotypes. There are numerous examples of cases concerned with violence against women that the federations have taken up, either through campaigns or through the nari adalats.
5. The federations are confident that the committee members are now well recognized by the taluka level officers at various taluka/block offices, police stations and village panchayats. The federation members now enjoy more visibility at the block level.
6. All the federations are involved in the education of girls, providing training to the sangha representatives on education and composing songs and plays, and organizing rallies on girls' education. The federations use songs, stories, games, puppet shows and role-plays for knowledge dissemination.

7. Working on women's issues and stressing the collective identity are two items on which the federations studied seem to be doing well. The capabilities of the federations on this account are well established.

8. Encouraging coordination and participation of sanghas seems to be reasonable, given that many of the federations have added new sanghas from their blocks/ mandals. However, there are some federations which have not expanded membership; also, the evidence regarding systematic and planned expansion into neighbouring blocks is weak.

9. The other two areas, internal management and networking both have to be termed as needing strengthening if the federations are to substitute for the DIUs in the future.

10. Internal management includes the importance of financial sustenance, and the evidence, at least from the federations studied, is not strong. While federation members are recognized at the block level offices, translating this into resource mobilization for themselves and the sanghas still seems to be some way off. The evidence for networking with nongovernment agencies is weak.

11. **Dimensions on which federations need to be evaluated (in descending order of importance), according to DIUs**
    a. Internal management processes
    b. Working on women's issues
    c. Networking with government/ nongovernment bodies
    d. Stress on collective identity of women
    e. Encouraging coordination/ participation of sanghas
    f. Ability to function autonomously

12. **Importance of work actually done in the districts (rank in brackets), according to DIUs**
    a. Education (1, most important)
    b. Women's issues including violence against women (2)
    c. Health action (3)
    d. Gender awareness (4)
    e. Developing capacities within sangha/ federation (5)
    f. Networking and economic empowerment (6)

13. In sum, overall, from the macro-picture of the districts, the two key concerns are strengthening internal management processes of the sanghas/ federations and enabling them to develop linkages with other agencies, especially for economic empowerment. Based on the perceptions of the district units, gender awareness, action on women's issues, especially violence against women, education and health, are areas that do not seem problematic.

Disengagement process

1. It is clearly understood at the field level that MS has to withdraw from districts where work has been going on for 10 years or more by March 31, 2015. However, there is lack of clarity on how the process of disengagement has to be carried out.

2. One view is that block disengagement should be the strategy. Our view is that this is not a feasible strategy from the implementation point of view, and that disengagement from the district is defensible.

3. There is a fear that volunteer-driven organizations like the federations will collapse once MS support, financial as well as non-financial, stops. There are examples of this happening, and one cannot rule out the possibility of this happening. But the successful consolidation and autonomy experiences indicate that higher-level Resource Groups have emerged as necessary supports,

and that these federations received some support in taking up low-risk activities like literacy centres.

4. There is a lot of concern about the financial viability of the federations; the track record of federations in generating surpluses through economic activities has not been good.

5. Federations are well placed to handle social processes, but not economic processes. Overall, there is a concern that asking the federations to take up economic income-generating activities will dilute their focus on the empowerment-related social issues. More importantly, they do not have the capabilities to engage in such activities.

6. Federations should be encouraged to explore non-conventional sources of funding. Road maps for federations should be prepared during the consolidation phase.

7. Setting up Resource Groups and inducting them during the consolidation period, will ensure the presence of a support between the state and the federations.

8. Direct MS support to federations after consolidation should be kept to a minimum, and should be provided only when there is a serious case for direct visits to federations for training and support. The closest district unit can also be asked to help.

9. Use of technology to support the federations has to be augmented. MS must prepare for the time when computers, computer literacy and connectivity will be within the reach of the federations. Mobile technology, which is already being used for communication, can be used for information sharing also.

10. State/ regional level resource groups can be established. Such groups, with perhaps some of the members being located in the districts, can provide support mainly on social justice, legal aid and educational issues. As the DIUs are withdrawn, the state resource groups can take up the functions of assisting the federations. The members of these resource groups can be supported directly by the State office on specified terms.

11. The scope for convergence with various government schemes and building that into the roadmaps for the federations should be explored by the resource groups.

5.   **INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND KNOWLEDGE BUILDING AND TRAINING AND CAPABILITY BUILDING: KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND MOBILITY**

1. All indications point to a substantial information and knowledge gain in several domains.

2. The key areas of knowledge gain for sangha members are four: (a) government schemes and programmes for the welfare of people (individual benefit schemes like widow pension or developmental works like roads, electricity, water, school, etc.); (b) information on health and hygiene; (c) schemes and services to promote access to and right to education for their children; (d) their rights in society.

3. Women pro-actively seek information primarily on ways to manage challenges in their lives—information on laws, health, and income generating capacity building.

4. Less than 5% non-members reported that there is no significant difference in information and awareness levels of sangha members as compared to non-members.

5. Specific issues on which training has been asked for include vocational training and empowerment.

6. While there is evidence of the empowering impact of the information gained by associating with sanghas, a significant demand for training relates to some form of vocational capacity building or income generating skill building training. MS does not have a good track record in employment or vocational training, but is more suited for responding to social empowerment

training needs. The economic empowerment demands from about a third of the sanghas have to be addressed by some other entrepreneurship promoting agency which will take into account the economic linkages as well as capacity building training.

7. There is evidence of action resulting from the increased information and knowledge: movement to and interaction with the hitherto male domains like panchayat offices, block offices of various line departments, banks, etc. The second arena is education and ensuring that their children attend school regularly and enjoy the basic minimum facilities/services that they are entitled to.

8. In their personal lives, women report increased self-confidence as a consequence of access to information related to their rights and entitlements.

9. Another impact of information is that women are no longer ready to tolerate injustice or any violation of their rights; for example, women's refusal to accept low or unequal wages.

10. The increased information and awareness of the sangha members leading to action is also noted by the villages' non-sangha members interviewed. They note the increased mobility of sangha members both within and outside the village, and their confidence.

11. Only in four of the 66 sanghas (6%) is challenging social discrimination cited by the non-members as evidence of action resulting from increased knowledge among the sangha members. But in 59, the majority, the other indicators of empowerment, like increased mobility and increased self-confidence, are noted as evidence of increased knowledge and action following from it.

12. The most significant and tangible impact of sangha membership in the lives of women has been increased mobility. Sometimes, sangha members have negotiated mobility for non-sangha members.

13. Sangha members are identified and recognized and given different treatment compared to normal citizens when they visit block level offices or panchayats. However, when new officials are transferred in, the process of rapport building has to start all over again.

14. Alternative structures for support: The Nari Adalats are dealt with separately in this report. Adult literacy centres were important in earlier years in enabling higher literacy levels. The teaching at these centres was undertaken variously by a literate sangha member, sahyogini or other volunteers. The teaching and learning material was provided by MS. In some districts these were undertaken in collaboration with the state government, thus facilitating access to government resources.

15. Some sanghas also have the 'Nari Arogya Kendra', 'Nari Sanjivani Kendra' (women's health centres) which are managed by sangha members, primarily at the Block level.

16. The sangha members point out that the intangible benefits of MS intervention are significant; they feel the transformative change in their lives is more important than counting the tangible and computable benefits like their access to individual welfare schemes. This is a lesson the sanghas studied offer unambiguously.

17. In sum, MS may be seen as a successful *educational* intervention. Its main strength is in initiating and implementing educational processes that harness the power of information for awareness generation and knowledge, leading to action. This educational identity of MS is its main strength.

6. **INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND KNOWLEDGE BUILDING AND TRAINING AND CAPABILITY BUILDING: EDUCATION AND LEARNING**

1. Building knowledge, based on articulated demands or needs, is at the core of the Mahila Samakhya programme. Over a period of time women have asked for information and knowledge on various issues.
2. MS has responded to the demand for vocational training, and has engaged in training in non-stereotypical businesses like cycle repairing, masonry and gas stove repairing. However this has not proved to be successful in either changing gender dynamics or ensuring dignified livelihood to the woman/girl so trained. An analysis of such failures needs a careful study of intersection between gender/feminist politics and poverty before embarking on economic empowerment programmes for women under MS.
3. Increasing girls' enrolment: MS intervention and efforts in this area seem to have met with success—the sanghas report an increase in the incidence of girls' education, in terms of higher enrolment and lower dropout. MS seems to have augmented the government's push for formal education of girls.
4. Drop out does happen in many villages and MS sanghas are aware of the need to control this problem. Various strategies have been used to bring the dropout girl back to school.
5. In many sanghas, the significance and value of education has become so important for the members that the older sangha members who have now become mothers-in-law support their daughters-in-law in education, at the cost of personally bearing additional housework and child care responsibility and loss of daily wage. This concern seems to extend to granddaughters also. This point was addressed earlier while discussing the intergenerational change in educational status in the sanghas.
6. There is evidence of the sangha members acting to improve girls' education among the very marginalized groups.
7. Key areas in which sanghas have tried to develop links with the government education system include scholarships, fortified food grain, ensuring mid-day meal quality, bicycles for girls, free transport for girls and bus passes, uniforms and other schooling material, enrolment in KGBVs, adding classes to the school and ensuring teacher attendance.
8. There is significant amount of evidence of MS converting women's life experiences into teaching learning materials and methodologies, in the posters, songs, and other material that MS has produced. The role of the MS functionary (Sahyogini, CRP) is critical in this; sangha members are limited in their capacities to take up this role.
9. MS has used a variety of tools for spreading awareness and building knowledge of women in the rural areas. Various folk forms have been used to integrate women's rights and gender discrimination, suffering on account of domestic violence, the importance of education for women and girls, laws and rights of women, and the importance of nutrition, good health and sanitation. Singing appears to be an integral part of samakhya empowerment culture and a very effective mode of communicating messages and learning as well.
10. MS has used a variety of training methods which involve the women and are participatory in nature. Films, audio-visual material, culturally appropriate modes like songs and kala jathas, have been used, and are rated as having been successful.
11. The interaction of methods and content is of course important. Issues concerning gender awareness, violence against women, development issues like education and health, are more suited for the methods used.

12. Some social issues, including child labour, child marriages in some districts, alcoholism, social barriers posed by religion, hinder the effectiveness of the methods. In these cases, a few follow up discussions with the DPCs (on telephone) indicated that there was not enough attention paid to the hindering social factors—the method which may have worked in another area, was assumed will continue to work.

13. Vocational training and individual and collective employment training in general do not seem to have worked as well as awareness training. For economic empowerment, training is only one element—the production (seeds as in the case of mushroom cultivation) and marketing (as in many other cases) linkages need to be worked out along with the training. In the absence of such a holistic approach, it is no surprise that the training did not succeed.

14. The training in awareness generation, capacity building, and health and education training, are listed by the district staff as successful—one training programme on herbal medicine growing is rated as successful, but economic empowerment/ vocational training is uniformly absent in this list.

15. While awareness generation and capacity building training programmes have been successful generally, in ten districts, such programmes are noted to have failed for a variety of reasons. The success rate of awareness generation training seems to be rated very highly.

16. There are a number of examples of economic employment training programmes that are considered failures. MS is not well placed to provide vocational or income generation training. The assumption that training alone is sufficient is not tenable; there are many necessary conditions like market linkages that are needed to make the training successful. On the other hand, MS is strong in social awareness training.

17. In sum, the identity of MS noted earlier, as a successful *educational* intervention, gets qualified: MS's main strength is in initiating and implementing educational processes that are geared towards awareness generation and knowledge creation. Training for self-employment needs, on the other hand, requires integration with other structures in the economy like the markets, raw material supply and technology.

7.   IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES: NARI ADALATS AND MAHILA SHIKSHAN KENDRAS

1. The Nari Adalats are fairly significant in nine of the 11 MS states. Their impact has been positive in terms of making available an alternative social justice forum that is gender sensitive, cost-effective and time-efficient to marginalized women.

2. The states should continue with the organic model of Nari Adalats that is rooted in the sangha-federation structure, established and managed by the federations, and works in tandem with supporting agencies of the state. However, if a state decides to scale-up the effort as a project, the experience of Gujarat can be studied.

3. The fact that Gujarat saw it appropriate to scale up this particular innovation is an indication of its perceived usefulness. True, such scaling-up decontextualizes the Nari Adalats, and ignores the organic location of such justice forums in the sangha-federation structure. However, it seems from Gujarat's experience that the perceived value of this kind of a forum outweighs the advantages of the federation-driven model of Nari Adalats. It is too early to predict the fate of the scaled-up model when the project cycle comes to an end, but for the time being the project model of Nari Adalats seems to be serving a social need.

4. MS has had a positive impact on a small number of girls who have been through the Mahila Shikshana Kendras. Likewise, MS involvement in KGBVs has had a positive impact on the counselling that is available to girls and the management of these structures. However, with the

progressive strengthening of focused education programmes like the SSA and now the RMSA, the need for continued involvement in implementation of activities for adolescent girls' education has reduced. MS's MSKs and KGBV involvement may therefore be phased out as an element of the consolidation phase, by integrating with RMSA and transferring the girls to other state-run hostels, or in the case of KGBVs reintegrating with SSA.

Directions for the future

1. The Nari Adalat is a significant initiative and should be an important aspect of the activity-mix of a federation when it is being prepared for consolidation.
2. The original model in which the Nari Adalats are rooted in the sangha-federation structure is in alignment with MS philosophy and approach and should be the training model for new federations. (If any state wants to scale up the Nari Adalat initiative to non-MS districts, the Gujarat model, which is a project-based model, not in line with the MS approach, may be shared.)
3. With the progressive strengthening of SSA and now RMSA, MS's MSKs and KGBV involvement may be phased out as an element of the consolidation phase, by integrating MSKs with RMSA and transferring the girls to other state-run hostels, or in the case of KGBVs by reintegrating with SSA. No new MSKs need be granted for districts which are about to enter the consolidation phase. In consonance with these steps, the federations may be advised to evaluate the extent to which they need to become involved in forums aimed at young boys and girls, like the bala sanghas, and act accordingly.
4. While the need for MS to get involved in implementation of activities directly related to adolescent girls has reduced since the early days of MS, MS still has a role to play in advocacy of issues affecting adolescents. To maintain an indirect focus on adolescent girls, it is recommended that the state have one resource person in charge of an adolescent resource centre, which will focus on information providing, which is one of MS's strengths. This resource centre should move towards greater and innovative use of ICT in its production and dissemination of materials to the federation. The Resource person should also explore the possibilities of convergence of MS with other agencies like the departments dealing with youth and adolescents and NGOs, and convert these into federation/ sangha training opportunities (see Chapter 9).

8. ISSUES RELATED TO IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

1. MS's implementation has shown significant capacity and capability to ensure 'negative freedom' –securing freedom from a particular kind of external interference. In MS this has taken the shape of taking charge of space, whether it is a private space like the sangha kutir, or a public space, both of which lend themselves to expression of collective resistance and of regular and hard-hitting responses to sexual violence and violence against women in general.
2. The need to be free from the kind of interference that this phenomenon represents has been a great motivation for the sanghas.
3. A lot of investment has gone in over the last 25 years in securing this negative freedom, through awareness training, legal training and capacity building for political participation.

4. These changes are likely to be permanent given the growing evidence that India is moving towards a more open public space as evidenced by the greater reporting of incidents of rape or more media visibility and monitoring of violence.

5. Establishing this freedom should take less time in the new educationally-backward blocks and districts. There are many leaders who, having spearheaded this 'freedom movement' successfully, have the potential to become expert spearhead team members for the new districts.

6. Capability for positive freedom needs to be enhanced: the ability for "positive freedom"— shaping the nature and actions of the legal and political institutions that they interface with, along with obtaining positive benefits in terms of economic and welfare improvement, is in evidence though to a more limited extent.

7. The sanghas are certainly limited in their capacity to negotiate the formal structures for securing their positive freedoms.

8. Training for working for positive freedoms at all levels has to be an on-going task for MS. Convergence and networking are important areas for training. This is in consonance with the needs of the sanghas and federations also.

9. Institutional identity of MS has to be enhanced. MS is perceived to be a 'small' programme, and may not receive the kind of attention within government circles that it expects.

10. In spite of having a flexible society format, issues like the financial sustainability of MS or its vehicles like the federations have not been addressed adequately.

11. MS has developed a reasonable ability to network with NGOs in many states.

12. The "low-cost" label often applied to MS is a misleading one, since MS has been very successful in tapping into the voluntarism of people in order to achieve social change. However, the label also refers to the perceived low honoraria levels which came in for criticism from many quarters, especially the district units.

13. The salary structure and related working conditions may be responsible for the high turnover that MS project offices witness. We recommend that the National Project Office set up a small internal taskforce to review the honoraria structures that would be appropriate for the XII plan period.

9. MAHILA SAMAKHYA: MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY, A REVIEW

1. The programmatic areas that form the basis for future work include the following: Developing organizational capacities within sanghas and federations; Women's issues including violence against women, legal awareness; Networking with government and other agencies for economic empowerment; Working for economic empowerment; Creating gender awareness; Education, including education of adolescents; Health action; Political participation. In all these thematic areas, the educational focus that is MS's key strength has to be leveraged.

2. There are significant strengths, mainly in the capability to address social injustice, on which future strategies can build. At the same time there are weaknesses related to inability to negotiate formal institutional structures and network for economic empowerment. The programme structure also has some weaknesses related to staffing.

3. Modifications of implementation structures have been suggested. These have mainly to do with establishing spearhead teams drawn from sangha/ federation leadership for new sangha mobilization, and establishing Resource Groups in three areas of focus: Institution Building (especially focusing on the federations); Entrepreneurship; and Gender Awareness, Education

and Health. The total number of staff may be decided at the state level, but eight resource persons may be needed at a minimum. Some rationalization of the current resource person set-up and the Resource Centre is possible.

4. Use of technology to support the federations has to be augmented. The current status of the use of IT for programmatic development is poor in MS. The use of IT for the MIS also shows a lot of scope for improvement. MS must prepare for the time when computers, computer literacy and connectivity will be within the reach of the federations. Mobile technology, which is already being used for communication, can be used for information sharing also. A strong recommendation is to engage the services of an IT designer to suggest a platform for MS, which can be multilingual and enable sharing across the country.

5. The NRG may have up to 20 nominated members, and a nominated member of the NRG will be required to contribute about four to five days during the year, or about eight to ten days during her 2-year term, to MS programmes in the 11 states. Attendance in national-level meetings will involve an additional commitment of time.

6. The nominated members of the NRG may be treated as a resource collective, any member of which can address MS-related requirements processes in any of the 11 states, depending on her availability and convenience.

7. A few longer-term issues like MS's lifecycle and expansion to new states, integration with SSA and the role of the state societies, and the spread-effect of MS experiences, have been suggested for discussion.

8. MS has done well on certain quantitative parameters for which baselines were developed in 2008 and targets specified. It can profit from using the information that it has at its disposal through an information system to develop a body of evidence for processes of empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Two national reviews of Mahila Samakhya (MS) have been carried out in the past—the first in 1992-93 when there were only three states under MS and the second in 2004 at a time when MS was present in nine states. Both evaluations reiterated the importance of the broad goal of the scheme, namely women's empowerment. This goal was to be achieved through an educational process—education understood in the broad sense of facilitating the expression of the capabilities of the women the programme worked for. In addition, MS specifically aimed to work with rural women, especially those from socially and economically marginalized groups. In other words, MS's philosophy, right from the early days, sought to address the marginalization arising out of the intersection of disadvantages of gender, class and social status, primarily caste or tribe. These broad goals inform the third National Evaluation, which was carried out over a tight timeframe, a two-month period from mid-August to mid-October 2014. The Terms of Reference, which formed the objectives of the study, were the following:

1. Expansion, coverage, consolidation of the programme
2. Strategies at field level for information dissemination and knowledge building
3. Strategies for training and capability building
4. Status of sanghas and federations
5. Ability of sanghas and federations to function autonomously
6. Impact of alternative structures like MSK and Nari Adalats
7. MS links with mainstream educational programmes
8. Local impact on issues of gender and development
9. Issues related to state and district implementation capacity: training, staffing and role effectiveness

Conceptual Underpinnings of the Evaluation

MS aims to bring together women so that they can collectively solve their problems through the agency of the mahila sangha (women's collective) and the federations they form. This bringing together of the women is expected to be a flexible and facilitative process, and not a target-oriented intervention. The hope is that the women themselves will influence the shape and pace of the programme, create a learning environment and promote the acquisition of information and skills needed for informed decision making. Hence, assessing the capabilities and potential of the institutional form that has taken shape—the sangha/federation complex will be an indication of the effectiveness of the MS process. For purposes of this study, empowerment is understood to be this institutional form's ability to make deliberate and purposive choices and transform them into relevant outcomes. This does indicate a greater focus on the agency role of the institutional form and its interaction with the opportunity structures in society; we are aware that one test of ultimate empowerment is the change in the self, in the individual domain, but we do not address this aspect directly in the study.

The mandate given to us determined the design choices that had to be made. First, the study draws on the revised and finalized Results Framework of 2008 that was shared with us for use as a guiding framework. This made it possible to assess the programme on its own terms. A comparison of MS project areas and non-MS project areas, which would have treated the latter as some kind of control, was not undertaken. It was neither feasible nor appropriate given the unique process-oriented nature of MS interventions which did not specify upfront, the targets or outputs to be achieved. Second, following

from this, MS's process of collectivization and giving time and space to disempowered women saw empowerment more as something of intrinsic value and not as something that should have an instrumental role. There is no doubt that an empowered institutional form can help in the achievement of desirable instrumental outcomes, like better enrolment of girls or greater participation in employment or other developmental schemes. However, most such outcomes have multiple factors contributing to them, and it would be difficult to attribute causality to MS interventions alone for any such positive outcomes. Also, it needs to be kept in mind that sanghas constitute only a small part of the village environment. For example, in the sample of sanghas covered in this study, the average sangha membership is about 38, but the village size on average is 417 households. Third, a baseline study which had been conducted in 2008-09 did establish baseline levels for a number of indicators, but these do not seem to have been used at the state and district levels to monitor the annual progress of the programme. (We make a brief comment on this in the last chapter.) In addition, the current terms of reference included a number of aspects for which there were no baselines. Finally, there is a clear understanding that MS is a "flexible, facilitative and process oriented and not a target driven programme. The programme is guided by a set of non-negotiables i.e. allowing women the time and space to come together and influence the shape and pace of the programme; to create a learning environment that encourages critical thinking by women, acquisition of the necessary information and skills to take informed decisions to determine their own development…" The non-target oriented nature of the programme has been emphasized all along and the design had to be sensitive to this aspect of MS practice.

Given these factors, the present study attempts a broad national assessment of MS processes. It is thus to be seen more as a stock-taking exercise in the context of recent discussions on the lifecycle of the programme in a particular district and MS's disengagement from districts where such disengagement would be justifiable.

The revised 'Results Framework,' which was used to guide the study, indicates five broad purposes of the programme. These have been used to understand the status and progress of the programme.
a. Expanding outreach of the programme to reach more women of most marginalized groups
b. Facilitate increased information and access of women to their entitlements, through various methods of capacity building
c. Facilitating increased participation of women and girls in formal and non-formal education through sustained engagement with them (lifelong learning/ continued education)
d. Building leadership amongst/of poor , most marginalized women and autonomy of women's collectives
e. Facilitating women's agency to challenge social inequality/unequal social relations/ , and to break discriminatory social barriers/practices (at individual, family, community & State levels).

Methodology

Given the tight timeframe within which the study had to be completed, and based on discussions with MHRD, four of the oldest states were selected for study. Thus, Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, the original pilot states, and Andhra Pradesh, which now comprises Andhra and Telangana, were selected. In each of the four states, two districts with contrasting levels of autonomy (level of support provided by MS) were selected. In each district, all the sanghas were classified into three categories—old and mature sanghas, with more autonomy, sanghas considered to be moderately strong, and relatively new sanghas still in the developmental stage. From each category, three sanghas were selected randomly. Thus, nine sanghas in each district, that is 72 sanghas in all eight districts, were

selected for study. In addition, one federation from each of the selected districts, ensuring an old and a not-so-old federation in each state, were selected. Thus 72 villages and eight federations were the units examined (Annexure 1).

The outputs specified in the Results Framework were used to frame questions for discussion at the sanghas and federations. At the sangha level, discussions with sangha members, at least twelve in each sangha, and discussions with the sahyoginis and a few non-sangha members, and sangha records, were the main sources of data. At the District Implementation Units of all eight districts, discussions with the District Programme Coordinators (DPCs) and other district level stakeholders were held. At the state level, day-long interactions with the MS stakeholders in the state were held in all four states.

In addition, an email survey of all the DPCs was conducted to obtain an assessment of the national picture with respect to sangha/ federation status. Of the 130 MS districts in the country, 120 were included in the survey. Three districts were new and in consultation with the State Project Directors, these districts were dropped; in another seven districts, data could not be compiled in time. In addition, visits to selected federations which were not part of the eight selected, and to a few specific project activities under MS, were undertaken.

1. MAHILA SAMAKHYA 2014: STATUS

The status of Mahila Samakhya (MS), as of September 30, 2014, is given in Table 1.1 (see below). Some salient features of this table and the findings from an analysis of other relevant data are presented below.

1. MS covers 130 districts and 679 blocks/ mandals in the country.
2. MS covers 36% of the blocks/ mandals in the districts in which it is working. This indicates significant coverage on average.
3. MS has a presence in 44,446 villages, that is in about a quarter of the villages of the districts where it is present.
4. In the villages under MS coverage, there are 55,402 sanghas. About 32% of these (17507) are under autonomous federations. This is a significant number and reflects the move towards greater autonomy and independence for the older sanghas.
5. The sangha membership stands at 14,41,928.
6. There are 325 federations; 156 (48%) are autonomous. Some more federations are in the process of consolidation; it is expected that about 60% of the federations currently in existence would come under the autonomous label by April 2015.
7. There are 21,825 savings and credit groups, with 5,31,239 members (about 37% of total membership).
8. MS is involved in 102 Mahila Shikshan Kendras with an enrolment of 2989. Cumulatively, under the programme, there are 28,507 MSK alumni, and 17,606 of these (62%) have been mainstreamed into formal schools.
9. There are 16,864 alternative learning centres of various kinds in most states. In four states MS runs 187 KGBVs and in one state there are 802 NPEGL centres. (These are taken up elsewhere in the report.)
10. There are 23,026 kishori sanghas with 5,23,701 members.
11. There are 481 Nari Adalats, which have dealth with, cumulatively, 30,410 cases up to now.
12. A total of 30,090 sangha women have contested panchayati raj elections, and 12,905 (43%) have been elected.
13. Sangha women also find representation on the school management committees: there are 30,377 SMC members who are also sangha members.

One key inference from the status presented above is that MS has progressed significantly down the sangha-federation autonomy path—32% of the sanghas are under autonomous federations and are no longer under direct MS coverage; about 48% of the federations are already autonomous and by April 2015, it is expected that this figure will reach 60%. It is likely that the autonomous sangha membership will also be around this figure. In brief, MS has travelled down the path of autonomy to a significant degree. This trend, which is by now well established, can only be taken forward—what support the autonomous federations would need in the future, if any such support is required, is a key issue. It also raises questions about the lifecycle of MS itself—how will the extension of autonomy be managed and at what speed should it take place?

Table 1.1: MAHILA SAMAKHYA 2014: STATUS AT A GLANCE

	State	Telangana	Andhra Pradesh	Assam	Bihar	Chhattisgarh	Gujarat	Jharkhand	Karnataka	Kerala	Uttarakhand	Uttar Pradesh	Total
1	Districts	8	7	12	21	6	12	11	18	8	8	19	130
2	Blocks	84	45	65	124	15	76	81	68	18	26	77	679
3	Villages	3627	1763	3466	8482	1586	4335	4993	3701	3715	2925	5853	44446
4	Sanghas	4520	2491	4030	11435	1131	3422	9667	6706	3792	2725	5483	55402
5	Members of Sanghas	177163	93671	214010	217007	26180	94649	146878	219173	67685	67836	117676	1441928
6	Savings & credit groups formed by sangha members	0	0	5902	7586	507	773	4723	0	0	1237	1097	21825
7	Members of Savings & Credit groups	150727	80914	65452	117015	5014	15519	57652	0	0	21534	17412	531239
8	EC/ other committee members trained	2765	0	5294	8055	94	28920	4674	133602	1254	5306	18410	208374
9	MS personnel trained	2902	1768	1102	5532	0	2911	792	2017	411	28	9134	26597
10	Federations formed	43	8	37	13	0	38	35	54	26	19	52	325
11	Autonomous federations	33	0	25	9	0	3	12	43	0	9	22	156
12	Sanghas under autonomous federations	1437	0	2008	2093	0	0	1762	4545	0	927	4735	17507
13	MSKs	9	6	12	12	2	3	14	13	8	7	16	102
14	Girls passed out of MSKs	4643	1030	2045	6722	25	207	3838	1405	508	1166	6918	28507

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	State	Telangana	Andhra Pradesh	Assam	Bihar	Chhattisgarh	Gujarat	Jharkhand	Karnataka	Kerala	Uttarakhand	Uttar Pradesh	Total
15	Girls enrolled in formal schools after having passed out of MSKs	3351	702	1606	3859	10	125	2461	29	381	787	4295	17606
16	Kishori Sanghas	2091	1339	1551	9630	414	1224	1398	2753	1929	0	697	23026
17	Members of Kishori Sanghas	57669	39328	38805	200311	7483	18581	17236	89717	44023	0	10548	523701
18	Nari Adalats/ Nyaya committees	49	4	13	72	1	103	12	55	16	120	36	481
19	Cases dealt with by Nari Adalats/ Nyaya committees	2195	749	766	8472	0	5269	402	3950	3308	1771	3528	30410
20	Counselling centres	0	0	6	0	0	53	0	0	34	3	0	96
21	Cases dealt with by counselling centres	0	0	799	0	0	24524	0	0	1938	136	0	27397
22	Sangha members contested PRI elections	3789	4146	2375	3733	239	8769	407	0	149	5203	1280	30090
23	Sangha members elected to Panchayats	0	2433	999	1213	78	384	227	1646	107	3977	1841	12905
24	Alternative centres for learning & literacy (adult learning centres/ literacy centres/ literacy	0	0	3203	597	248	544	2896	835	95	3534	4912	16864

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	State	Telangana	Andhra Pradesh	Assam	Bihar	Chhattisgarh	Gujarat	Jharkhand	Karnataka	Kerala	Uttarakhand	Uttar Pradesh	Total
	camps/Jagjagi centres/ bal jag-jagi)												
25	KGBVs run by MS	0	0	0	107	0	15	0	32	0	0	33	187
26	NPEGEL centres run by MS	0	0	0	0	0	0	802		0	0	0	802
27	Sangha members on School Management Committees set up under RTE	4532	2204	8205	0	2004	4243	1418	2454	803	1760	2754	30377
28	Sanjivini kendras, herbal medicine centres run by Federations/ Sanghas	0	0	0	0	0	14	74	37	0	293	59	477
29	Early child care centres, Palna Ghar/ Shishu kendras	0	0	903	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	912
30	Mahiti Kendras/ information centres	0	0	0	0	0	66	84	20	23	0	0	193

Source: Compiled as part of this study from data supplied by State Project Offices and verified by National Project Office.

Mahila Samakhya 2014: *A National Review*

The status picture presented above shows that MS covers 130 districts and 679 blocks/ mandals in the country. There are 55,402 sanghas, with a consolidated membership of 14,41,928. This study also collected data directly from 120 districts. As a result of this exercise, consolidated data pertaining to 13,47,065 members were obtained. From this dataset, the following observations can be made.

1.1 MS has successfully mobilized socially-marginalized women

Table 1.2: Sangha membership, by social category

Category	Number	Per cent
Sangha membership TOTAL	1347065	
Sangha membership Scheduled Caste	474742	35.2%
Sangha membership Scheduled Tribe	278907	20.7%
Sangha membership Other Backward Classes	351147	26.1%
Sangha membership General	73171	5.4%
Sangha membership Minority	114376	8.5%
Sangha membership (Other)	54722	4.1%

Overall, MS has focused on the socially marginalized sections of society. Nearly 56% belong to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. This is two and a half times their representation in the general population; women belonging to the Other Backward Classes seem to be in proportion to their presence in the general population. Minority community contributes a fairly substantial 8.5%; this figure has to be seen in the context of the stated concern in the recent past about the lack of representation of minorities. MS has clearly been a programme targeted at social change; it has focused strongly on the most vulnerable sections of society, so much so that ***nearly 90% of the sangha membership is drawn from the disadvantaged sections of society***. This focus, as will be seen later on, has led to the emergence of leadership from the disadvantaged sections of society—prima facie, within women, privileging the interaction of social status represented by caste, tribe or religion and class, both of which often run parallel to each other, is indicated by the membership pattern.

1.2 Support to sanghas from DIUs is mainly non-financial

The macro-status picture presented earlier showed that 32% of the sanghas are under autonomous federations. The districts were asked to indicate the number of sanghas that do not receive any kind of support directly. This number is 23%. The DIUs provide direct mobilizational (non-financial) support to 62% of the sanghas and a mix of some financial and other forms of support to the remaining 15% sanghas (Table 1.3). That is, only these 15% are in the three-year funding cycle—the 23% sanghas which do not receive any support now have received seed funding in the past. As indicated during the field visits, the funding cycle operates in a variety of ways; the sanghas have to show a good track record before they start receiving the small amounts set aside by MS; often delays in receiving funds can lead to irregular patterns of distribution. Overall, from the field visits, it was obvious that while funding to the sanghas is seen by them as important, the desire to run a good sangha through voluntary contribution is seen as more crucial.

Table 1.3: Sanghas receiving financial support from MS

Sanghas in funding cycle	14.5%
Sanghas receiving only mobilizational support from district units	62.3%
Sanghas that do not receive any kind of support	23.2%

1.3 MS is a volunteer-driven programme built on the contribution of sangha members

If building a good sangha through voluntary contribution of the members is crucial, what is the nature of such contribution to the collectivization imperative of MS? The contribution of the sangha members is mainly the contribution of their time in terms of wages foregone and the incidental expenses that they bear. Against this investment of time and money what has been the outcome? Given the tight schedule under which this study was carried out, only a brief study of five sanghas in Telangana, carried out with the help of the resource persons of the state, is presented here. Five sanghas, which were fairly active, were selected from five districts of Telangana, one from each district. The sangha records, including data on how many women contributed to which programme for how many days during the period under study and whether they had to spend any money on their own, discussions with the sangha members concerned, independent records of wages in the area, and information available with the district units, were used to compute the wages foregone. The data collection was intensive, subject to a number of cross-checks; yet a conservative approach was taken, so that wherever there was a doubt about the number of days spent or about the wages, the lowest figures were taken. The results are presented below. On average, a sangha foregoes wage income of ₹ 1,00,886 per annum in order to carry out the women's empowerment that MS aims at; the average sangha member contributes ₹ 3532 per annum. The average sangha takes up 889 woman-days for its activities per annum; and the average sangha member contributes 31 days—or roughly two and a half days a month. Of course there are variations among the sanghas—the smaller sanghas make more demands on their members; the larger sanghas seem to be managing with smaller per member contributions.

Table 1.4: Contribution of sangha members in days and wages foregone (excluding incidental expenses)

	Rayalapalli	Madwar	JhariKolamguda	Yerraram	Julurpadu	Mean
Time period (years)	10	15	10	15	3	
Average membership (number)	25	30	30	25	42	
Days contributed by sangha per annum	1029	812	764	1092	750	889
Days contributed per member per annum	41	27	25	44	18	31
Wages foregone by sangha as a whole per annum (₹)	93690	83482	116511	137555	73193	100886
Wages foregone per member per annum (₹)	3748	2782	3884	5502	1743	3532

Where are the efforts of the women directed? Health is a major concern; nearly a quarter of the time contributed goes towards health issues. Children's education and women's taken together account for about 28 per cent of the time contributed. In other words, health and education account for half of the contribution. The remaining time is divided among the political agency goals of MS, helping out in federation building and taking up social and gender related issues. (Collective farming, specific to the state, may be discounted here.)

Table 1.5: Contribution of sangha members, by activity (excluding Julurpadu)

Wages foregone per member per annum (₹), by activity	Rayalapalli	Madwar	Jhari Kolamguda	Yerraram	Mean	% by activity
Children's Education	528	516	452	866	590	15%
Women's Literacy	486	599	518	496	525	13%
Health	789	326	1389	1181	921	23%
Collective farming	461	241	0	1207	477	12%
Participation of women in Panchayats	364	137	250	861	403	10%
Social and Gender issues	764	649	105	680	549	14%
Institutional Building	356	314	664	211	386	10%
Natural resource asset building	0	0	506	0	127	3%
	3748	2782	3884	5502	3979	

Each sangha member may be putting in about ₹300 per month to achieve their collective goal, and MS's purpose, of empowerment. The contribution of the average sangha member is significant indeed and indicates the success of the mobilization that MS has managed to achieve. In terms of returns the impact that the case study villages indicate is significant. The benefits achieved are presented in Annexure 2. It is difficult to place a value on stopping one child marriage or ensuring 90% institutional deliveries—though the benefits of delayed pregnancy and safe child birth are well known; nor is it easy to place a value on the benefits of reduced alcoholism—the impact of this problem on domestic violence and home economics are well known. Suffice it to say that these benefits are the result primarily of the voluntary effort put in by the women members.

The picture is likely to be similar across a major part of MS areas. The district study gave the following distribution of the sanghas by their activity status.

Table 1.6: DIUs' categorization of sanghas, by perceived activeness

Active sanghas	16009	30.5%
Medium activity sanghas	18164	34.6%
Weak active sanghas	18295	34.9%
Total sanghas	52468	

It is reasonable to expect that the contribution of the women described above is likely to be applicable to about 65% of the sanghas. Assuming that only 50% of the contribution of Rs. 3532 applies, and that too to only 65% of the membership, the conservative annual input is a significant Rs. 168 crore. This is a

major contribution of the women, and the achievements have to be seen in relation to this investment. MS may be a "low-cost" intervention in terms of the plan allocation—about Rs. 210 crore in the XI Plan, but the voluntary contribution of the sangha members has been immense. MS can pride itself on mobilizing such massive voluntary contributions for social change.

1.4 Social profile in favour of the marginalized and increasing focus on education: Support from profile of a small sample

The profile of the 802 sangha members who took part in the discussions in the 72 sanghas is given below. These members gathered when the study teams visited the sanghas; data on a maximum of 12 members in each sangha was collected, even if more had attended the group meetings. More than a third of the members are in the 31 to 40 age group (Table 1.7). Women less than 50 years of age account for more than 80% who contributed data. The age profile, considering that old sanghas were a significant part of the sample, indicates a preponderance of younger women; the average age is 40.9 years. The average years of membership in the sangha works out to 9.1 years. Slightly more than a third had been in the sanghas for 11 years or more.

Table 1.7: Sample sangha member profile, Age and Years in sangha

Age			Years in sangha		
30 years and below	181	23.4%	5 years and less	279	35.2%
31 to 40 years	268	34.7%	6 to 10 years	236	29.8%
41 to 50 years	189	24.5%	11 to 20 years	242	30.5%
More than 50 years	135	17.5%	More than 20 years	36	4.5%
	773			793	

In line with the MS pattern, almost all the women belonged to socially disadvantaged communities; SC and ST made up nearly 55% of the women. The proportion of OBC is significantly higher in the sample than in the macro-picture presented earlier—possibly because of the selection of the four states which did not include states with higher representation of general category and others.

Table 1.8: Social profile of sangha members in sample

SC	275	34.9
ST	159	20.2
OBC	315	40.0
General	9	1.1
Minority	30	3.8
	788	100.0

Many women (446 out of 747, 56%) are in paid employment outside their homes and family occupations. This reflects the profile of the women with whom MS consciously decided to work. The card-holding status is as follows: 77.4% have MNREGA card; 74.9% the BPL card; 56.9% the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana card. All these indicate a fairly high level of participation in government schemes and intervention. Seventy two per cent of the women have their own bank accounts; 65.6% of them

report that at least one member of the family has availed of the benefits of reservation. A large number (86.4%) report regular participation in the gram sabha. As discussed elsewhere in this report, this is one significant spin-off of MS intervention. The poor formal education status of the sangha members is reflected in the large proportion of women without formal education. However, the numbers with secondary/ higher secondary and even graduate qualifications is indicative of the change that has happened in wider society in recent years.

Table 1.9: Educational profile of sangha members in sample

No formal schooling	475	61.2%
Primary	80	10.3%
Upper primary	96	12.4%
Secondary/ higher secondary	101	13.0%
Degree	21	2.7%
MSK graduate	3	0.4%
	776	

The women reported on whether all girls (and boys) in the 6 to 16 age group (which includes part of the secondary school stage) in their families were in school. The gap between boys and girls is quite narrow, with nearly 81% of the women reporting all girls in school. It is possible that some of the older children have left school at various stages, and hence the proportion is short of the ideal 100%.

Table 1.10: Children in 6-16 age group in school, sample sangha members' families

All children in 6-16 age group in school?	Girls		Boys	
	Number	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	547	80.8	584	84.4
No	130	19.2	108	15.6
Total	677	100.0	692	100.0

What is interesting is that in the families of those members who do not have formal education, the younger generation of girls is doing well; 77% of those with no formal education have all the girls in school. Members with formal education, though, still seem to be at an advantage, but the picture with respect to those without formal education is encouraging.

Table 1.11: Girls (6 to 16 years) in school, by formal education of mothers

Educational status of sangha member	All girls in age group 6 to 16 in school		Total
	Yes	No	
No formal education	299	87	386
	77%	23%	
Formal education	214	35	249
	86%	14%	

1.5 Summary: Mahila Samakhya Status

1. MS covers 130 districts and 679 blocks/ mandals in the country.
2. MS covers 36% of the blocks/ mandals in the districts in which it is working. This indicates significant coverage on average.
3. MS has a presence in 44,446 villages, that is in about a quarter of the villages of the districts where it is present.
4. In the villages under MS coverage, there are 55,402 sanghas. About 32% of these (17507) are under autonomous federations. This is a significant number and reflects the move towards greater autonomy and independence for the older sanghas.
5. The sangha membership stands at 14,41,928.
6. There are 325 federations; 156 (48%) are autonomous. Some more federations are in the process of consolidation; it is expected that about 60% of the federations currently in existence would come under the autonomous label by April 2015.
7. There are 21,825 savings and credit groups, with 5,31,239 members (about 37% of the total sangha membership).
8. MS is involved in 102 Mahila Shikshan Kendras with an enrolment of 2989. Cumulatively, under the programme, there are 28,507 MSK alumni, and 17,606 of these (62%) have been mainstreamed into formal schools.
9. There are 16,864 alternative learning centres of various kinds in most states. In four states MS runs 187 KGBVs and in one state there are 802 NPEGEL centres.
10. There are 23,026 kishori sanghas with 5,23,701 members.
11. There are 481 Nari Adalats, which have dealth with, cumulatively, 30,410 cases up to now.
12. A total of 30,090 sangha members have contested panchayati raj elections, and 12,905 (43%) have been elected.
13. Sangha women also find representation on the school management committees: there are 30,377 SMC members who are also sangha members.
14. MS has successfully mobilized marginalized women; nearly 90% of the sangha membership is drawn from the disadvantaged sections of society. SC and ST constitute 56% of the sangha membership at the national level.
15. Support to sanghas from DIUs is mainly non-financial, with nearly 62% of the sanghas receiving only mobilizational (capacity building) support. While sanghas do see funding as of some importance, the desire to run a good sangha through voluntary contribution may be perceived to be more crucial.
16. MS is a volunteer-driven programme built on the contribution of sangha members. The contributions of the members has been significant. Case studies of five fairly active sanghas indicate that the average sangha member may be contributing about ₹ 3532 per annum to the task of women's empowerment. The average sangha member contributes about 31 days per year, roughly two and a half days a month to the sangha institution. Assuming that only 50% of the contribution of Rs. 3532 applies to only 65% of the active and very active membership, a conservative estimate of the annual input may be a significant Rs. 168 crore. In brief, the committed contribution of the women to their own empowerment has to be recognized.
17. The sangha women who contributed to the discussions in the 72 sampled sanghas reflect MS's focus on the marginalized sections of society. The sample indicates that the inter-generational shift in favour of girls' education is strong. In the families of those members who do not have formal education, the younger generation of girls is doing well; 77% of the members with no formal education have all the girls in their families in the age group of 6 to 16 in school.

Members with formal education, though, still seem to be at an advantage, but the picture with respect to those members without formal education is encouraging.

2. EXPANSION AND COVERAGE OF THE PROGRAMME

As noted earlier, MS covers 130 districts and 679 blocks/ mandals in the country and is present in 44,446 villages. In these villages, there are 55,402 sanghas, of which 32% (17,507) are under autonomous federations. The sangha membership stands at 14,41,928. There are 325 federations, 156 (48%) of which are autonomous and and a few more are in the process of consolidation preparatory to withdrawal by March 2015. The XI Plan had envisaged expansion to 141 districts, but this included nine districts of Madhya Pradesh. At the beginning of the period, MS was present in only 83 districts of nine states. While the number of districts reached is marginally short of the 132 (excluding Madhya Pradesh) expected by the end of 2012, the number of sanghas and the membership have shown a steady and significant increase. The focus of this chapter is on the sangha—the keystone of the entire MS edifice. What can be highlighted from the process of sangha formation? In recent years the focus has shifted to an inclusive method of expansion within sanghas. What has been the pattern of such expansion? We answer these questions primarily from the data collected from the field study of 72 sanghas.

2.1   Persons playing critical roles in sangha formation

Who played a critical role in sangha formation? In all the villages except one, the women were able to identify by name the key persons who were most critical in getting the initial group together. As is to be expected, MS functionaries have played a key role in getting the sanghas started; the names of many of them are remembered even though they have been moved out to other places or have left MS. This is a very striking feature of the responses to this question. The pattern of responses indicates that the role played by MS functionaries is remembered long after the sangha formation; yet, more than 40 per cent of the sanghas (30 out of 72) attribute the key agency role to themselves. In other words, the catalytic role played by MS functionaries seems to be evident—the MS people are recalled by name, and at the same time a number of sanghas believe that such people helped them play mobilizational roles. This is an indicator of the strength of the sangha initiation processes in MS.

Table 2.1: Key sangha initiators

Key roles played by villagers themselves; still active in sanghas	25
Key roles played by villagers themselves; migrated out or passed away	5
Key role played by MS functionaries, who have moved to other places or left MS	31
Key role played by MS functionaries, who have moved up the MS ladder as Cluster resource persons or to district level	8
Some awareness of who played the key role in getting the group started, but attributing critical leadership to many agencies	2
Not able to identify who played key roles in sangha formation	1
	72

2.2   Patterns of expansion of membership: Inclusion of women from all social groups

MS began with the specific goal of working with the most vulnerable rural women—those who were marginalized on account of class, caste and tribe overdetermined by gender marginalization. Hence, many of the early organizational efforts focused on the most deprived and most vulnerable who happened to be women belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes. Of course, in the case of scheduled tribes, the villages were socially homogeneous. What has been the movement over the years with respect to expansion within the sangha (Table 2.2) and with respect to inclusion of all social groups in the sanghas?

Table 2.2: Addition of new members

Age (years)	Number	Initial memb ership	Initial per sangha members	New memb ers	New members as % of initial	Attrition (members left)	Attrition as % of new members
ALL sanghas	72	1735	24	1010	58%	156	15%
Less than 10 years old sanghas	38	931	25	395	42%	53	13%
10 years or more	34	804	24	615	76%	103	17%

The average sangha seems to start with a fairly standard size, around 24 to 25 members. But over time, about 14 members seem to get added on, with about two leaving. On average, there has been some growth; as is to be expected, this seems to be more in the older sanghas, which add about 18 compared to the younger ones which add about 10 during the course of their first few years. However, if one considers the per annum addition per sangha, it is 1.5 members; also there is a correlation of -0.20 between age of the sangha and members added per annum—member addition slows down as sanghas age. We would like to add a general comment on 'membership' here. The term assumes that formal records are maintained which helps one get a fairly accurate picture of the membership. Often, as evidenced during the field visits, membership registers are not maintained in the manner one would expect in formal organizations. Especially in the older sanghas, while initial records are available, over time, the concept has come to be quite fluid in practice. Very often, during the visits, in group meetings of sanghas with membership of 'x', there would be 'x+' attendance. The number of women actually taking some interest in the sangha may be more than the number formally identified as members. Hence, getting an idea of the number of members who are formally recognized as such required some effort. Having said that, it must also be noted that with the entry of more educated young women in recent times, it is possible in the future to stress membership record keeping as an indication of a formal organization—even if it is a volunteer-driven group as in the case of the sanghas. Given the limitations noted above, it can be concluded that there has been a limited addition to the formal membership, especially when one considers that the average village size in which the sanghas are situated is 417 households. In some states like Karnataka, the sangha size is bound to be limited because of the influence of the savings and self-help movement on MS membership patterns. Yet, overall, growth in membership, though limited, has happened.

Even if the growth has been limited, from where has the additional membership come? This question can be answered by an analysis of the types of expansion undertaken by various kinds of sanghas. From

an analysis of the evidence of expansion in the 72 sanghas, four types of sanghas emerge (Table 2.3): The first category includes those sanghas where there is clear evidence of inclusion of other social groups; the second category does not show this evidence, though in some cases a few women of other social groups may have been included. There is another category which includes sanghas that claim that their membership has theoretically been open to all women—such sanghas, like the others do have the option of expanding vertically—deepening their own community membership, or expanding horizontally, across other social groups. The last category includes sanghas which were set up in socially homogeneous settings—these are primarily single social group sanghas though some of them may have included one or two women of one or two families belonging to other social groups which resided in their villages.

Table 2.3: Sangha types, by mode of expansion

	Progressively included other social groups	No evidence of inclusion	Open to all from early days	Single group-focus sanghas	Total
Total sanghas	11	9	36	16	72
	15%	13%	50%	22%	

Sixteen of the 72 sanghas were initiated in a homogeneous environment—a single tribe village or a small village with a single/ dominant caste. For instance, in Sekhpura, a small Uttar Pradesh village, the Dohre community constitutes the sangha membership. In a few cases, such villages may have a very small number of families (one to three) belonging to one other caste, and such sanghas have included women from these other castes. While in practice sanghas may have started as institutions based on the most deprived castes, half of the sanghas (36) claim that they kept the sanghas open to all women right from the beginning or the very early days of the sangha; as we will see later these sanghas may expand horizontally across other social groups or vertically, within their own groups. A few show evidence of active participation of all social groups. One sangha made efforts to include the women of the lone Muslim family in the village in the sangha. Two other sanghas put in effort to include the three Muslim families that each had in their villages. In one Telangana sangha, special efforts have been made to ensure the participation of a fairly sizeable proportion of Muslim women.

Of the remaining 20, nine have remained in their original form—sanghas initiated for, and often by, the most marginalized women, usually belonging to SC. Either the members have not opened their doors to others, or other caste groups do not want to join ("The Brahmins and Kumbhar families did not join the sangha), or, as in one case, some joined but left. The other 11 sanghas have moved towards progressively including women of other social groups. "We have opened our doors to women from all the households of the village." What has been the vertical and horizontal expansion behaviour of these four categories of sanghas?

In the analysis that follows, we consider only 68 sanghas, since four sanghas which were formed in the last one year, had had two rounds of membership, the second closely following the first, with the first round taking in a small number and the second bringing in a large number of women. For instance, in one sangha, ten members were included in the first round and the second round brought in 40 women. Second, the dominant mode of expansion has been counted. Thus in the case of horizontal expansion, it is likely that some additions from within the same community may also have happened; however, cross-checks indicate that sanghas usually follow one dominant mode of expansion.

Table 2.4: Horizontal and vertical expansion of sanghas, dominant patterns, by type of sangha

| | | Type of sangha | | | | |
		Progressively included other social groups	No evidence of inclusion	Open to all from early days	Single group focus sanghas	Total
Within same social group	Number	2	4	8	8	22
	% within Type of sangha	18.2%	50.0%	24.2%	50.0%	32.4%
	% of Total	2.9%	5.9%	11.8%	11.8%	32.4%
	Members added	70	29	203	129	431 (48%)
	Avg added per sangha	35	7	25	16	
Across social groups	Number	9	0	7	2	18
	% within Type of sangha	81.8%	0.0%	21.2%	12.5%	26.5%
	% of Total	13.2%	0.0%	10.3%	2.9%	26.5%
	Members added	168	0	292	4	464 (52%)
	Avg added per sangha	19	0	42	2	
No members added	Number	0	4	18	6	28
	% within Type of sangha	0.0%	50.0%	54.5%	37.5%	41.2%
	% of Total	0.0%	5.9%	26.5%	8.8%	41.2%
Total	Number	11	8	33	16	68
	% of Total	16.2%	11.8%	48.5%	23.5%	100.0%

The following observations may be made:
1. In the sample villages, 52% of the women added have been from other social groups; there has been a movement from a focus on the initial group with which the sangha started to a more inclusive agenda based on identity as women.
2. At the same time, it must be noted that 28 of the 68 sanghas have not augmented their membership. This only reinforces the point about limited expansion made earlier.
3. The sanghas which have been open to all show a balanced expansion horizontally and vertically, adding 42 and 25 members per sangha, respectively. Nine of the eleven sanghas which have progressively included other social groups have also been successful, including 19 women per sangha.

To conclude this section, it seems that expansion within sanghas, though limited, does indicate a horizontal spread across social groups different from the ones which initiated the sanghas. Discussions within MS have often made references to the need to be more inclusive when it comes to participation of other social groups. This movement seems to be in evidence. However, it must be kept in mind that MS began with a strong focus on the most vulnerable women—women who were at the receiving end of multiple modes of discrimination. The older sanghas show clear evidence of leadership from the formerly most vulnerable sections of society. That there is now some horizontal expansion is interesting; one way of interpreting this pattern is that MS by and large reveals a bottom-up approach to empowerment, where the initially most vulnerable have to close in upon themselves till such point as they develop enough power and confidence to be able to relate with some confidence and measure of equality with other social groups. This approach to empowerment, which begins by addressing multiple modes of discrimination first has held MS in good stead and should not be given up when new sanghas are formed in the future. In other words, there is no reason to change the initiation process that MS has followed up to now.

2.3   Why have new women joined?

Of the 72 sanghas, 28 have not seen the addition of any new members. The reasons given by the 44 sanghas which have seen expansion cluster around the following three themes: First, savings. This is a dominant reason in seven of the sanghas. The savings also lead to internal lending. The desire to learn more, "gain knowledge", and improve levels of awareness, constitute a second major cluster of reasons in 26 sanghas—there could be minor reasons also, but we are focusing here on the most important reason. Specific areas of knowledge and awareness include the law, education, panchayat system, and health. For some, gaining knowledge also means getting a chance to step out of the village and break the "purdah system" as mentioned in two villages. A third set of reasons include the motivation and benefits provided by the existing sangha members (eleven sanghas). Seeing the changes among women who were sangha members was a major motivator in at least six of the eleven. "After seeing the changes in members' daily life, especially after seeing them going out of the house, we were motivated." As an instance in this category, one incident is narrated briefly. In one village, a woman's husband expired. Seeing her helplessness, one man told her that he would help her get some money from the block office. The formalities were done, and then since the woman did not know how to encash the 5000 rupee cheque, the man offered to get the money. He took the cheque and never came back. The woman approached the sangha members who went to the block office and solved the problem. The woman immediately joined the sangha. This pattern again supports the point made earlier about the strength of the initiation processes that MS has followed. The third category is especially interesting because it indicates that empowerment of the most vulnerable—addressing multiple identities, even if it takes more time, provides a strong foundation for a movement to a larger group based on a single identity.

2.4   Eligibility norms for becoming a member in the Sangha

As is to be expected, 55 of the 72 sanghas (76%) do not have any stated eligibility criteria for membership. Of the remaining 17, only one states that the sangha is open only to SC, in spite of the presence of other social groups in the village. Two have a small formal token fee for membership, and the other 14 have age-related restrictions—all specify a lower age limit of 18, and 12 have upper limits

of 45 or 50. No instance of membership being refused was reported in the sample villages, on grounds other than the eligibility criteria, if any had been specified.

2.5   Activity sub-groups in the sanghas

In 31 of the 72 sanghas there are no clear sub-groups that are active on a regular basis. In 37, however, sub-groups inspired by MS training are in evidence. These sub-committees take up various issues like health, education, law, panchayat, nari adalat, and savings, and follow the broader thematic areas that MS has identified. On average, there are four to five committees. In three sanghas, self-help groups have been initiated.

2.6   Are adolescent girls (11-17 years) members of the sanghas?

In 19 sanghas, adolescent girls are members of the sanghas, with on an average there being about ten girls in each sangha. In two sanghas, adolescent girls are not members but are allowed to attend sangha meetings. In 11 villages there are kishori sanghas, with the smallest having four girls and the largest 25. The other 40 sanghas (55%) do not allow adolescent girls to become members.

2.7   Do sanghas support expansion into new villages?

Fifty six out of the 72 sanghas (nearly 78%) have been involved directly or indirectly in the formation of new sanghas. For a volunteer-driven programme, this is an impressive achievement. Out of the 16 sanghas which have not involved themselves in expansion work, two express a desire to help, but also say that they have not had an opportunity to help out thus far. The sanghas are usually requested by MS functionaries to help out by visiting neighbouring villages; in some cases (six out of 56) the women have initiated sangha formation on their own because of social ties. Whatever the reason, the high proportion of sanghas involved in new sangha formation has to be appreciated. The indirect involvement of 38 out of the 56 sanghas is expressed in various ways. In one village the sangha undertook a 20 km padyatra. Others have covered five to seven other villages. A number of sanghas have involved themselves in conducting meetings in neighbouring villages; a few have used the nari adalat route to motivate women to think about a sangha. A few sanghas have targeted one village each to create awareness about the benefits of a sangha. The remaining 18 sanghas are able to cite direct evidence of sanghas to the formation of which they have contributed. In one case, women from a neighbouring village became temporary members to learn the activities that a sangha is supposed to do. There are also examples of a single sangha helping set up four to five other sanghas.

2.8   Summary: Expansion and coverage

1. MS has expanded from 83 districts in nine states at the beginning of the XI Plan period to 130 districts in 11 states (counting Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as separate states). While this number is marginally short of the 132 (excluding Madhya Pradesh) expected by the end of 2012, the number of sanghas and the membership have shown a steady and significant increase.

2. MS functionaries have played critical roles in sangha formation; but 40 per cent of the sampled sanghas attribute the key agency role to themselves, indicating that MS functionaries have played key catalytic roles while helping local women play mobilizational roles.

3. The average sangha starts with a fairly standard size, around 24 to 25 members. Over time, about 14 members seem to get added on, with about two leaving. On average, there has been some growth. If one considers the per annum addition per sangha, it is 1.5 members; also there is a correlation of -0.20 between age of the sangha and members added per annum—member addition slows down as sanghas age. In short while growth is there, it is limited, given that the mean village size is 417 households. Growth slows down with the age of the sangha.

4. 'Membership' is a fluid concept—formal membership registers are usually not taken very seriously, sometimes attendance in meetings is more than the formal membership. Membership record keeping may be stressed in the future as an indication of a formal organization—even if it is a volunteer-driven group.

5. The patterns of expansion in the 72 sanghas reveal four types of sanghas. The first with clear evidence of inclusion of other social groups (15%); the second category does not show this evidence, though in some cases a few women of other social groups may have been included (13%). A third category is made up of sanghas that claim that their membership has theoretically been open to all women—such sanghas, like the others do have the option of expanding vertically—deepening their own community membership, or expanding horizontally, across other social groups (50%). The last category includes sanghas which were set up in socially homogeneous settings—these are primarily single social group sanghas (22%).

6. In the sample villages, 52% of the women added to the initial membership have been from other social groups; there has been a movement from a focus on the initial group to a more inclusive agenda based on identity as women.

7. At the same time, 28 of 68 sanghas have not augmented their membership. This reinforces the point about limited expansion made earlier.

8. Expansion within sanghas, though limited, does indicate a horizontal spread across social groups which are different from the ones that initiated the sanghas.

9. Within MS there have been frequent references to the need to be more inclusive when it comes to participation of other social groups. This movement seems to be in evidence.

10. MS began with a strong focus on the most vulnerable women—women who were at the receiving end of multiple modes of discrimination. The older sanghas show clear evidence of leadership from the formerly most vulnerable sections of society. That there is now some horizontal expansion is interesting; one way of interpreting this pattern is that MS by and large reveals a bottom-up approach to empowerment, where the initially most vulnerable have to close in upon themselves till such point as they develop enough power and confidence to be able to relate with some confidence and measure of equality with other social groups.

11. MS's approach to empowerment, which begins by addressing multiple modes of discrimination first has held MS in good stead and should not be given up when new sanghas are formed in the future. In other words, there is no reason to change the initiation process that MS has followed up to now.

12. New members have joined for three reasons. First, the possibility of increasing their financial savings. Second, the desire to learn more, "gain knowledge", and improve levels of awareness, including a chance to step out of the village and break the "purdah system." A third set of reasons include the motivation provided by the existing sangha members.

13. More than three-quarters of the sanghas sampled did not have any formal eligibility criteria for admission. Most of the remaining sanghas have age-related rules for exclusion. Nearly 55% of

the sanghas do not allow adolescent girls to become members. In a couple of sanghas they are allowed to attend sangha meetings.

14. Fifty six out of the 72 sanghas (nearly 78%) have been involved directly or indirectly in the formation of new sanghas. For a volunteer-driven programme, this is an impressive achievement. Most of these sanghas do so because MS may request them, but in six out of the 56 sanghas, the women have initiated sangha formation elsewhere on their own because of social ties.

3. THE MAHILA SAMAKHYA SANGHA: INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTH AND LOCAL IMPACT ON ISSUES OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

> The village meeting began with us asking them what they would like to tell us about their Sangha and Mahila Samakhya. The discussion was energetic and animated. A woman immediately began role playing the change and the first thing she spoke about was changes in mobility and freedom. Earlier, we could not go even to the hospital by ourselves. We could not sit outside the way we are sitting and talking to outsiders like you. If we went somewhere, we went like this (covering her head and face with a sari) completely hidden. "Jaisey taisey kar ke badla" (somehow we managed to change). ...but this comment was immediately responded to: "jaisey taisey nahin," "soch samajh ke...ran neeti thee" (not somehow, but with thinking and understanding, with a strategy).
>
> Field Notes from Uttar Pradesh

The results framework identifies one of the goals of the MS programme as "facilitating women's agency to challenge social inequality/unequal social relations/ and to break discriminatory social barriers/practices (at individual, family, community & state levels)." The outputs the programme is expected to work towards include "a) All interventions or programme processes geared towards inclusion b) MS functionaries as well as Sangha members, breaking social barriers in personal lives/practice c) Increase in women reporting violence against women, social discrimination d) Women's increased control over resources & decision-making power.

Our data, interactions in the field and conversations and meetings with various stakeholders all point to the MS programme having had a significant imprint on local issues of gender and development. While it might be impossible to isolate the impact of the MS programme, there is little doubt that sangha women have developed empowered identities and voices in most communities that the programme has worked in. The signs of success are not necessarily evident in the resolution or elimination of problems that have particularly impacted marginalized women—although several such examples were also identified—but in the contestation of spaces from which these women have been excluded historically and the challenges to discriminatory practices.

The contestation and challenges to gender-based discrimination have occurred at several levels. These include making themselves visible in the public sphere by simple acts like collectively singing songs around themes of empowerment and more stridently in taking out rallies raising awareness on issues like literacy, making demands of the government or in protest of violence against women. These actions in the public sphere have often also implied experiences of transformations in the private sphere. We describe these before we turn to the public sphere.

3.1   Transformations in the private sphere

In our group discussions, sangha women often pointed to changes in their status within their households resulting in a greater voice in household decisions as well as increased mobility. The statements we heard in focus groups discussions included: "the females are now asked their opinions in the household decisions"; "husband now helps in household work"; "the harassment has reduced in our homes";

"before 2003 we used to think men are great compared to females but after joining the sangha we learnt what are the things are equal to both, the roles and responsibilities of women. Before, we would not come outside to do any work and we would not even open our mouth in front of our families. We practiced purdah in front of males and elders. Now we believe we should participate in decision making"; "my sister Mazanbe would not go out of the house without permission but now she has the confidence to go to market and medical shop."

3.2   Participation in formal and informal democratic spaces

The Results Framework describes an explicit purpose of MS to be to "facilitate increased information and access of women to their entitlements, through various methods of capacity building." The outcomes that suggest realization of this goal are: "a) Marginalized women realize their rights and entitlements, leading to change in their status b) Enhanced transparency & accountability of State to deliver rights & entitlements to marginalized women c) Articulation of marginalized women's own notions of equity & equality."

We find strong evidence of high levels of participation in institutionalized democratic spaces by sangha women. In focus group discussions, over 96 per cent of the sanghas rated their participation in Gram Sabha meetings as regular. This is supported by the large number of the members surveyed, 86.4%, who report regular participation in the gram sabha (see previous chapter). This is one significant spin-off of MS intervention. The reports of high levels of participation are corroborated from interviews of non-members as well. In some cases their participation is specifically noted with non-members remarking that "sangha women attend meetings compulsorily" and others noting that "now their [Sangha] issues and problem are considered seriously in the gram sabha." The importance of this participation is best realized when placed in the context of the narratives of historical exclusion of women in public spaces that we heard during our field visits.

Eighty-one per cent of the old sanghas and 58 per cent of the newer sanghas replied with specific examples on the action they have taken to demand access to government services and benefits from the authorities/panchayats. They have taken steps like dharna, and demonstrations. Sangha members have competed and often won elections in Panchayati Raj Institutions. In over 55 per cent of surveyed Sanghas, sangha members have competed in elections and gone on to win posts like Sarpanch, membership in Ward Committees and Panchayats. The social and institutional challenges that Sangha members still face is evident from the fact only 27 per cent of Sanghas report members of Sanghas being part of the PRI committees. Even among Sanghas where members have not stood for elections themselves, a majority report participation in the conduct of the electoral process.

The high levels of participation by sangha women are also reflected in the fact that over 80 per cent of sanghas were able to articulate explicit issues that had been raised by sangha women in gram sabha meetings. The issues raised by sanghas include those related to local infrastructure (road construction, water pumps, government subsidies in housing, electricity, street lights, quality of school building, hand pumps in schools, community washroom; schooling; environment (tree cutting); access to and functioning of government services and schemes (quality of mid-day meals, access to job card, BPL cards, Aadhar, old-age pensions, the issue of false bills to government, Indira Aawaas Yojna). In addition, some sanghas show evidence of advocating for local resources to support sangha activities. For example, several sanghas spoke about the raising the requirement of land for sangha office in gram sabhas or with panchayat officials.

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In the context of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, it might be useful to highlight the demands around cleanliness and sanitation that have been raised by sanghas without us specifically asking for them. Some points of intervention that were mentioned included raising the "demand of cleaning the water tanks when some of the villagers became victims of dengue"; "demand for dustbins for every house, drainage system, cleaning of water tanks, clean drinking water" "issues related to Nirmal gram for making toilet in every house"; "due to poverty, there is no toilet in houses so sangha members raised this issue in gram sabha". In one case, the Sangha members also talked about going on a dharna for making toilets in every house in the village.

A few examples are given below to illustrate the range of issues and demands raised. "The talati refused to give BPL card to those who satisfy BPL criteria; so this issue was raised in the gram panchayat by the sangha women; also they raised ration card and water issues." "Regarding street lights we went to gram sabha collectively, and complained to panchayat president, he took action and order street lights. There are many water-related problems in our area; we complained to the president and he constructed a water tank in our area." There are many other examples of water tank construction and road development. "We collectively went to gram sabha for water tank problem; they provided it in a week. We also we raised the problem of quality of food in the midday meals issue for our children." "In Shamna Uchher Programme (a programme to increase admissions in the schools) the sangha was helped by the principal of the school and also the Sarpanch of the village. They helped them to manage and arrange programme for all the 3 days." An example of how the sangha can find some meeting space for itself is provided by the following example. "The sangha demanded support for a mini-anganwadi which will also be a sangha office, and with panchayat intervention one house was provided to the sangha."

The multiple ways in which Sanghas contribute to the provision of local public goods is illustrated by the examples above. In addition, several sanghas reported working with local governments on election cards, relief work and the pulse polio programme.

Most of the sanghas emphatically stress that the enthusiasm and willingness has either been maintained or gone up over the years. Where they have gone up the reasons seem to be success in taking up cases related to harassment of women, development work related to education and agencies like the public distribution system, and the increased confidence while talking to government functionaries. In addition, the feeling that knowledge and awareness have increased also adds to the motivation. In three sanghas, however, the members feel that their enthusiasm has gone down; participation levels have dropped and there may be case for fresh leadership. Overall, even accounting for the subjective and impressionistic nature of the responses, it is clear that in the majority of the sanghas, the women have managed to maintain or augment their enthusiasm.

3.3   Inclusive impact

Despite their intentions, collective processes can often be exclusionary by privileging those who are able to participate in the process and ignoring others who are voluntarily or involuntarily excluded. Therefore, a key criterion in evaluating the success of the Mahila Samakhya programme is the extent to which Sangha women are able to use their "empowered" positions to bring about changes in their communities that challenge historical gender-based exclusions.

As part of the discussions with Sangha women, we tried to assess how the sangha members have worked with non-member women to solve the issues concerning women. In a few sanghas, women had formed issue-specific committees that undertook village level activities—open to all. Examples of these issues included education, health, agriculture and law. One sangha described the work of its education committee in running night classes in the village which all women and girls could attend. At another sangha, members spoke about "Sangha women help(ing) other women to get Aadhar card when they had issues at the taluka office. Sangha women also did a survey in the whole village and helped all the villagers get election cards."

A few examples are provided to illustrate the range of issues on which sangha members have included others. "We had a rally supporting the local government for Akshara Bharathi Scheme camp." "Sangha members helped other women open bank accounts for their girl children as per Balika Samrudhi Scheme, and also helped many women take part in government schemes like Chiranjivi yojana, Aadhar card." A non-member recalled that "sangha members contributed during an epidemic in the village and took part in vaccination, medicine distribution, and other facilitation during health campaigning." Another described the how sangha members involved other women in anti-alcoholism and school enrolment campaigns. The involvement has also extended to the private sphere. "The sangha helped a non-member whose husband left her after marriage. The members talked to the husband of the victim and informed him that they were going to send him a notice from the nari adalat. Within a few days he came back." "The sangha collectively helped a non-member who was a victim of domestic violence. The sangha members intervene whenever any issue is reported to them. A husband was beating his wife; the sangha told him that his behaviour may set an example in the village and all men may start following him, and that he should sit down and sort out the issue with his wife." "There was a case of rape in which sangha members intervened and sent the culprit to jail." Other specific instances cited included intervention in cases of domestic violence and delivery of children. An instance of sanghas collaborating among themselves to resolve a conflict arising out a love marriage was also reported. Yet another issue on which there has been intervention by the sangha is the rehabilitation of widows and infertile women.

3.4   Context-dependent participation

The diversity of issues raised speaks to the non-target oriented nature of MS. In several conversations, it was evident that the issues being raised were context dependent and locally demanded. Regarding context dependent participation, out of 60 sanghas, 19 reported participation by less than 20 women when the Sangha has tried to mobilize around specific issues and 19 reported higher levels of participation. Many sanghas emphasized the fact that participation depended on the issue. Thus, a clear contrast to sector-specific, target-oriented programmes is observed. This poses a challenge in evaluating a programme as the achievements of the programme cannot be measured along some narrowly defined criteria that have been defined prior to the delivery of the programme. Therefore, we have to make judgments based on our understanding of the processes being followed by the sanghas and visible or tangible evidence of these processes in bringing about desired changes.

It was also apparent that these changes cannot be attributed entirely or solely to the Mahila Samakhya programme. For example, in one sangha, while women mentioned that earlier "we never used to come out from the kitchen in presence of head of family but now the situation is changed", they also added "it is not just because of the sangha but because of changes in society." Similarly, in another village located in the forests, members remarked "we live near the forest, but the village is having good connectivity with town and is now seeing change; girls are also having same facilities like the boys."

3.5 Violence against women

The status of a sangha as an independent collective entity of marginalized women puts it in a unique position to handle cases of violence against women. They often see it as a matter of responsibility and we heard several reports of work that Sanghas had done to challenge violence against women. The accounts we heard included, "there was a rape case of a seven year old girl by her elder brother in which sangha members acted collectively; with the help of the mother and the wife of the boy, the girl got justice and that boy is now in jail." At a sangha meeting we were told of a recent incident in which a woman was raped and drowned in a pond. The sangha women dug the pond out, despite protests, till the body was found. The Superintendent of Policy remarked to this group, "tum log CID ho kya, soongh ke yahan aa jati ho", referring to the observation that the sangha appeared whenever there was a case of sexual violence.

Their work often puts them in conflict with powerful local actors including the police and invites threats to their own safety. When asked about their motivation to take on such risks, a sangha member highlighted the empathy they feel for the victim and that they themselves might have been in the same place. When asked about what gives them the strength, she pointed to the strength in their collective and their ability to mobilize at least a couple of hundred women from the federation if it became necessary (as it had on one occasion when the District Magistrate refused to listen to the case of violence they had brought to him). In other sanghas as well members spoke about access to the MS network. At one sangha, we heard that "when police was not filing the case of rape, villagers and sangha members informed the MS staff and they worked together as pressure group on police to file an FIR in a rape case."

3.6 Beyond gender

MS's emphasis on working with marginalized women has interestingly implied that challenges to discriminatory norms and practices have not been restricted to the sphere of gender alone. We often heard examples in which gender-based empowerment has gone on to challenge other forms of subjugation and discrimination. For example, "We used to stay back at home if some upper caste people passed our homes; we used to maintain purdah and not wear footwear in front of high caste people." This situation has changed.

3.7 Creating an identity

"Hamari sabse badi shakti pehchan hai. Pehchan badi baat hai" (Our greatest strength is our identity; identity is a great thing), (sangha member).

One of the most visible ways in which collective voices are heard in villages is the medium of songs, dance and storytelling. We asked non-members if they aware of the use of any media forms by the sanghas. Over 76 per cent responded in the affirmative. Some of the comments we heard from non-members included: "They sing songs which motivate us to fight against problems"; "I don't know the issues (on which they sing songs) but they raise many issues of the village and women"; "They sing songs and dance and they also tell some women-related stories; and I even have some CDs of those

programmes"; "They sing songs on child marriage, unequal treatment between boy and girl and family planning"; "For increasing the learning of sangha members... they use songs, play, poster, flash cards, pamphlets and puppet shows as an mediums of communication." All these indicate that there the activities of the sanghas are known fairly well known among other sections of the village society.

3.8   Sangha leadership and planning

Almost all the sanghas report a leadership structure that is open to all women regardless of caste, class or any other social background. Indicating democratic functioning, members described the process of selecting a sangha leader in the following way: "If the sangha members see it fit, they can change the leaders, for example when they feel that the leaders are not working according to their expectations."

Participation in almost all the sangha meetings the research team personally attended was engaged and open. While a few women did speak more than others, the others responded knowledgably when prompted. In some cases, women who had been quiet during the conversations led the group in songs or were found to be quietly making notes of the meeting. The extent to which democratic functioning has been engendered in these very isolated spaces can be gauged by the response we got from a sangha which describes itself as living in the forests, away from civilization: "The sangha takes decisions on the basis of group discussion, if differences occur voting shows the final way or solution."

3.9   Evidence of programme planning

Around 58 per cent of the Sanghas report that they have a system of annual programme planning and creating an annual calendar of events. The older sanghas are much more likely to report doing this (68 per cent) compared to the younger sanghas (48 per cent). The Sahyoginis mention that in some cases the CRPs and JRPs provide support even in fully autonomous sanghas.

3.10   Training

Only around half the sanghas we enumerated data from mentioned that they had received some training on financial management. The training has been received from both MS staff (JRPs or CRPs) as well as Federation. The receipt of training is associated with the sanghas having independent initiatives for raising funds. Regarding capacity building for political awareness, 73% of the old sanghas (10 years or older) and 39% of the young sanghas (less than 10 years) report receiving training.

3.11   Fund-raising

We find Sanghas have fairly limited ability to raise funds independently. While we do find evidence of activity and continuing impact in many of the autonomous sanghas -- including those that have not received any funding from MS for several years -- this happens in spite of their inability to raise funds. Forty six per cent of the old sanghas and 41 per cent of the new sanghas shared specific efforts (primarily in the newer sanghas) articulated plans to raise funds on their own initiative. The fund raising avenues we heard included MS funded specific programs (example, one Sangha specifically mention Jan Sampark Abhiyan), interest on savings, charging of membership fees and applying to Panchayat or local

government. For example, the women in one sangha stated: "We requested government authorities for funds but did not get any; we raised the funds by our own savings, interest on internal lending ... small efforts have been made by the sangha to raise funds like saving 10 rupees but we have now increased it to 50 rupees weekly."

We also note some examples of efforts that might be worth considering by other sanghas. At one sangha we were told, "We usually raise the given fund by taking land on lease and cultivating those lands, and then selling vegetables; we even have taken cattle on lease and sell the milk and milk products in the other villages." Other activities included charging late fees from late comers, selling medicinal plants, membership fees, selling compost from compost pits prepared. Similarly some sanghas have been successful in conducting activities via funds from local area development funds of MLAs and even individual donations in some cases.

3.12   Capacity for management at sanghas

The Sahyoginis were asked to describe various aspects of the management of the Sangha. Based on these reports, the sanghas have been classified into one of the following categories:
None—no formal evidence of thinking on management of the sangha.
Low: Most don't report formation of annual plans, the key activities are vaguely articulated or appear to revolve purely around financial transactions. The activities also appear to be driven largely by external inputs. Most have not initiated or articulated efforts for independent fund raising.
Moderate: Most have annual plans. Compared to those categorized as high, they have limited articulation or prioritization of activities.

High: There is progress in codifying leadership and organizational structure. There is an explicit articulation of preparation of annual plans.

The distribution of the Sanghas by their age is provided below (Table 3.1)

Table 3.1: Capacity for management: Sanghas Percentages (numbers in brackets)

	Old Sanghas (10 years or older)	Young Sanghas (less than 10 years old)
None	12 (3)	2.8 (1)
Low	36 (9)	63(22)
Moderate	40 (10)	20 (7)
High	12 (3)	14.2 (5)

 As the table indicates, most sanghas fall in the low-moderate range. It is important to note that these are subjective judgments reached by us on the basis of data provided by the sahyoginis. But from our judgments of the data, very few of the old sanghas appear to be in a position to manage their activities in a manner that would be considered well-organized by modern definitions. This has not necessarily limited their ability to create an impact as most of the other evidence points to. However, given MS's

exit strategy, it is important to note that the capacities that have been built up at the Sangha level to negotiate formal institutional structures still remain fairly limited.

3.13   Relationship with federations and MS

No conflicts between sanghas and federation were reported to us. "There is a good relation like mother and child relationship, MS staff make us very aware." "When sangha is not able to solve its problem it goes to the cluster and if it is beyond the cluster then it would be handled by MS." From the voices of the sangha women, the Federation emerges as a source of ideas, knowledge and coordination. A Sahyogini provided an interesting articulation of the relationship between the Sangha, Federation and MS. She pointed to the absence of any hierarchy, but instead a chain in which each one is interdependent on the others. "It is a chain system for exchange of knowledge and information. Three of them make a balance in flow of information. There is flow of information and sharing that start from sangha to MS or vice versa and there is no change in this chain system." A non-member observed the difference between a Sangha and federation as: "Sangha activities are managed by sangha members. The bigger activities of the sangha are managed by regional activists of MS management."

Only seven of the 72 sanghas could cite an instance where their work was held up due to lack of timely support from the MS programme. These instances include an educational camp getting delayed; one sangha not getting the necessary support when it wanted help in opening a bank account for a neighbouring new sangha as a result of which there was a delay of one year; demand for new mattresses not being met; demand for additional training not being met; inadequate support when there some schooling-related issues; and the demand for some veterinary services not being met. Overall, the sanghas seem to rely more on their own resources and lack of support hindering their work does not seem to be a major issue.

3.14   Impact on local development: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

During our field-work in Uttar Pradesh, we heard repeated references to MGNREGA both in the context of the impact it had on their lives and the work Sangha women had done mobilizing around it. They often pointed to the prejudices they faced at the hands of Sarpanches who refused to provide them with job cards and then work under the act. The challenges also lay at home, with male members often objecting to the idea of women having their photographs in job cards or going out to work in public works programs.

To examine whether the mobilization by Sanghas and Federations had been able to influence aggregate measures, we analysed publicly available data on participation in MGNREGA (Table 3.2). We compared percentage of person-days worked by women in MS blocks with those in MS blocks and how this had changed over time. It was important to consider changes in time as the narratives we heard talked both about the mobilization around the programme as well as the resistance faced. The earliest year that data was available from is 2011 and the most recent data are from the current financial year.

Table 3.2: Women Participation Rates in MGNREA in Uttar Pradesh: Comparison of MS and non-MS Blocks

Year	Averages for all Blocks	Averages for MS Blocks	Averages for only Non-MS Blocks of UP
2011-12	15.74	18.88	20.33
2012-13	18.46	20.86	18.21
2013-14	21.39	24.32	21.09
2014-15 (on-going)	22.77	27.47	22.36

As Table 3.2 indicates, while women participation rates are consistently low in Uttar Pradesh, they were lower to start out with in the MS blocks compared to non-MS blocks. However, the increase in participation rates over time has been greater in MS blocks than it has been in MS blocks. This difference in relative performance is a fairly strong affirmation both of the claims we heard from the ground on the work that Sangha women had done in obtaining their rights under MGNREGA as well as the potential of the MS programme.

3.15 Dimensions on which MS district staff believe sanghas should be rated for effectiveness

Having seen the work of the sanghas in the foregoing sections, we now turn to the views of the district implementation units regarding the parameters or dimensions on which the sanghas may be evaluated for their effectiveness. The purpose was to generate an understanding of what the district staff consider as worthwhile yardsticks, and compare this with what is projected by the overall national guidelines or policies and our observations in the field. Eighty six of the 111 districts which generated the parameters also described the mechanisms that were used to generate these parameters—group discussions among the members of the DIU, often supplemented by checking with key federation or sangha members on the phone or with CRPs, JRPs, constituted the major method. Records and case studies available at the district office level were also used in many cases.

Each district had to generate a list of five (districts were free to finalize fewer parameters) parameters and rate each on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 indicating most important and 1 least important. A total of 510 responses were thus generated from 111 districts. The list was subjected to a content analysis to generate themes that could capture the variety implied in the list. Eight themes emerged (Table 3.3). Internal management processes of the sanghas emerged as the most significant in terms of numbers (28%), with internal leadership processes supporting this dimension of organizational functioning. This indicates a greater focus on the procedural issues related to organizational functioning, rather than purpose-related issues. However, ability to handle women's issues and generating awareness about the principles of MS are the next two, both almost equally significant in terms of numbers. The former indicates an action dimension and the latter an educational or mobilization dimension. These are

directly related to the goals of MS. The action dimension is further emphasized by the expectation that sanghas would play an instrumental role in accessing government resources and participation in panchayati raj. Specific roles in education and health are also indicated. The ability to identify and solve various problems that affect women, though limited in number is rated highest. In brief, at least from the district's perspective, the instrumental role of the sangha in action, its awareness creating role and the internal management of the sangha are the three broad expectations. These eight dimensions may possibly provide a framework for future capacity building interventions.

Table 3.3: Dimensions to evaluate sanghas: DIU views

	Dimension	Frequency		Score	Average rating on 10
1	Internal management processes like regular meetings, including all women, documentation and record keeping, networking	153	28%	1104	7.2
2	Handling women's issues, especially violence related issues	112	20%	833	7.4
3	Awareness of gender discrimination and striving for equality, importance of collectivization	99	18%	766	7.7
4	Accessing government resources and facilities for participation in panchayati raj and economic empowerment	73	13%	525	7.2
5	Children's/ girls' education including women's literacy importance	57	10%	420	7.4
6	Problem identification and solving, ability to spot women's issues and local issues and take action	25	5%	208	8.3
7	Internal leadership processes, rotation of leadership, democratic functioning	20	4%	154	7.7
8	Health issues: ability to identify issues and take action	15	3%	98	6.5
		554	100%		

While 'internal management processes' is believed to be important, the sanghas show mixed evidence—on the participation front they are doing well, but when it comes to the capacities that have been built up at the sangha level to negotiate formal institutional structures, there is some way to go. Democratic functioning is a minor criterion; while evidence from the samples sanghas indicates that this issue is not problematic, discussions indicate that in some sanghas rotation of internal leadership becomes problematic when there is capture of the sanghas by a few powerful women. At the moment, though, this is not a major issue. 'Ability to handle women's issues' and 'generating awareness about the principles of MS' are two dimensions on which the sanghas seem to be doing well—the former indicates an action dimension and the latter an educational or mobilization dimension; examples of both have been presented in this chapter. These two dimensions are directly related to the goals of MS and the sanghas have been successful on these. The action dimension is further emphasized when sanghas are

expected to play an instrumental role in accessing government resources and participation in panchayati raj—while the participation aspect is strong, the sanghas' ability to raise resources independently is limited. Specific roles in education, health and 'ability to identify and solve various problems that affect women' are indicated, and the sanghas seem to be doing well on these.

3.16 Summary: The MS sangha

1. The MS programme seems to have had a significant imprint on local issues of gender and development.
2. While it is not possible to attribute this to MS alone, there is little doubt that sangha women have developed empowered identities and voices in most MS communities.
3. The signs of success are not necessarily evident in the resolution or elimination of problems that have particularly impacted marginalized women—although several such examples were also identified—but in the contestation of spaces from which these women have been historically excluded and the challenges to discriminatory practices.
4. The contestation of gender-based discrimination has occurred at several levels, including visibility in the public sphere--acts like collectively singing songs, or through more obvious acts like rallies and protests.
5. There is evidence of change in the private sphere as well, through greater voice in household decisions as well as increased mobility.
6. There is strong evidence of high levels of participation in institutionalized democratic spaces by sangha women; 96 per cent of the sanghas rated their participation in gram sabha meetings as regular; 86.4% of the individual members surveyed report regular participation in the gram sabha. This picture is corroborated by non-members as well. The importance of this participation is best realized when placed in the context of the narratives of historical exclusion of women in public spaces that were cited during the study.
7. Eighty-one per cent of the old sanghas and 58 per cent of the newer sanghas replied with specific examples on the action they have taken to demand access to government services and benefits from the authorities/panchayats.
8. In over 55 per cent of surveyed Sanghas, sangha members have competed in elections and gone on to win posts like Sarpanch, membership in Ward Committees and Panchayats.
9. The social and institutional challenges that Sangha members still face is evident from the fact only 27 per cent of Sanghas report members of Sanghas being part of the PRI committees. Even among Sanghas where members have not stood for elections themselves, a majority report participation in the conduct of the electoral process.
10. The high levels of participation by sangha women are also reflected in the fact that over 80 per cent of sanghas were able to articulate explicit issues that had been raised by sangha women in gram sabha meetings. The issues raised by sanghas include those related to local infrastructure and government services and schemes.
11. Sanghas have contributed to the provision of local public goods. In addition, several sanghas reported working with local governments on election cards, relief work and the pulse polio programme.
12. Most of the sanghas emphatically stress that their enthusiasm and willingness to participate has either been maintained or gone up over the years. Where they have gone up the reasons seem to be success in taking up cases related to harassment of women, development work related to education and agencies like the public distribution system, and the increased confidence while

talking to government functionaries. In addition, the feeling that knowledge and awareness have increased also adds to the motivation.

13. Collective processes can often be exclusionary by privileging those who are able to participate in the process and ignoring others who are voluntarily or involuntarily excluded. But sangha women have been able to use their "empowered" positions to bring about changes in their communities that challenge historical gender-based exclusions. In a few sanghas, women have formed issue-specific committees or taken up activities that have benefited all women or the entire village.

14. The diversity of issues raised by the sanghas speaks to the non-target oriented nature of MS. It is evident that the issues being raised were context dependent and locally demanded. Thus, a clear contrast to sector-specific, target-oriented programmes is observed. However, the process of change has been helped by broader changes in society in recent times which have supported the principles that MS has emphasized right from its early days.

15. The status of a sangha as an independent collective entity of marginalized women puts it in a unique position to handle cases of violence against women. The sanghas often see taking up such issues as a matter of responsibility. This is perhaps one of the most significant social interventions that the sanghas have made.

16. The sanghas' work often puts them in conflict with powerful local actors, but by and large, the sanghas have persevered in their efforts.

17. MS's emphasis on working with marginalized women has interestingly implied that challenges to discriminatory norms and practices have not been restricted to the sphere of gender alone. There are a few examples of this extending to caste discrimination. This is to be expected given MS's focus on multiple modes of discrimination and oppression.

18. The activities of the sanghas—their songs and issues—have specifically resulted in visibility; as a result the activities are known to a fair degree among other sections of the village society. The importance of the symbols used to promote visibility, whether it is a song or a rally, cannot be underemphasized. Almost all the sanghas report a leadership structure that is open to all women regardless of caste, class or any other social background.

19. Participation in almost all the sangha meetings the team personally attended was engaged and open.

20. Around 58 per cent of the Sanghas report that they have a system of annual programme planning and creating an annual calendar of events. The older sanghas are much more likely to report doing this (68 per cent) compared to the younger sanghas (48 per cent). The Sahyoginis mention that in some cases the CRPs and JRPs provide support even in fully autonomous sanghas.

21. Only around half the sampled sanghas mentioned that they had received some training on financial management. The training has been received from both MS staff (JRPs or CRPs) as well as Federation. The receipt of training is associated with the sanghas having independent initiatives for raising funds.

22. Regarding capacity building for political awareness, 73% of the old sanghas (10 years or older) and 39% of the young sanghas (less than 10 years) report receiving training.

23. Sanghas have fairly limited ability to raise funds independently. While we do find evidence of activity and continuing impact in many of the autonomous sanghas, this happens in spite of their inability to raise funds. MS sanghas seem to survive on the contribution of the time of the volunteers as noted in Chapter 1.

24. Forty six per cent of the old sanghas and 41 per cent of the new sanghas shared specific efforts (primarily in the newer sanghas) articulated plans to raise funds on their own initiative.

25. The sanghas fall into four categories, depending on their internal management practices. (1) None—no formal evidence of thinking on management of the sangha. (2) Low: Most don't report formation of annual plans, the key activities are vaguely articulated or appear to revolve purely around financial transactions. The activities also appear to be driven largely by external inputs. Most have not initiated or articulated efforts for independent fund raising. (3) Moderate: Most have annual plans. Compared to those categorized as high, they have limited articulation or prioritization of activities. (4) High: There is progress in codifying leadership and organizational structure. There is an explicit articulation of preparation of annual plans. Most sanghas fall in the low-moderate range. Very few of the old sanghas appear to be in a position to manage their activities in a manner that would be considered well-organized by modern definitions. This has not necessarily limited their ability to create an impact as most of the other evidence points to.

26. Given MS's exit strategy, it is important to note that the capacities that have been built up at the Sangha level to negotiate formal institutional structures still remain fairly limited.

27. All sanghas report a functional relationship with the federations. Only seven of the 72 sanghas could cite an instance where their work was held up due to lack of timely support from the MS programme. Overall, the sanghas seem to rely more on their own resources and lack of support hindering their work does not seem to be a major issue.

28. The impact on local development can be illustrated with the example of MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh. While women participation rates are consistently low in the state, they were lower to start out with in the MS blocks compared to non-MS blocks. However, the increase in participation rates over time has been greater in MS blocks than it has been in MS blocks. This difference in relative performance is a fairly strong affirmation both of the claims that Sangha women had done in obtaining their rights under MGNREGA as well as the potential of the MS programme.

29. The DIUs believe that sanghas should be rated on eight dimensions:
    - Internal management processes like regular meetings, including all women, documentation and record keeping, networking
    - Handling women's issues, especially violence related issues
    - Awareness of gender discrimination and striving for equality, importance of collectivization
    - Accessing government resources and facilities for participation in panchayati raj and economic empowerment
    - Children's/ girls' education including women's literacy
    - Problem identification and solving, ability to spot women's issues and local issues and take action
    - Internal leadership processes, rotation of leadership, democratic functioning
    - Health issues: ability to identify issues and take action

    While the sanghas show evidence of doing well on handling women's issues and generating awareness of gender discrimination, and on education and health, the evidence on internal management and accessing government resources is mixed.

4. THE MAHILA SAMAKHYA FEDERATION: STATUS AND ABILITY TO FUNCTION AUTONOMOUSLY

As of September 2014, there are 325 federations, 156 (48%) of which are autonomous. It is expected that about 60% of the existing federations will be autonomous by the beginning of the next financial year. The current status of the federations has to be examined in the context of the policy of forming block-level federations in districts where MS has been operating for more than three years as MS's *exit strategy*. It is assumed that the autonomous federations will now play a key role in sustaining and nurturing empowerment processes initiated at the sangha level. The federations will also, it is hoped, monitor and manage structures like MSKs and the nari adalats. In other words, the exit strategy makes certain assumptions about the capabilities of the federations to mobilize sanghas in new blocks and to sustain themselves. In what follows we comment on these two assumptions. We first report on an assessment of eight federations, one from each of the eight districts, selected randomly for study. We then present an analysis of the DIUs' ratings of the federations. Finally, we comment on the disengagement process that will be apt for the future.

The eight federations studied are on average 10.6 years old, and so have sufficient experience to comment on the progress and future of MS. The number of sanghas covered by each of these federations on average was 61 villages. All had bank accounts in their own names. The federations are open to all sanghas in their mandals/ blocks. Since MS initially focused on the most vulnerable women in the educationally-backward blocks and managed to mobilize women around the intersection of class, caste and gender, most of the current leadership at the federation level reflects this early focus. Most of the women we talked to belong to the most marginalized sections of society—dalit and tribal women. The federations started with an average of about 27 sanghas each. Three federations have not seen any growth in sangha membership, but in the others, about 25 sanghas on average per federation have joined. Some of the federations have very clear norms on eligibility for membership. In such federations, the strength of a sangha is evaluated by the Working Committee (*karobari* committee) of the federation. The evaluation is a subjective assessment of the capability of the women of the sangha "to go anywhere and fight for women's causes" and to "convince people for social change." If the assessment is positive, the Committee deems the sangha to be a strong sangha. Some sanghas do get classified as "not yet strong." Only a strong sangha is permitted to join the federation. No federation has seen a sangha leaving it. The federations do have sub-committees that are activity based, like health, agriculture, social issues, and panchayati raj. These build on the thematic areas identified by MS. In two federations there were particularly strong para-legal aid cells.

All the federations have the standard organizational structure prescribed under MS, with a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Working Committee members elected from the sangha representatives. The federations either want a person who has completed schooling to stand for elections to leadership positions, or in some cases, they just want literate women in the age group 18 to 40. The members are elected for terms of three years or two years. All the federations have received financial management training like some inputs on managing and utilizing funds.

The regular activities of the federations include the following.
1) Monthly meetings

2) Training sessions
3) Nari Adalat
4) Information centre
5) Evaluation of the sanghas
6) Fund raising activities

All the federations are associated with Nari Adalats and Mahiti Kendras (Information Centres). Various other activities like Sanjivani Kendra, Literacy Classes and Mahila Shaksharta Kendra, are also in evidence. The Sanjivani Kendra run by some federations is an outlet for herbal formulations made by members. Where the federations run the Nari Adalat, there is a 11-member committee to handle the activity. The Nari Adalat is conducted once or twice a month on specified dates at the federation office. The information centre is run by two women of the federation; these centres are usually open four to six days a month, for example four Mondays and two Thursdays, or the first and third Mondays and the second and fourth Thursdays. These dates are known to the sanghas.

The federations are also active in supporting sangha members who stand for panchayat elections. Some federations have organized rallies for such candidates. The federations have also been engaged in providing Panchayati raj training and exposure to the working of government departments to its sangha members. The federations also have records of having helped out government departments voluntarily when requested to do so, for example when the forest department conducts reproductive and child health camps in tribal villages, or when blood testing camps are organized by the government. One other example is a survey of out-of-school children.

All the federations have a mechanism for preparing an annual plan on the basis of the requirements mentioned by the member sanghas and resources available. An annual budget is also prepared. But, often the federations have to deviate from the plan, because of "lack of resources or some unplanned event." All the federations have a place where they meet; one federation had a fairly spacious two-roomed building with a small room for an office and a large room for group meetings. All the eight federations also had specific members identified for recording the minutes. All had received training on how to record the minutes and on management of federation work.

From the incidents narrated about the decision making, discussion appears to be the dominant method to resolve any differences. Sometimes, two different sanghas make demands which have to be prioritized for action. The claim of the federations is that such conflicts are usually settled by the leadership through discussion of both demands, and then prioritizing on the basis of the amount of work to be done.

All the federations feel that their enthusiasm for working for women's rights, and making their "own decisions" has been maintained or been augmented over the years. One federation notes that "as the membership of the federation kept increasing with time, the enthusiasm and willingness to work for women's causes also increased."

The background noted above indicates that the initiation of the formal structures, setting up the organizational form and processes, has gone according to plan. Thus, the base on which activities can be carried out, has been established. This is in contrast to the picture provided by the sanghas (see Chapter 3), where very few of the old sanghas appear to be in a position to manage their activities in a manner that would be considered well-organized by modern definitions, though it must be added that this has not limited their ability to create an impact; the capacities that have been built up at the sangha level to

negotiate formal institutional structures still remain fairly limited. The federations, on the other hand, seem to be better placed, having received more direct attention from MS in recent years.

4.1 Key process supporting the demand on the federations: New information and knowledge

The federations note the importance of the Information Centres they run. It should be noted, however, that the Information Centres are present in only four states. These centres provide information regarding various government schemes, facilities available for the backward classes, and related matters. In particular, knowledge regarding the work of the tehsildar's office and the police station has been helpful. Often the information has to do with the rights of women; in the federations' assessment this information has particularly helped women become a little more independent. The training that sangha members receive after their sanghas join the federation also ties in with this increased availability of information. In addition, the rallies that the federations sometimes organize create awareness about a specific issue, like violence against women.

All the federations except one highlight the importance of the sanghas asking them for information. Sanghas usually ask for information regarding various schemes, processes and training, laws, health-related issues, opening bank accounts, etc. Often the requests are for vocational training like preparation of shampoo, vaseline and balm, and stitching and sewing. The federations have tried to respond to such requests by calling two or three members from each of the requesting sanghas for master training. These women then go back to their sanghas and share what they have learned. Organizing vocational training is more difficult, and outside help is needed.

4.2 Women's mobility and issues handled

The issue of women's mobility used to be discussed frequently in the early days of the federation; though such discussions have come down in frequency over the years, according to the federations. Overall, the increase in mobility is seen as a major change characterizing MS impact, though some federations note that in some areas the impact has been limited—visits to the mandir and neighbours' houses are fine, but outside travel is actively discouraged. Apart from mobility, all the federations are able to cite many instances of discrimination against individual women that they have taken up, either through the nari adalats or on their own. These examples include domestic violence, deprivation of assets of women by their families and dowry cases. In one case, the federation is proud of its work with an orphan girl who lacked confidence completely; now that girl is studying in a college.

Changing gender stereotypes: The federations have launched various campaigns to fight against gender stereotypes by training two to three representatives from each sangha. Some cite their work in changing the image of widows by helping them attend all social events as evidence of changing stereotypes. "They can now wear good clothes and are also asked for their opinions in their families." Another example cited is stopping the practice of not wearing slippers in front of high-ranked caste people. In one village, the federation notes the changes brought about in the *devadasi* tradition (rescuing six *devadasi* girls) and the reduction in child marriages. Such cases have been documented periodically by MS and so do not need repetition here. The federations also take up cases of violence against women, when they go and talk to the parties involved.

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4.3   Acknowledgement of federations' value at block level

The federations are confident that the committee members are well recognized by the taluka level officers at various taluka/block offices, police stations and village panchayats. If any of them go with the women to any of these offices, the work may get done faster. "Even if the women just say that they are MS sangha members, the work gets done faster in contrast to the experience of non-sangha citizens." In one federation, the working committee members have the phone number of the district magistrate, who has always been ready to help; in another an official immediately responded to the federation's request for a photo of Pandit Nehru. The sanghas also note that the federation members are well recognized in police stations. Sometimes, the police call the members for some cases, "because they think if that case can be solved by the federation members, we can forward this case to them." The specific examples cited appear to be violence against women cases. In one example, the federation had to counter the powerful in a particular village when investigation into a dispute was being soft-pedalled by the police. However, with the intervention of the federation, the police changed their approach and the offender was pulled up. Other examples worth citing are the action taken by the federations including cases of murder of women by their in-laws and rape. The action has included dharna, apart from persuasion. Many more such instances can be cited; they indicate that the federation members now enjoy more visibility at the block level. The examples also indicate that the federations have had to face well-entrenched social barriers that individual women would have found extremely hard to face.

4.4   Federations and increasing girl's enrolment in primary schools

All the federations are involved in education of girls, providing training to the sangha representatives on education and composing songs and plays, and organizing rallies on girls' education. Direct action on preventing dropout is done by the sanghas and not by the federation. In some states, Kishori sanghas have been formed by the federations. The federations report that the sanghas raise the topic of education concerning specific girls regularly during the federation meetings, and often a representative of the federation goes and meets the girl in question and her family on a particular date. If the issue is a financial constraint, the federation advises the parents to send their daughters to the KGBV. Otherwise, they try to motivate the parents to continue with the education of their girls. The situation has changed over the years. Now there is more awareness about education, not just because of MS. Villagers are indeed aware about girls' education, but as the federations report, "They think many times before stopping their daughters from going to school, because they know the federation and sanghas will scold them." The federations are able to show specific evidence of direct impact of their activity in terms of dropout girls who have re-joined the schools, the enrolment in specific villages, and the fact that some of the girls motivated by them are now Asha workers. However, it must be noted that only a few federations have formally collaborated with government departments of education on educational activities; one federation in Telangana has good relations with the Mandal Education Officer who helps the federation in keeping the poor children in hostels and educating them.

4.5   Federations and preparation of teaching learning materials

The federation members use songs, stories, games, puppet shows and role-plays for knowledge dissemination. Some federations have received training from MS in songs, dance and storytelling. The sanghas have created a lot of songs and other material. The documentation done by MS over the years supports this fact. The federation office bearers themselves have composed many songs and dramas. The president of one federation had once gone to the state capital to attend an MS programme. When she came back, she shared her experiences with the others during the next federation meeting. These experiences become a common fund which training discussions draw upon. A number of real life examples are cited—for HIV awareness, educating girls, and so on. One federation has prepared some case studies; a few were able to show the songs and dramas they have prepared. The federations do acknowledge that MS functionaries played a crucial role in developing the tools.

4.6   Efforts to mobilize funds

In six of the eight federations MS no longer provides financial support or resource support, though it helps out when requested.   The range of fund mobilization methods, excluding the three-year support given by MS, includes the following:

- Rs.1000 membership fees paid by village sangha at the time of joining.
- One federation charges Rs.10 as the annual fees to all its members.
- A Forest Department project which generated a grant of Rs.120000 in one federation.
- One federation used to have a contract for providing food at Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya (KGBV).
- One federation buys two stalls every year at a local mela and sells household products produced by the sangha members.
- Federations charge the village sangha membership fees ranging from Rs.12 to 150 at the time of their joining.
- Some donations from local sources, including legislators.
- Some income from small-scale businesses like vegetable selling.
- Sporadic work like working as election agents, polio campaigners, which generates small amounts of surplus for the federations.

4.7   Increasing incidence of women's assertion of rights to services and entitlements

There are a number of examples. A few are cited here. "Many of the women did not have their election cards. Some of them tried many times to get an election card and had to visit the relevant offices many times. Still they were not getting the election cards. The issue was raised in the federation meeting and then the federation decided to help the women. First the federation members conducted a survey in the rural areas of the taluka in order to prepare a list of women who did not have election cards. Then they approached the relevant officials and demanded a camp in which election cards could be issued to all the listed women. The plan was approved and fine-tuned. All the women got their election cards." "In one area during a drought there was no water. The sanghas had visited the relevant officials several

times but no steps followed. The federation then visited the officials along with a large number of sangha members and enabled regular water supply." As three federations note, "Women staged a dharna for stopping liquor shops in villages and asked for police support."

4.8   Evidence of plans for the future

The leadership of the federation wants to continue with the goal of empowerment of women in their sanghas. They want to do this by including more sanghas in the federation and by getting associated with more government projects that would help them raise some funds. One federation is planning to undertake various training programmes which can generate some money. Specific dreams include starting a resource centre with government support, a hostel for girls, and offices for the federations, though plans for implementation are not clear. One federation wants to clearly focus on violence against women and child marriages.

4.9   District Implementation Units' perceptions of key factors in federation effectiveness

The DIUs were requested to evolve five parameters or dimensions on which the federations may be evaluated for their effectiveness. The purpose was to generate an understanding of what the district staff consider as worthwhile yardsticks. Each district had to generate a list of five parameters (districts were free to finalize fewer parameters) and rate each on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 indicating most important and 1 least important. A total of 373 responses were made (Table 4.1). The responses were inductively coded, and six dimensions emerged.

Table 4.1: Evaluation criteria for federations: DIU perspectives

	Dimension	Frequency	Average rating on 10	Total score
1	Internal management processes	118 (32%)	6.9	822
2	Working on women's issues	92 (25%)	7.0	653
3	Networking with government/ nongovernment bodies	75 (20%)	6.9	517
4	Stress on collective identity of women	46 (12%)	7.9	365
5	Encouraging coordination/ participation of sanghas	27 (7%)	6.8	183
6	Ability to function autonomously	15 (4%)	8.1	121
		373		

The first observation is that the DIUs find it more difficult to generate responses for the federations—the total number of responses is only 373 compared to the 554 that a similar exercise for the sanghas yielded. Internal management processes dominates, indicating the importance the district functionaries

attach to the organization building aspects of MS. A generalized ability for 'autonomous functioning' is indeed indicated as a numerically small though highly rated dimension, but it would be more useful to consider the 'working on women's issues' and stress on the collectivization principle of MS (together accounting for 37% of the responses) as important reflections of MS philosophy. The networking requirement is easier said than done, as the field experiences indicate, but it may be an important area in which the federations could do with more support.

The account of the federations given earlier seems to match up fairly well with some of the items on this ideal list generated by the DIUs. 'Working on women's issues' and 'stressing the collective identity' are two items on which the federations studied seem to be doing well. The capabilities of the federations on this account are well established. 'Internal management' seems to be theoretically well-placed, as noted earlier—the formal organizational form and processes have been set up, so that there is a base on which activities can be carried out. However, 'internal management' also includes the importance of financial sustenance, and the evidence, at least from the federations studied, is not strong on this score. The performance on 'encouraging coordination and participation of sanghas' seems to be reasonable, given that many of the federations have added new sanghas from their blocks/ mandals. However, there are some federations which have not expanded membership; also, the evidence regarding expansion into neighbouring blocks is weak. The federations, with some exceptions, do not seem to show evidence that they have focused on expanding into neighbouring areas. 'Networking' has to be termed as needing strengthening if the federations are to substitute for the DIUs in the future. While federation members are recognized at the block level offices, translating this into resource mobilization for themselves and the sanghas still seems to be some way off—the evidence for networking with nongovernment agencies is weak. The concern about autonomous functioning (rated high but limited in terms of number of responses) does indeed get reflected in discussions with the federations, and is tied up with the process of disengagement that is currently underway.

4.10   District Implementation Units' perceptions of most important activities carried out by federations and their constituents

The districts were also requested to rank, from 1 to 5 (declining levels of importance), five activities that were actually being carried out by the women in their districts. The 491 valid responses were content analysed and coded into six categories. In Table 4.2 the ranks of the various activities and the weighted scores (5 indicating most important, and 1 the least important) are summarized. Education and health, and action against violence against women are clearly rated to be important activities.

Table 4.2: Importance of federations' work: DIU perceptions

Rank given by DIUs→	1	2	3	4	5	Weighted score
Activity↓	**Number of responses in each rank**					
Education	42	23	21	14	1	3.90
Gender awareness	11	12	13	11	15	2.89
Health action	3	16	21	7	9	2.95
Networking and economic empowerment	4	7	12	27	38	2.00
Developing capacities	7	14	8	15	17	2.66

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within sangha/ federation						
Women's issues including violence against women	30	29	24	23	17	3.26
Total	97	101	99	97	97	Total responses: 491

4.11 Comparison of parameters generated by district staff and perceptions of actual work being done

The table given below (Table 4.3) compares what all the 120 districts say about the dimensions that may be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the federations and sanghas with their perceptions of the criticality of the kinds of work that have been *actually* carried out. This will help us understand whether there are mismatches about what should ideally be examined and what the sanghas and federations are actually focusing on. A few observations can be made.

- The criticality of the work done on women's issues and gender awareness gets reflected in the dimensions on which sanghas should be assessed.
- The education and health work actually done by the sanghas and federations is considered important, though it does not rank that high in 'what needs to be assessed.' Clearly, a closer examination of how the effectiveness of such work, both in education and health, needs to be assessed is required.
- While internal management processes are of concern to the district implementation units, it rates very low on the actual work done. This may indicate that in the perception of the districts, there is still a long way to go in terms of the presence of strong internal processes. During the field visits this perception was borne out quite strongly; it has been accentuated by the consolidation and withdrawal that is happening at the moment. There is no doubt that strengthening internal management when MS is further withdrawn from actual implementation in the older districts will be a challenge.
- A second concern is the perceived weak networking that has happened up to now and the moderate importance given to it in assessment. This indicates that more emphasis on external linkages is needed. During the field visits, concern was repeatedly expressed, especially in the context of federation autonomy, that the desired level of linkages with government and nongovernment agencies was yet to be established.
- In sum, overall, in the districts, the two key concerns are strengthening internal management processes of the sanghas/ federations and enabling them to develop linkages with other agencies, especially for economic empowerment.
- Based on the perceptions of the district units, gender awareness, action on women's issues, especially violence against women, education and health, are areas that do not seem problematic.

Table 4.3: Important dimensions and criticality of actual work done: DIU perceptions

Dimension to evaluate effectiveness	Federation Score given by districts (Rank in brackets)	Sangha Score given by districts (Rank in brackets)	Actual work being done: Perceptions of districts	Weighted score (out of 5) (Rank in brackets)
Internal management processes	822 (1)	1104 (1)	Developing capacities within sangha/ federation	2.66 (5)
Encouraging coordination/ participation of sanghas	183 (5)			
Ability to function autonomously	121 (6)			
Working on women's issues	653 (2)	833 (2)	Women's issues including violence against women	3.26 (2)
Networking with government/ nongovernment bodies	517 (3)	525 (4)	Networking and economic empowerment	2.00 (6)
Stress on collective identity of women (countering discrimination)	365 (4)	766 (3)	Gender awareness	2.89 (4)
Education		420 (5)	Education	3.90 (1)
Health		98 (8)	Health action	2.95 (3)
Problem identification and solving		208 (6)		
Internal leadership processes		154 (7)		

4.12   Disengagement process

MS programme authorities have communicated clearly to the states that wherever work has been going on for 10 years or more, the program has to disengage from that district. In other words, the DIU can no longer continue to exist in districts in which the work has been going on for longer than 10 years. The extended deadline for this transition is March 31, 2015. This policy, and the accompanying deadline, only build on the pronouncements made in earlier plan periods. The difference now is that there seems to be a realization that the timeline can no longer be taken for granted—in earlier years, for instance at the beginning of the XI period, though there was a disengagement policy, the districts always hoped that the "exemption clause" would somehow enable perpetuation of MS's presence in the old districts. However, now, from our discussions with the states, it appears that the accepted view is that disengagement is part of the lifecycle of any intervention that seeks to build a movement. If MS is to remain true to its original philosophy of creating institutional forms with the agency capability to tap into opportunity structures, it must also learn to "walk beside us" for some time and then "behind us."

However, while there is acceptance of the need for disengagement, it is believed that the process of disengagement suffers from a lack of clarity of how exactly such disengagement is to be carried out; some states would like some uniform guidelines applicable across the country, rather than leaving it to the states.

This feeling of lack of clarity arises from the perceived lack of attention to implementation hurdles. The first hurdle arises because of the addition of new blocks in old districts. In some districts, though work may have started many years ago, blocks have been added very recently. The discussion with the federations and MS functionaries on disengagement from such districts indicates some apprehension. Some states are planning to move their district units to the neighbouring districts in order to be able to manage the new blocks in old districts. However, there is a lot of uncertainty about the ability of the new district unit to do so without compromising on the quality of the work. There is also a view that a critical mass of the educationally backward blocks is still to be attained, and so new blocks have to be added in old districts. For example, in Medak district of Telangana, there are 45 mandals, 40 of them educationally backward. Fourteen are under MS, and 26 are not. One suggestion to address this hurdle was to make disengagement from blocks as the guiding principle. This, however, requires the DIU with its staff of three to four people to continue even if only one block is a young block, and hence, organizationally speaking, seems infeasible. Second, it is accepted that something called a 'critical mass' will help the federations carry on the DIUs' work. Treating the XI Plan 'norm' of 250 sanghas in a district as a flexible condition, it appears that about a quarter of the villages (25%) in the district would be a reasonable norm. As of 2014, the total MS village coverage in its districts where it operates is about a quarter of the villages. Thus, if 25% is seen as a reasonable norm, there is a critical mass which the federations can build upon. Such a norm is not a 'target' and is only a guideline to ensure that a base is built. Our view is that disengagement from the district is defensible and that 'disengagement from blocks' is not a feasible principle.

The second hurdle arises from the manner in which three key words are often used within MS with respect to federations, in the context of disengagement. These are consolidation, autonomy and sustainability. The current strategy of "consolidation," in practical terms, is a phase of withdrawal, since it is designed to phase out MS involvement from the block over a period of one year. However, the perception is that there is no standardized process for consolidation that has been communicated from the National Office to support such transition—MS functionaries in the field do look up to the national office for guidance on this matter, since for many it is an "unpleasant but necessary" task. There are many apprehensions. One is the fate of the sahyoginis and even the district teams when consolidation happens. The sahyoginis are drawn from the same social context which they attempt to change, and may have to address questions about the withdrawal since the widespread social change that can justify such withdrawal is yet to be witnessed, in spite of MS's long presence in many areas. Second, previous experience of withdrawal has been mixed, leading to some uncertainty about how to handle consolidation. The fear is that the local volunteer-driven organizations will collapse once the regular support of the district unit is withdrawn. There is some evidence to indicate that once MS financial support to the federations stopped, the federations had to go back to volunteer support, with a dilution of the work. In some federations, even during the phase of withdrawal, some dropping of energy was reported by MS functionaries. But there are other federations which have come out of the consolidation fairly successfully. As part of this study, the experiences of 33 autonomous federations in Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana was reviewed. What started with withdrawal from four mandal federations in two districts in 2007-08, now covers 33 federations in seven districts. The key factors that facilitated the withdrawal seem to be three:

- There was a lot of trial and error, since the state MS did not have readymade models which could be applied. This led to a lot of experimentation and a sense of ownership for the results. This does not mean that other federations have to go through the same process—one can always learn from these early attempts, but some trial and experimentation may be needed.
- Mandal Resource Groups were evolved as a support structure for the federations. These groups had volunteer members drawn from the clusters of sangha and had demonstrated their capabilities in tackling issues at the cluster or sangha level. The volunteers were brought in as co-trainers during the consolidation phase. They were also made responsible for certain activities like campaigns and awareness programmes.
- The federations were asked to take up activities like literacy centres and MSKs, with some monitoring support provided by MS.

In spite of these steps, the federations do acknowledge that sustainability and networking for further strengthening remain concerns. These federations have responded positively to the disengagement and have only requested that "MS be just a phone call away."

The other two terms, autonomy and sustainability are linked. Autonomy is associated with the nature of the links MS should continue to retain with the federations, if any. On the ground, district functionaries interpret autonomy to mean that the federation has already received the grant that it was supposed to have received according to the Plan Document, and is now independent. At the same time, there is a concern that the financial viability of the federation is in doubt. The federation's views also touch on the issue of sustainability, both financial sustainability and the sustainability of the relations with MS which would give them some technical support whenever needed. The general impression is that the federations are not well positioned for sustainability at the moment, even in the federations where withdrawal has worked well.

What are the key factors hindering sustainability? Discussions with stakeholders in the states indicates that many of the federations are yet to fulfil the expectations that MS had of them when the strategy of federating sanghas at the block level was first developed. Given that it is a volunteer driven structure, it is not possible for women to meet very often for issues that may not be perceived as serious enough or may be perceived as "regular issues." However, they do get together when there is an issue that is important. Even reaching this stage has taken many years. In other words, the volunteer-driven of the structure may slow down the pace of implementation of any work that the federations may take up.

A second feature of the structure is that it has developed the capabilities to handle social processes, but not economic processes. Social change agents that they are, collective economic activity is not the federations' strength. "Federations are social organizations that are concerned with the process of empowerment—attending to issues of education, health, violence, and legal aid." Social activities are not income generating, and the members are constrained by their lack of capacities and skills in areas of work that do not cover awareness generation and social change. But income generation emerged as an imperative tied to the sustainability of these structures when the phasing out of MS began to be discussed. The possibility of federations becoming social-entrepreneurs engaging in economic development projects to generate money has also been discussed and tried out, with mixed results, mostly negative. Some activities like working for organizations like Naandi Foundation on mobilization of girls' education have barely broke even. No surplus was generated. In the collective dryland farming experiment in Telangana, out of 500 such ventures, about 200 are on-going. The rest had to be closed. Mysore district has the system of Mahasanchi where each sangha gives a small amount (between 3000 and 5000) to the Federation which can be given as loans under emergency to Federation members. The

idea behind it is to make the Federation autonomous and set up a revolving fund. The repayment terms are decided by the Federation and the interest earned is also deposited with the Federation. The general experience has been that they have not been successful in economic, income-generating, activities.

As part of this study, a brief exercise to map all the activities of the last three years of 30 federations in Telangana was done. The results are presented in the following matrix:

		Economic	Social	Political
Activity	Continuous	Nil	All 30	A few undertake
	Episodic	Sporadic	All 30	Common

What becomes evident is the federations are geared to taking up regular social activities as well as sporadic issues. However, their record in economic activities seems to be weak, with no federation having the experience of taking up a long-term continuous economic engagement. In another example, from Varanasi, a federation formed in 2002, with a 19-member executive committee, works primarily in a 'movement mode' and becomes active when there is a violation of rights. However, it does not have the capacity to work as an institution on a sustainable basis, especially when economic activities have to be taken up. Yet another federation in Karnataka, formed in 2002, and covering 58 sanghas, does work through six different committees, and charges nominal fees for the services it provides. For instance it runs an information centre twice a week to help women access information related to various government schemes, filing applications, etc. A nominal fee of Rs. 20 per application is charged for this support, which is not limited to writing out application but also includes accompanying the woman to the office concerned and helping in undertaking the process there. The woman who runs the information centre is given Rs.50 per day of work and the actual travel costs. The wish list of this federation includes starting a computer centre for children to generate income and engage in vocational training for the sanghas. Moving from the current state to economic outreach of this kind is a huge jump. In yet another federation, formed in 2002, the federation undertakes campaigns at the block level; the person asked to do the work used to get an allowance of Rs. 50 per day earlier. This was discontinued when MS financial support stopped. Another federation wants to set up a Mahila Bank and construct their own office and establish a herbal garden. These plans, as is the case of many other federations visited, once again do not seem to be tied with the feasibility of such proposals.

Overall, there is a concern that asking the federations to take up economic income-generating activities will dilute their focus on the empowerment-related social issues. More importantly, they do not have the capabilities to engage in such activities. From the discussions at the state level and with the federations, the following directions for the future emerge.

1. Federations are social change agents. Their strengths are in supporting sanghas and ensuring that MS spreads to new villages in their blocks. With some support and encouragement, they should be able to take up work in neighbouring blocks. Their second strength is in managing welfare activities including legal issues and some educational activities. These, however, do not generate surplus. Most such activities barely breakeven or end up making losses. Collective economic activity is not the federations' strength. The implication is that the federations will need some kind of financial support.
2. The federations have very limited regular income at the moment. Some charge a member fee from the sanghas; in Telangana for instance a fee of Rs. 50 per month from each member sangha gives a federation with 30 sanghas an annual income of Rs. 18000. The usual

maintenance costs include travel costs, meeting costs, and other minor material costs like overheads (rent for a room, power supply, mobile charges, etc.). Federation governing body members have a two-year term, and so they do not mind spending from their own pockets for travel and other incidentals. But after two years, the new members have to incur the same expenditures, and often the new members raise questions about these costs. If these maintenance charges can be taken care of, the federations will be better placed to focus on their social agency role and also generate welfare-oriented projects. In a discussion during the stakeholder meeting of one state it was suggested that every federation should think of building up a fund of about Rs. 3,00,000 for regular maintenance expenses.

3. Can such corpus funds be raised from non-conventional sources of funding? MS is not responsible for raising such funds, but the federations, with some support from local organizations, should be encouraged to think of raising such funds from entities, including corporates, that are interested in women's development.

4. Such funding can be facilitated by clear roadmaps that the federation can prepare. At the time of consolidation, plans for sustainability through such roadmaps have to be prepared. The rest of the time available till March 2015 should be used to prepare such roadmaps for all the federations that are under consolidation.

Features of the road map: Non-financial support from MS

1. Regional resource groups need to be created and made co-trainers during the consolidation period, so that there is a local body that can support the federations. The services of these persons can be made available to the federations.

2. Direct MS support to federations after consolidation: This should be kept to a minimum, and should be provided only when there is a serious case for direct visits to federations for training and support. The closest district unit can be asked to help.

3. Use technology to support the federations. One interesting observation was the extensive use of mobile phones for communication. One federation leader who attended one of the state stakeholder meetings was carrying a regular school notebook with mobile phone numbers of a range of people, including the leaders of other federations. When federations say be "just a phone call away" the opportunity for conference calling arises. At a later stage, perhaps when computers, computer literacy and connectivity spread, the federation leaders can be connected by video. This is likely to happen in many states and the State offices need to be prepared for this. A "Mobile helpline with the SPO" was also suggested as an initiative that can be tried.

4. State/ regional level resource groups can be established. Such groups, with perhaps some of the members being located in the districts, can provide support mainly on social justice, legal aid and educational issues. As the DIUs are withdrawn, the resource groups can take up the functions of assisting the federations and the block resource groups. The members of these resource groups can be supported directly by the State office on specified terms.

5. Explore the scope for convergence with various government schemes and build that into the roadmap.

4.13   Summary: The MS federation

4.13.1 Assessment of federations

1. Most of the leadership at the federation level reflects the early focus of MS on the most marginalized sections of society—the leadership provided now by dalit and tribal women has to be recognized. This is a significant outcome of MS.
2. All the federations visited have the standard organizational structure prescribed under MS, and have received financial management training like some inputs on managing and utilizing funds. All of them have a plan of functioning that includes monthly meetings, training sessions for sanghas, running other bodies like the Nari Adalat and Information centre, evaluating sanghas which want to join, and engaging in some fund raising activities. The initiation of the formal structures seems to have gone according to plan.
3. The federations particularly note the importance of the Information Centres they run. These provide information regarding various government schemes, facilities available for the backward classes, and related matters. It should be noted, however, that Information Centres are present in only four states.
4. The federations have launched various campaigns to fight against gender stereotypes. There are numerous examples of cases concerned with violence against women that the federations have taken up, either through campaigns or through the nari adalats.
5. The federations are confident that the committee members are now well recognized by the taluka level officers at various taluka/block offices, police stations and village panchayats. The federation members now enjoy more visibility at the block level.
6. All the federations are involved in the education of girls, providing training to the sangha representatives on education and composing songs and plays, and organizing rallies on girls' education. The federations use songs, stories, games, puppet shows and role-plays for knowledge dissemination.
7. Working on women's issues and stressing the collective identity are two items on which the federations studied seem to be doing well. The capabilities of the federations on this account are well established.
8. Encouraging coordination and participation of sanghas seems to be reasonable, given that many of the federations have added new sanghas from their blocks/ mandals. However, there are some federations which have not expanded membership; also, the evidence regarding systematic and planned expansion into neighbouring blocks is weak.
9. The other two areas, internal management and networking both have to be termed as needing strengthening if the federations are to substitute for the DIUs in the future.
10. Internal management includes the importance of financial sustenance, and the evidence, at least from the federations studied, is not strong. While federation members are recognized at the block level offices, translating this into resource mobilization for themselves and the sanghas still seems to be some way off. The evidence for networking with nongovernment agencies is weak.
11. **Dimensions on which federations need to be evaluated (in descending order of importance), according to DIUs**
    a. Internal management processes
    b. Working on women's issues
    c. Networking with government/ nongovernment bodies
    d. Stress on collective identity of women

  e. Encouraging coordination/ participation of sanghas
  f. Ability to function autonomously

12. **Importance of work actually done in the districts (rank in brackets), according to DIUs**
  a. Education (1, most important)
  b. Women's issues including violence against women (2)
  c. Health action (3)
  d. Gender awareness (4)
  e. Developing capacities within sangha/ federation (5)
  f. Networking and economic empowerment (6)

13. In sum, overall, from the macro-picture of the districts, the two key concerns are strengthening internal management processes of the sanghas/ federations and enabling them to develop linkages with other agencies, especially for economic empowerment. Based on the perceptions of the district units, gender awareness, action on women's issues, especially violence against women, education and health, are areas that do not seem problematic.

4.13.2 Disengagement process

1. It is clearly understood at the field level that MS has to withdraw from districts where work has been going on for 10 years or more by March 31, 2015. However, there is lack of clarity on how the process of disengagement has to be carried out.
2. One view is that block disengagement should be the strategy. Our view is that this is not a feasible strategy from the implementation point of view, and that disengagement from the district is defensible.
3. There is a fear that volunteer-driven organizations like the federations will collapse once MS support, financial as well as non-financial, stops. There are examples of this happening, and one cannot rule out the possibility of this happening. But the successful consolidation and autonomy experiences indicate that higher-level Resource Groups have emerged as necessary supports, and that these federations received some support in taking up low-risk activities like literacy centres.
4. There is a lot of concern about the financial viability of the federations; the track record of federations in generating surpluses through economic activities has not been good.
5. Federations are well placed to handle social processes, but not economic processes. Overall, there is a concern that asking the federations to take up economic income-generating activities will dilute their focus on the empowerment-related social issues. More importantly, they do not have the capabilities to engage in such activities.
6. Federations should be encouraged to explore non-conventional sources of funding. Road maps for federations should be prepared during the consolidation phase.
7. Setting up Resource Groups and inducting them during the consolidation period, will ensure the presence of a support between the state and the federations.
8. Direct MS support to federations after consolidation should be kept to a minimum, and should be provided only when there is a serious case for direct visits to federations for training and support. The closest district unit can also be asked to help.
9. Use of technology to support the federations has to be augmented. MS must prepare for the time when computers, computer literacy and connectivity will be within the reach of the federations. Mobile technology, which is already being used for communication, can be used for information sharing also.

10. State/ regional level resource groups can be established. Such groups, with perhaps some of the members being located in the districts, can provide support mainly on social justice, legal aid and educational issues. As the DIUs are withdrawn, the state resource groups can take up the functions of assisting the federations and the block resource groups. The members of these resource groups can be supported directly by the State office on specified terms.
11. The scope for convergence with various government schemes and building that into roadmaps for the federations should be explored by the resource groups.

5. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND KNOWLEDGE BUILDING AND TRAINING AND CAPABILITY BUILDING: KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND MOBILITY

In this chapter and the next we cover (1) strategies at field level for information dissemination and knowledge building, and (2) strategies for training and capability building. These two items reflect two of the five purposes of MS: "Facilitating increased information and access of women to their entitlements, through various methods of capacity building, [and] facilitating increased participation of women and girls in formal and non-formal education through sustained engagement with them." For ease of discussion, in this chapter we focus on the knowledge, awareness and mobility impact of MS. In Chapter 6 we focus on the education and training dimensions of MS. We draw primarily on the sangha study and field discussions to present the findings under the broad indicators used in the Results Framework; in addition, we draw on the feedback from 120 MS districts on these aspects.

5.1   Increase in knowledge and awareness

The overall picture that emerges from the sangha study and field discussions is that there is substantial information and knowledge gain in several domains. There is increased information about the responsibilities of the State; there is increased information on entitlements of women and girls and on processes through which these can be accessed or demanded. In the personal domain, there is awareness of gender-based discrimination and patriarchy and power relations and the manner in which these influence the inter-relationship between the sexes in society. Of course there are bound to be variations in the levels of such awareness among the large sangha membership, but overall, at the level of the collective, there is a clear information and knowledge gain.

The key areas of knowledge gain for sangha members, according to them, are four: (a) government schemes and programmes for the welfare of people (individual benefit schemes like widow pension or developmental works like roads, electricity, water, school, etc.); (b) information on health and hygiene; (c) schemes and services to promote access to and right to education for their children; (d) their rights in society.

Women pro-actively seek information primarily on ways to manage challenges in different aspects of their lives—in only five of 60 sanghas did the Sangha women not ask for any information and depended on the system to provide them with the information. Such information is mainly about various laws that can help them confront the violence faced by them, health, and most importantly, some skill or income generating capacity building. This is to be expected when we consider that the sangha members come from the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in the rural society and their need to earn a stable and sustainable livelihood is a primary concern.

What is important to note is the perception of the non-members in the same villages: less than 5% non-members reported that there is no significant difference in information and awareness levels of sangha members (3 out of 66 sanghas); they attribute the increase to both MS and reasons external to MS.

Various institutions and agencies are also collectivizing women in savings and credit groups in the villages where MS is already present. However women from those groups are now moving towards

joining the MS sanghas as they feel they stand to gain more by becoming members of MS sangha. The distinguishing factors there are that information gains are more empowering than monetary savings, they get information about different government schemes which proves beneficial in the long term than short term gains of money.

5.2   Specific information needs of women

One factor which advantages sangha members vis-à-vis non-members in the same village is the access to information available to the members. The field data shows that women seek varied kind of information from the Mahila Samakhya functionaries. The significant issues on which information is sought are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Issues on which information is sought by sanghas

Kind of information	% sanghas asking
Government schemes and programmes for welfare and development (individual and village)	10%
Health and hygiene	17%
Laws protecting various rights of women	20%
Education and various services/provisions for education of girls	10%
Gender discrimination and various forms violence against women including domestic violence, sexual violence etc.	11%
Operation and management of Sangha	3%

5.3   Specific issues on which training has been asked for

About 82% of the sanghas reported asking Mahila Samakhya to provide them training and capacity building in specific arenas in their lives. This is corroborated by the sahyoginis, 86% of whom report that sangha women asked for specific training in some form. The two main categories of trainings asked for are given in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Issues on which training is sought by sanghas

Main training need	% sanghas asking
Vocational skill building trainings for income generating activities	33%
Training on various aspects of empowerment – laws and ways to demand fulfilment of their rights, gender discrimination, violence against women and laws to deal with the same, etc.	36%
No training asked for	18%

Note: Minor training needs not included.

While there is an acknowledgement of the empowering impact of the information gained by associating with sanghas, the demand for training includes a significant number related to some form of vocational capacity building or income generating skill building training. This is an issue to be considered seriously, since MS does not have a good track record in employment or vocational training. MS is more suited for providing the kinds of information asked for and for responding to social empowerment training needs. Awareness raising and information dissemination by Mahila Samakhya is underscored by the fact that the stress is on infusing a woman' rights perspective on every issue thereby facilitating a fundamental change in the way the sangha members address any issue. The economic empowerment demands from about a third of the sanghas have to be addressed by some other entrepreneurship promoting agency which will take into account the economic linkages as well as capacity building training.

5.4   Evidence of action on the information gained

There is evidence of action resulting from the increased information and knowledge. The greatest impact of this knowledge gain for sangha women is evidenced by their movement to and interaction with the hitherto male domains like panchayat offices, block offices of various line departments, banks, meetings with department functionaries and officials, and articulating their demands to government officials. The other arena where they have extended their influence is giving importance to education and ensuring that their children attend school regularly and enjoy the basic minimum facilities/services that they are entitled to.

In their personal lives, women report increased self-confidence as a consequence of access to information related to their rights and entitlements. Repeatedly, women from across the country cite examples to show how their fear has come down and how they challenge mobility restrictions; how their confidence to speak and put across their viewpoint to others has increased. There are numerous examples to show increased participation in decision making, challenging discriminatory practices and changing power relations in the personal domain.

> *There was an incident of rape in one of the villages in Varanasi three days prior to March 8 as preparations for a big mela (fair) to celebrate the International Women's Day were afoot. There was no action in the matter. When all the women gathered on March 8, they came to know about this. The event/programme was stopped immediately and a large number of women went to the police station and ensured that a complaint was filed, and action was initiated. The girl was taken to Mahila Shikshan Kendra and has since been rehabilitated in the KGBV.*

Another impact of this information is that women are no longer ready to tolerate injustice or any violation of their rights. One arena where this is visible is women's refusal to accept low or unequal wages; they would apply to the Block Development Officer (BDO) for sanctioning work under the NREGS but will not accept work in the village which does not pay them their due wages.

> *As the sangha became strong, women from Bhatauli village, Varanasi asked the Thakur in the village to increase their daily wage. While the father said no, the son said yes. The next day when the wages were paid at the previous rate, all the women decided to refuse to work in the Thakur's field. The Thakur's men went to the neighbouring village to bring women agriculture labourers from there, as they could not stop the work during harvesting. When sangha members came to know about this, they went to the neighbouring village and requested the women not to*

> *harvest the Thakur's crop. They also went to the village headman with this problem. Finally the*
> *Thakur had to relent and give women an increased wage as was promised by his son.*

The increased information and awareness of the sangha members leading to action is also noted by the villages' non-sangha members interviewed. These non-members base their opinion on the tangible and visible changes observed by them, primarily the increased mobility of sangha members both within and outside the village, their confidence and interaction with officials at village panchayats and blocks for infrastructure development, their ability to voice their opinion without fear and the information that the sangha members now have about diseases and local herbal medicines. Only in four of the 66 sanghas (6%) is challenging social discrimination cited by the non-members as evidence of action resulting from increased knowledge among the sangha members. Yet, in 59, the majority, the other indicators of empowerment, like increased mobility and increased self-confidence, are noted as evidence of increased knowledge and action following from it. Another related point noted is that there are sangha members who have been appointed as rural extension workers in different government schemes and programmes. These members have an advantage over non-sangha women during appointment of anganwadi and Asha workers, since they have already received some training and more aware.

5.5   Increase in women's mobility

The most significant and tangible impact of sangha membership in the lives of women has been increased mobility. This has also been touched upon in previous chapters (see Chapters 3 and 4).[1] Significantly, every sangha reported restrictions on mobility as a feature of pre-sangha days. There were no spaces or people that a sangha member could access without seeking permission and/or being accompanied by a male or a senior family member, except the fields. A woman could step out of the house only if the head of the household allowed it. Talking to or visiting neighbours or the parental family was also prohibited in many cases. In fact some women report that any questioning of these restrictions would lead to violence against them. Attending sangha meetings or collectivizing was a challenge for them and many obstacles were posed by the family members with allegations of trafficking and character assassination of the sahyoginis who would attempt to bring all the women together. Moreover, the women themselves were not very confident about their own capabilities to travel out alone, un-negotiated by male company. Fear and insecurity were indeed dominant themes. These observations are in line with what used to be reported in the documentation of the early days of MS, and it is no surprise that every sangha studied reported this as the most significant theme of the early days of their lives as sanghas.

This situation has changed and there are fewer restrictions on women's (sangha members) movement within and outside the village. Their access and outreach to outside spaces has expanded and includes various offices in the villages or districts or even the state capitals. It is reported that there is increased support from the family members as well as an acceptance of women's presence at various forums of

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[1] A 2013 annual review of MS (available at iati.dfid.gov.in/iati_documents/3965679.doc) cites a study by the University of Illinois, USA of MS, Uttarakhand (*Empowering Women through Education and Influence: An Evaluation of the Indian Mahila Samakhya Program,* IZA Discussion Paper No. 6347, February 2012) that showed MS women experienced significantly greater physical mobility, had higher political participation, and had more access to employment.

the village (gram panchayat, gram sabha, school management committees) and during interaction with district authorities for developmental work. Armed with information, the women are more confident when they step out of the village and visit various offices to discuss and negotiate with the officials on various issues and concerns faced by women individually and collectively. The information spreading role of MS uniformly comes out as a significant aspect of MS intervention.

Unfortunately the restrictions on the mobility of non-sangha members continue even in the villages where the sangha is very active. No doubt there has been some change as a result of wider social trends, but in the villages studied, there seems to be a lot of variation on this score depending on the individual/family. Sangha members seem to be significantly less disadvantaged on this score. In some cases the non-sangha members' mobility has been negotiated by a sangha member and there is some freedom of movement.

In recent times, there has been an increase in information availability in rural areas as a result of the penetration of mobile, television and internet technology. However, MS's intervention in the early years when these avenues were not available seems to have played a crucial role in using information for empowerment. Secondly, mere access to information and exposure does not instil the confidence to challenge the patriarchal norms that control women's movements. This is where sangha women seem to be at an advantage, as a result of their collectivization and exposure to MS training, vis-à-vis the non-sangha members in the same villages who still seem to suffer from mobility-related disadvantages. The confidence to act on the information gained seems to be driven by the fact that a woman has joined the sangha, and that she can rely for inspiration and motivation on those women who have already negotiated this space for themselves in their families and surrounding environments. The sangha meeting records show that issue is often discussed in the sangha meetings, increasing the mobility of non-members as an argument to increase sangha membership is also discussed. As discussed elsewhere in this report, the new members who have joined the sanghas cite, apart from savings, the desire to gain knowledge and the mobility of sangha members as two key reasons influencing their decision to join.

5.6   Identity of MS women developed amongst other programmes and departments at village/ block/ district

Sangha members are identified and recognized and given a different treatment compared to normal citizens when they visit the offices or panchayats. The women report receiving a different (positive) and speedy response to their applications or petitions. This is more so when they approach the officials as a collective/group. This power of sangha members is utilized by them for the benefit of other women and sometimes also for the entire village community as well. There are instances where sangha women have taken the initiative to ensure that measures for development and welfare of all citizens are made available to people in their neighbourhood and/or villages. There are several instances of sangha members having ensured access to facility/service (provision of water stand-posts, roads, school building, loan for income generating activity) or scheme for individual benefit (housing, widow pension, scholarship to girl child, construction of individual toilets). This in part is due to increased information with women which helps them negotiate better with the authorities, often also holding out veiled threats of 'action' in case of any inaction on part of the authorities.

One challenge faced by women in establishing their identity is worth noting. Often, transfer of officials and bureaucrats implies that women have to start the process of rapport building and establishing their

identity all over again and explaining the MS programme to them. This raises a question: Since MS is a government programme, can the MS functionaries be issued some ID cards/documents and/or office space that can facilitate this rapport building?

5.7   Alternative structures for support

The main forums and alternate structures accessible for women are the adult literacy classes '*saksharta varg'*, the *Nari Adalat* (lit. women's court, which dispenses justice from a pro-woman perspective), and the Nari Sanjivani/ Aarogya Kendra (women's health centre). The uniqueness of MS programmes is evidenced by the flexibility available to the system to design and decide the timing of the interventions based on the priorities of the women. Hence we find different trajectories for the starting of adult literacy classes as well as different formats. This variety also extends to the management of the Nari Adalats. In certain cases the adult literacy classes were demanded by women when they realized the possibility of learning these skills; in other instances women were motivated to learn these skills to enhance their confidence [many women proudly report they can now sign their names]. The teaching at these centres was undertaken variously by a literate sangha member, sahyogini or some other volunteer. The teaching and learning material was provided by MS. In some districts the activities were undertaken in collaboration with the state government, thus facilitating access to government resources.

The Nari Adalats are dealt with separately in this report (Chapter 7). What is to be noted is that when the Gujarat experience (which began in 1995) was taken to other states, efforts to build 'ownership' by the sangha members were made by the MS staff. For instance, sangha members were taken on exposure visits to functional nari adalats to understand the process of this 'quasi-judicial' justice dispensing mechanism. This inspired women when they saw the effectiveness and convenience of such a forum and its potential to bring relief to disadvantaged women.

The fact that Nari Adalats are located at the Block level implies that the Federation members have the management responsibility. So the women handling the responsibilities of the nari adalat are usually Sangha representatives to the Federation; they may or may not be members of the Federation's Executive Committee. There is no common pattern of operations management of the Nari Adalat. Some of these forums charge nominal fees when the case is filed; if the nari adalat has to visit some village or town as part of the process to resolve the matter, the costs are borne by the complainant. In others, no fees are charged or only some costs are borne by the complainant. Some Federations provide travel support to members of the nari adalats. In most cases however, it is the women themselves who bear the costs of their movement for nari adalat work.

Some sanghas also have the 'Nari Arogya Kendra', 'Nari Sanjivani Kendra' (women's health centres) which are managed by sangha members, primarily at the Block level. Some sangha members were trained in identifying and preparing herbal medicines from locally available plants and herbs. The women were trained in preparing herbal medicines for common ailments like headaches, cough and cold, diarrhoea and acidity and through this centre, they have managed to establish their identity and presence at the Block level.

While sangha members are aware of these forums and mechanisms, awareness within the wider community about such forums is low. The publicity of these forums is only through word of mouth and experience sharing. From one perspective, it is desirable that the existence of and access to these

forums should be spread widely. However there is a word of caution here. The running of such institutions and mechanisms is purely a voluntary effort by the women, often at a high personal cost (loss of daily wages compounded by spending money from their pockets for travel and other incidentals), not counting the increased work load.

5.8 Social, economic, psychological and cultural benefits to the sangha members individually and collectively

Every sangha indicated positive change for all their members in one or more aspects of their lives—personal, inter-personal, social or cultural, thereby helping them improve their own and their familial situations, especially their children's educational status. The real and felt personal gains listed by the sangha members include improved self-confidence and awareness reflecting in their participation in private and public spaces (decision making in the family, ability to raise questions in village gram sabha), developing reading and writing skills, enhanced mobility, increased voice in personal and public spaces, success in accessing state support. Sangha members have been able to acquire several benefits from the government including individual benefits like widow pension scheme, housing, support for education of daughters, and sanitation facilities. Some have even obtained assistance for setting up small shops or businesses.

In villages where the sanghas are active, women have also challenged deep rooted socio-cultural traditions and practices that discriminated and undermined women's contribution and role in family and community. Traditions like purdah, widow remarriage, nutrition, practices related to sanitation and hygiene etc. have been questioned and a significant change is reported in these villages.

Sangha members have also received several vocational and skills building training (tailoring, vermi-compost making, kitchen garden, animal husbandry), in convergence with the government departments. While all of this may not have translated into economic gain, as reported earlier, in some cases sanghas have gained access to credit from the state. Where the sangha receives a loan, members have used it as a revolving fund from which women are given loans.

In sum, the overall picture is that the sangha members point out that the intangible benefits of MS intervention are significant; they feel the transformative change in their lives is more important than counting the tangible and computable benefits like their access to individual welfare schemes. This is a lesson the sanghas studied offer unambiguously. The increase in their intrinsic worth as women and as human beings as evidenced by greater social respect, the breaking of gender barriers when they are called for panchayat and gram sabha meetings, the recognition and honour given by government officials, and the increased negotiating power within the family and the community, far outweighs stereotypical expectations of benefits. The change in self-worth that happens when a dalit woman is addressed in the second person plural (e.g. Nars'amma', and not Narsa), or to quote another sangha member who told this study team in Telugu: literally "I am more intelligent now," but implying a "more aware person", cannot be measured.

A few occasions are reported when their questioning of the social norms governing their lives led to further restrictions on the women and to resistance from their families and communities. In that sense it can be said that sangha membership is disadvantageous in the initial phases as the women have to confront many obstacles beginning with their immediate family. However in no instance has this

disadvantage persisted beyond a certain period of time—the time it took for the sangha to establish its presence and demonstrate the power of the increased information and knowledge of its members. This change, where the woman finds a new place for herself, is perhaps the most significant outcome of MS's sangha strategy.

5.9   Summary: Information dissemination and knowledge building and training and capability building: Knowledge, awareness and mobility

1. All indications point to substantial information and knowledge gain in several domains.
2. The key areas of knowledge gain for sangha members are four: (a) government schemes and programmes for the welfare of people (individual benefit schemes like widow pension or developmental works like roads, electricity, water, school, etc.); (b) information on health and hygiene; (c) schemes and services to promote access to and right to education for their children; (d) their rights in society.
3. Women pro-actively seek information primarily on ways to manage challenges in their lives—information on laws, health, and income generating capacity building.
4. Less than 5% non-members reported that there is no significant difference in information and awareness levels of sangha members as compared to non-members.
5. Specific issues on which training has been asked for include vocational training and empowerment.
6. While there is evidence of the empowering impact of the information gained by associating with sanghas, a significant demand for training relates to some form of vocational capacity building or income generating skill building training. MS does not have a good track record in employment or vocational training, but is more suited for responding to social empowerment training needs. The economic empowerment demands from about a third of the sanghas have to be addressed by some other entrepreneurship promoting agency which will take into account the economic linkages as well as capacity building training.
7. There is evidence of action resulting from the increased information and knowledge: movement to and interaction with the hitherto male domains like panchayat offices, block offices of various line departments, banks, etc. The second arena is education and ensuring that their children attend school regularly and enjoy the basic minimum facilities/services that they are entitled to.
8. In their personal lives, women report increased self-confidence as a consequence of access to information related to their rights and entitlements.
9. Another impact of information is that women are no longer ready to tolerate injustice or any violation of their rights; for example, women's refusal to accept low or unequal wages.
10. The increased information and awareness of the sangha members leading to action is also noted by the villages' non-sangha members interviewed. They note the increased mobility of sangha members both within and outside the village, and their confidence.
11. Only in four of the 66 sanghas (6%) is challenging social discrimination cited by the non-members as evidence of action resulting from increased knowledge among the sangha members. But in 59, the majority, the other indicators of empowerment, like increased mobility and increased self-confidence, are noted as evidence of increased knowledge and action following from it.
12. The most significant and tangible impact of sangha membership in the lives of women has been increased mobility. Sometimes, sangha members have negotiated mobility for non-sangha members.

13. Sangha members are identified and recognized and given different treatment compared to normal citizens when they visit block level offices or panchayats. However, when new officials are transferred in, the process of rapport building has to start all over again.
14. Alternative structures for support: The Nari Adalats are dealt with separately in this report. Adult literacy centres were important in earlier years in enabling higher literacy levels. The teaching at these centres was undertaken variously by a literate sangha member, sahyogini or other volunteers. The teaching and learning material was provided by MS. In some districts these were undertaken in collaboration with the state government, thus facilitating access to government resources.
15. Some sanghas also have the 'Nari Arogya Kendra', 'Nari Sanjivani Kendra' (women's health centres) which are managed by sangha members, primarily at the Block level.
16. The sangha members point out that the intangible benefits of MS intervention are significant; they feel the transformative change in their lives is more important than counting the tangible and computable benefits like their access to individual welfare schemes. This is a lesson the sanghas studied offer unambiguously.
17. In sum, MS may be seen as a successful *educational* intervention. Its main strength is in initiating and implementing educational processes that harness the power of information for awareness generation and knowledge, leading to action. This educational identity of MS is its main strength.

6. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND KNOWLEDGE BUILDING AND TRAINING AND CAPABILITY BUILDING: EDUCATION AND LEARNING

6.1 Promotion of real and thematic literacies amongst women and girls

From the field studies of the sanghas, the broad theme that emerges is that building knowledge, based on articulated demands or needs, is at the core of the Mahila Samakhya programme. Over a period of time women have asked for information and knowledge on various issues like different government schemes for individual benefits as well as development of the village, laws and schemes protecting women from violence, and gender based discrimination like child marriage, other harmful traditions and practices like *devadasi* system, health and hygiene, nutrition, etc. The sangha members have also demanded skill building training for income generation like animal husbandry, agriculture, vocational trainings like tailoring, embroidery, papad and pickle making, negotiating and discussing with government officials. The key areas in which information and training are sought are given in the table below (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Key areas in which information and training are sought by sanghas

Key issue	Frequency (sanghas asking)
Information and trainings on government schemes and programmes for individual welfare and village development	13
Vocational skills building and income generating activities	14
Rights of women and laws protecting these rights	11
Gender discrimination against women	7
Right to education and provisions made by government to support access to right to education (KGBV, Scholarship schemes, etc.)	13
Health and nutrition	11
Water and sanitation issues (support for accessing drinking water, support for construction of toilets etc.)	5
Panchayat and its functioning	4

The training imparted on gender equality, leadership capacity building, awareness raising on rights and laws protecting women, health and sexuality training, income generation, functional literacy training, is reported to have been successful as they are perceived to have affected women positively and led to lasting change in their lives by fundamentally altering how they and those immediately around them perceived them. The methods adopted varied from long duration (fortnight or even months) programmes to intensive campaigns and use of various media like audio-visual material, folk forms, street theatre apart from the conventional methods of lectures and discussions.

There is a need to mention here that in many areas vocational skills and income generating training focused on challenging the entrenched gender bias by training women and girls in non-stereotypical professions and businesses like cycle repairing, masonry and gas stove repairing. However this has not proved to be successful in either changing gender dynamics or ensuring dignified livelihood to the

woman/girl so trained. There should be larger social mobilization challenging gender bias for such strategies to gain a foothold in society. Often the woman/girl so trained became a subject of mockery in the village. There is no denying that such strategies are necessary and it is important to challenge such biases; however, the operationalization of such strategies should be thought through from the community perspective and not merely from a theoretical approach. An analysis of such failures needs a careful study of intersection between gender/feminist politics and poverty before embarking on economic empowerment programmes for women under MS.

6.2   Increasing girls' enrolment through MS efforts and interventions

Mahila Samakhya programme is typically rolled out in educationally backward blocks implying thereby that the overall status of education in the region is lower than the national average. Every village in the 72 sanghas studied has reported an increase in the incidence of girls' education. It is reported that over time most girls, irrespective of their caste and social location, are now enrolled in schools in the village or even sent outside the village to complete their basic studies or study further. From the accounts of the women interviewed this was not the situation a few years ago or when the sangha was formed. Gender prejudices disadvantaged women and girls and worked to deny them equal opportunity of education. Very few families sent their daughters to school since the girls were looked at as extra hands for household work or income generating work (agriculture, labour, etc.) or caretakers of their siblings; in some cases, girls were not sent out due to fear for their safety. It must be recorded here that despite high enrolment rates, there are reports of a few girls dropping out of the education system after enrolment, the reasons for which is more the family situation than caste compulsions. Overall it appears that the discussion of educational issues in the sanghas have paid off in terms of a greater sensitization to education of girls. It must also be noted that the general thrust for education of girls, irrespective of MS intervention, has been strong over the last two decades. MS may have augmented the government's push for formal education of girls.

Such augmentation is evident in the sanghas' efforts to ensure that all girls from all communities are enrolled in the schools and mainstream education system. These have been undertaken by the sanghas acting on their own, or in collaboration with local schools, panchayats etc. Various methods have been adopted to increase awareness on education in the rural communities and motivate parents to send their girls to school. During this study, a variety of methods used by the sanghas to encourage enrolment in schools were recorded. Many sanghas show evidence of having undertaken mass public events like rallies, campaigns, slogan (wall) writing, *prabhat pheris* (early morning walks/rally through the lanes in residential areas accompanied with singing songs), street plays, undertaking surveys to identify girls who are not yet enrolled in the schools, door to door visits, and discussions in gram panchayat meetings and gram sabhas. Home visits and counselling parents and family members on a one to one basis has also been done to convince the parents to enrol their daughters in the mainstream education system and/or continue the education of their girl child on a continuous basis. Moreover, most of the sanghas surveyed show that their concern for girls' education does not end with enrolment; they also follow up the attendance, and try to minimize drop-out from school.

Drop out does happen, and if there is an incident of drop out, the strategy to get the girl back in school is first discussed in the sangha meeting before any action is initiated. Sometimes the parents are called at the sangha meeting and counselled to send their girls back to school. Very often this strategy succeeds. The sangha members' engagement with girls' education also illustrate their efforts to find long-term solutions to the problem of drop-out. According to the sangha members interviewed, the

main reasons offered by parents for not sending their daughters to school, as noted above, are the need to look after younger siblings and do household work, economic difficulties and safety of older girls. The sangha members have often tried to address these causes. There are instances where the sangha members have negotiated and activated the *anganwadi* near school; or undertaken advocacy for ensuring safe and secure transport service (bus) service or supported parents in filling up applications scholarships and other benefits announced to promote girls education. The sangha members have also coordinated with the Mahila Samakhya teams and sent the girls to MSKs or KGBVs in situations which necessitated such support. The sangha members' becoming part of SMC (school management committees) or MDM monitoring (mid-day meal) has also worked to the advantage of girls' education as parents feel secure in the belief that a few women from the village are present on the school premises.

It is worth noting here that there is a major change in the perception of value for girls' education amongst the rural community. Not one member of the sanghas mentioned that there is no point educating the girl and in spending on her as she would only be sent to her in-laws family. Often, the girls are sent out to study beyond the classes available at the local level and are sometimes also encouraged to complete their graduation courses. The significance and value of education has become so important for sangha members that older sangha members who have now become mothers-in-law support their daughters-in-law, at the cost of personally bearing additional housework and child care responsibility and loss of daily wage, to continue their education and ensure also that the granddaughters get a proper education. Clearly, over a period of time, the value attached to girls' education has increased, and the sangha members are proud of their role in achieving this.

It is true that several other factors could have led to the overall increase in value attached to girls' education and the increase in educational levels of girls. The increased emphasis on education of the government, several national schemes and programmes for promoting girls education, motivation by exposure to the outside world where they see achievements and lives of educated women and girls, are generally accepted causes at a national level. Where MS adds value is in ensuring that continuation of the girls in school is attended to. Many of the sanghas studied act as watchdogs to ensure that girls continue their education, thereby making a difference to the overall education in the village/region.

The other value added by sangha members in improving girls' education is the efforts made by them at ensuring that girls from the marginalized groups also become part of regular schooling system and get educated. They make efforts to ensure girls from the marginalized groups within the village, girls from minority community begin attending school by visiting their homes, counselling their parents, motivating girls to join the schools.

> *The Udan Khatola centres were started during the mid-nineties in Varanasi, UP as education centres that specifically ensured that small children from extremely poor and marginalized groups like Muslims, Nat, Yadav, Musahars received some form of education and could be enrolled in mainstream schools. There were many such Udan Khatola centres in the region and three specifically in Muslim settlements in Maharajpur, Gorain and Saharanpur villages in Sewapuri block of Varanasi to provide an opportunity to Muslim girls and boys to receive education. This focus was introduced because the Muslim community was not ready to send their daughters to schools. Hence centres were started in the settlements so that the community understood the significance of education. With increased awareness on importance of education and enrolment of Muslim girls in schools, these centres have since been closed. Similarly the*

centre started in the Nat[2] settlement ensured that girls who were sexually exploited had a chance for a better life.

There are several instances where intervention by MS has brought about individual benefits as well as systemic changes. Girls have got scholarships (formats and amounts vary based on the State), uniforms, books, cycle, etc. due to intervention by Mahila Samakhya. Various education camps, functional literacy classes for adults, monitoring of Mid-Day Meal scheme etc. have been implemented in different areas with support of and/or in collaboration with the State Departments (social welfare, education, etc.). Examples of MS intervening in ensuring timely transport service, proper sanitation facilities in the school, restrooms for adolescent girls, are available. The following table (Table 6.2) shows the key areas in which sanghas have ensured functioning and accountability of the government education system.

Table 6.2: Linkages with the government educational system

Scholarships awarded to promote girls education
The supplementary (fortified) food grains were received
Ensuring quality mid-day meal is provided
Girls got bicycles
Free transport services, bus passes
Ensuring girls get uniforms, shoes, bags, books and stationery
Sent girls to KGBVs in cases where parents could not afford the school fees
Ensuring full strength of teachers
Securing higher standards(classes) in the village school, construction of more classrooms, toilets, etc.

In approximately 60% of the villages where the mahila sangha is present, at least one sangha member is part of the School Management Committee. This is reported by the sanghas as having ensured some information flow back to the sanghas on schooling matters, and in some places in ensuring regularity of teachers in the school and overall functioning and accountability of school towards children's education. The sangha SMC members have been involved in activities like the construction of toilets and water tanks above the toilets, mid-day meal organization, and monitoring of dropouts of girls. From the data it appears that wherever sangha members have become members of SMCs, the collective backing of an organization like the sanghas has helped them act as watchdogs and pressure groups for improving schooling. By and large the sangha members' efforts are visible in the villages, especially where sangha members have been involved in SMCs and the earlier Village Education Committees. However despite this, the impact of Mahila Samakhya programme on engendering the mainstream education system has been very limited. This has also been noted in some internal documents of MS.

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[2] Nat is a community that practices inter-generational prostitution and girls are the primary bread winners for the family.

6.3 Converting women's life experiences into teaching learning materials and methodologies

It is usually said that experience is the greatest teacher and this holds true for enhanced learning and awareness among the sangha members also. The regular meetings are the first and the most influential forum for learning where the real experiences of daily life are recounted and become a tool or material for teaching others. One example will illustrate this point. One sangha member mentioned that she was sold a product after its "expiry date," a concept that she was completely unaware of. When her children saw the product, they taught her how to read the expiry date on a product before purchasing it. Narrating this experience in the sangha meeting thus built the understanding and capacity of the members present on customer rights and protection. Oral rendition thus is the most common method for transfer of knowledge.

Leading by example, setting a standard for behaviour is another method. Ratna was widowed very early in life and was left alone to look after herself and her two sons. She took up tailoring to survive and worked hard to educate her sons. She never lost her patience and never gave up despite facing several challenges. Today one of her sons has joined the state police in a senior position and the other is preparing to similarly join the state police. Her life is an inspiration to others in the village.

Initiating action on real life experiences is also one of the major forms of learning. In several instances women have taken action in resolving marital problems, domestic violence matters which becomes learning method for them. One woman was raped by a person in the village and when this matter came to light, she committed suicide. The sangha members got together and filed a case and followed it up at all levels till the accused was punished.

Apart from these Mahila Samakhya has developed and employed common training tools like posters, banners, flip charts, audio-video material like videos, street plays, folk music, etc. for teaching women and making them aware of the deeply entrenched gender discrimination and biases which need to be overcome. Often stories from lives of sangha members are converted into teaching learning material by MS functionaries, sometimes after following the proper protocol for permission of the women whose stories are used. The most common form this takes the conversion of life stories into songs against gender discrimination. The women spontaneously now compose and sings songs on their lives and experiences of gender discrimination.

The role of the MS functionary (Sahyogini, CRP as the case maybe) is critical in understanding and identifying which narrative should be picked up for conversion into TLM. Sangha members are limited in their capacities to take up this role. They are already involved in volunteering for a variety of activities like monitoring MDM, participating in SMC, supporting ANM, ASHA, Anganwadis, etc. and the task of developing tools and materials has been taken up by MS functionaries. In this, they have been successful.

6.4 Integration of local folk and cultural traditions for awareness generation and knowledge dissemination

MS has used a variety of tools for spreading awareness and building knowledge of women in the rural areas. Various folk forms have been used to integrate women's rights and gender discrimination,

suffering on account of domestic violence, the importance of education for women and girls, laws and rights of women, and the importance of nutrition, good health and sanitation. Songs are the preferred mode; these are performed regularly in the villages. Singing appears to be an integral part of samakhya empowerment culture and a very effective mode of communicating messages and learning as well.

6.5   Methods that have been successfully used

Table 6.3 presents the feedback from all the districts on the methods that have been used with success; the expected outputs were visible with the combinations of method and content given in the table. Examples of actual programmes are also presented.

Table 6.3: Successful training methods used in MS

Method used	Content covered	Examples from practice
A-V aids	General discussion	Use of various aids like slide projector, charts, current newsletters, posters, songs (commonly used)
Awareness programmes	Child marriage, biodiversity; education; government schemes	Early marriage issues; cultivation of local plants and herbs; RTE; MNREGA awareness programmes
Training Programmes; camps	Literacy; adult learning; organic farming; health	30-day camps to increase women's literacy rate; Adult learning centres for tribal communities; organic farming; health camps (a number of examples)
Films	Empowerment; legal issues; social change; health care	Used in confidence building workshops for awareness about women's empowerment; specific films on legal issues and laws; videos on changes in women, family, and society; health videos to create awareness; legal awareness; films about awareness on health and caring during pregnancy
Campaigns	Education, anti-alcohol	Movement for admission to schools; one anti-alcohol campaign which stopped liquor sale in 12 villages; campaign to increase women's participation in local governance, in which the importance of the right to vote of every 18 year old explained
Celebrations	Special days	Celebration of birthdays of girl child; Women's Day; Literacy Day
Folk art	Programme	Art forms for child sanghas: An example is a 10-day training programme conducted for 90 children to teach folk art forms on subjects of child marriages and gender sensitivity.
Kalajata	Self-confidence; political mobilization	Drama to build confidence among sangha women; in one district a programme to create political awareness that was supported by sangha women, villagers, youth and gram panchayat members during local elections of 2014
Mahila mela	Self-confidence	This women's fair was implemented to strengthen the self-confidence of members of sanghas and establishment of sangha and mahasangha

Participatory Learning and Action	Local planning; Opportunity analysis	Participatory Learning and Action method: (Literacy map, Social map, Tree map); Participatory Learning and Action method: (Venn diagram, resource map) As the villagers participated, it was easy to know their situation, the opportunities they have and their actions. It was also helpful to have analytical discussion and take joint action.
Rallies	Violence against women; gender awareness	Campaign on violence against women through rallies
Role plays	Awareness	Role plays and street play; theatre workshops, awareness camps, seminars, workshops
Songs	Generating knowledge	Preparing songs in the local language
Vision building exercise	Gender equality	Vision building for gender equality

6.6   Methods that have not been successful

The table below presents the methods that have failed to achieve the desired outcomes, in the perception of the District Implementation Units. The table collates information from 120 districts and highlights the reasons for the failure, which indicate that the nature of the content or deficiencies in the methods may be responsible for failure.

Table 6.4: Training methods that have not been successful

Anti-alcohol campaign; some people sabotaged the campaign and this could not be handled by MS
Anti-child labour campaign; no follow-up work and the programme did not do well. Social problem too strong for the campaign.
Awareness about legal, health, through seminars, lectures and talks. While these are successful sometimes, often the programmes do not take into account the illiteracy or semi-literacy of the participating women and girls. There is poor understanding of the talks and lectures.
Campaign to register Muslim girls in school (KGBV) did not work because the girls were interested only in zardoshi work and there were other social constraints.
Collective/ individual employment training; the group fell apart in a few days and members scattered. Such programmes assume that a little training will work; the linkages regarding marketing, design, other production support needed, are not addressed. Enthusiasm fails immediately. Examples include mushroom production; bamboo and a number of other small activities.
CRPC: Child rights protection committees were established in cluster level in coordination with sanghas. The desired results were not obtained, more thinking needed, since sustained work is needed.
Documentation training; no follow up and no time for documentation. Sangha women are volunteers and they find it hard to allocate time for this.
Anti-alcohol rallies: In one sangha, the problem identified was alcoholism. They took out processions and demanded ban on liquor. They communicated with the local administration. The success lasted only two days and after that the liquor was freely available in the market.
Jivan ke Pratham Hajar Din training failed due to infrastructure reasons (scarcity of electricity); the video shows were not successful

Library for women was created but did not work because women were aged and no more interested in reading
Literacy classes were arranged for minority community through sangha but they failed to bring women out of their houses
Literacy of Federation Women; women did not pay attention and were not willing to educate themselves.
Magic show for awareness of *Jan samuday* failed because it only entertained and did not lead to awareness.
NREGA training, detailed and continuous training/information is important.
Rehabilitation of women labelled as witches. For ten years awareness meetings with support of different government agencies have been held, but no concrete follow up for the women.
Right to information; though information given no utilization of information, no administrative support and no follow-up.
Roaming library. Initiative tried, but failed because of lack of coordination and management.
Stopping child marriage rallies failed because of lack of planning, no cooperation from representatives of villages, no cooperation from important people.
To increase the literacy rate in tribal areas, *akshara tirthas* were conducted. They were not successful because of the workload of women, lack of volunteers, lack of support from family members, and no follow up by teams which changed constantly.
To spread information, wall writings were thought of. But they were erased due to rains; many villagers did not allow writing on their walls; also, as many were not literate, this approach was not successful.
Training centres for Sangha women for reading and writing; agricultural and non-agricultural workers could not spend time at the training centres.
Training for PRI Members did not work because members were unable to stay at night in the training centres.

A few observations can be made:

1. MS has used a variety of training methods which involve the women and are participatory in nature. Films, audio-visual material, culturally appropriate modes like songs and kala jathas, have been used, and are rated as having been successful.
2. The interaction of methods and content is of course important. Issues concerning gender awareness, violence against women, development issues like education and health, are more suited for the methods used.
3. Some social issues, including child labour, child marriages in some districts, alcoholism, social barriers posed by religion, hinder the effectiveness of the methods. In these cases, a few follow up discussions (on telephone) indicated that there was not enough attention paid to the hindering social factors—the method which may have worked in another area, was assumed will work.
4. Vocational training and individual and collective employment training in general do not seem to have worked. For economic empowerment, training is only one element—the production (seeds as in the case of mushroom cultivation) and marketing (as in many other cases) linkages need to be worked out along with the training. In the absence of such a holistic approach, it is no surprise that the training did not succeed.

6.7   Training programmes which succeeded

The districts were asked to evaluate the MS training programmes they had conducted in the last few years and rate them as successful (evidenced by desired outcomes being achieved) and not successful (no achievement of outcomes and the reasons for this). As noted in the section on the methods, the training in awareness generation, capacity building and health and education training, are listed as successful—one training programme on herbal medicine growing is rated as successful, but economic empowerment/ vocational training is uniformly absent.

Awareness programmes
Awareness about employment guarantee.; gender equality training; modules on sexuality; awareness about discrimination; rights of women; cleanliness awareness; training to men; awareness about equal wages to men and women; awareness about Aadhar card, elections cards

Capacity building
Leadership programme for women members of sangha; documentation training for sangha members; sharing real life experiences through drama; training of weak sanghas; computer classes on record keeping; training members of school management committees; kishori natya training: self-experience.

Health and Education training
Women's literacy training; right to education; training on mid-day meal management, registration in school, women in school management committee and awareness on education; special training on women's reproductive health; general health training (in one district sangha members were trained as health resource persons for the district; there are 302 sangha members as active members of National Rural Health Mission); training regarding child care; sanitation and cleanliness (in one district, construction of bathrooms with available resources, building Individual Sanitary Latrines, taking precautions to protect from seasonal diseases, etc. was taken up systematically by 938 sangha members in 45 villages); HIV AIDS awareness; Sanjivani Kendra for awareness about cultivating herbs and herbal medicines; awareness campaign on TB; kitchen garden training.

Legal awareness
Training on women's justice (nayaktava); awareness about women's legal rights, domestic violence, rights to education; training for starting Nari Adalats; legal literacy training—believed to be especially successful because of good training materials and modules, training by experienced lawyers, coordination with police departments, and follow up with counselling centres in blocks.

There is only example of a herbal medicine training which has resulted in some production of herbs by some sangha members.

6.8   Training programmes which have not succeeded

While awareness generation and capacity building training programmes have been successful generally, in ten districts, such programmes are noted to have failed for a variety of reasons: awareness failed because "only about 10% of the women were able to carry out any kind of action" leading to a loss of enthusiasm, or the Panchayat head did not take the gender awareness created seriously. Documentation training did not work in one district because "the resource person's facilitation was also

not up to the mark"; a *jhola pushtakalay* programme failed since women's issues were not taken up in this programme and women were not interested; a *kalatanda* programme failed because the trainees could not do drama well; in some places the literacy programme (Sakshara Samakya) did not succeed because the women did not take an interest.

Likewise, in another nine districts, there are examples of development training or political awareness programmes not working. For instance, one sangha was given the task of managing the mid-day meal scheme, but the women failed. Many *dais* were successful in assisting in institutional delivery but not in household deliveries, and so the training is considered to have not worked. A couple of literacy initiatives did not work because of family constraints and agricultural work. A campaign to grow trees did not work because no one took care of the plants. In three districts, panchayati raj training is reported to have failed because many of the elected women representatives did not participate because of social constraints or panchayati raj was seen as a scheme that had to be implemented.

There are a number of examples of economic employment training programmes that are considered failures. While herbal medicine training did work in one district, in other districts, the medicinal plants were not easily available and the raw-material was too costly for the women. Vocational training in jam and jelly making, pickle making and in making jute products, since marketing and preservation were not included in the programme and the members did not benefit from the training. Fragrance stick preparation training failed because of non-availability of raw material. In one district *lac* bangle production was started as a collective venture, but the selling slowed down very quickly and production stopped completely; likewise, in another district sanitary napkin production was started but production stopped soon. An effort to make artificial ornaments did not take off because there was no capital; in yet another district, embroidery training failed because women did not take it up.

The analysis of the training programmes reiterates the conclusion drawn earlier: MS is not well placed to provide vocational or income generation training. The assumption that training alone is sufficient is not tenable; there are many necessary conditions like market linkages that are needed to make the training successful. On the other hand, social awareness training is a strength of MS.

6.9   Summary: Information dissemination and knowledge building and training and capability building: Education and learning

1. Building knowledge, based on articulated demands or needs, is at the core of the Mahila Samakhya programme. Over a period of time women have asked for information and knowledge on various issues.
2. MS has responded to the demand for vocational training, and has engaged in training in non-stereotypical businesses like cycle repairing, masonry and gas stove repairing. However this has not proved to be successful in either changing gender dynamics or ensuring dignified livelihood to the woman/girl so trained. An analysis of such failures needs a careful study of intersection between gender/feminist politics and poverty before embarking on economic empowerment programmes for women under MS.
3. Increasing girls' enrolment: MS intervention and efforts in this area seem to have met with success—the sanghas report an increase in the incidence of girls' education, in terms of higher

enrolment and lower dropout. MS seems to have augmented the government's push for formal education of girls.

4. Drop out does happen in many villages and MS sanghas are aware of the need to control this problem. Various strategies have been used to bring the dropout girl back to school.

5. In many sanghas, the significance and value of education has become so important for the members that the older sangha members who have now become mothers-in-law support their daughters-in-law in education, at the cost of personally bearing additional housework and child care responsibility and loss of daily wage. This concern seems to extend to granddaughters also. This point was addressed earlier while discussing the intergenerational change in educational status in the sanghas.

6. There is evidence of the sangha members acting to improve girls' education among the very marginalized groups.

7. Key areas in which sanghas have tried to develop links with the government education system include scholarships, fortified food grain, ensuring mid-day meal quality, bicycles for girls, free transport for girls and bus passes, uniforms and other schooling material, enrolment in KGBVs, adding classes to the school and ensuring teacher attendance.

8. There is significant amount of evidence of MS converting women's life experiences into teaching learning materials and methodologies, in the posters, songs, and other material that MS has produced. The role of the MS functionary (Sahyogini, CRP) is critical in this; sangha members are limited in their capacities to take up this role.

9. MS has used a variety of tools for spreading awareness and building knowledge of women in the rural areas. Various folk forms have been used to integrate women's rights and gender discrimination, suffering on account of domestic violence, the importance of education for women and girls, laws and rights of women, and the importance of nutrition, good health and sanitation. Singing appears to be an integral part of samakhya empowerment culture and a very effective mode of communicating messages and learning as well.

10. MS has used a variety of training methods which involve the women and are participatory in nature. Films, audio-visual material, culturally appropriate modes like songs and kala jathas, have been used, and are rated as having been successful.

11. The interaction of methods and content is of course important. Issues concerning gender awareness, violence against women, development issues like education and health, are more suited for the methods used.

12. Some social issues, including child labour, child marriages in some districts, alcoholism, social barriers posed by religion, hinder the effectiveness of the methods. In these cases, a few follow up discussions with the DPCs (on telephone) indicated that there was not enough attention paid to the hindering social factors—the method which may have worked in another area, was assumed will continue to work.

13. Vocational training and individual and collective employment training in general do not seem to have worked as well as awareness traiiing. For economic empowerment, training is only one element—the production (seeds as in the case of mushroom cultivation) and marketing (as in many other cases) linkages need to be worked out along with the training. In the absence of such a holistic approach, it is no surprise that the training did not succeed.

14. The training in awareness generation, capacity building, and health and education training, are listed by the district staff as successful—one training programme on herbal medicine growing is rated as successful, but economic empowerment/ vocational training is uniformly absent in this list.

15. While awareness generation and capacity building training programmes have been successful generally, in ten districts, such programmes are noted to have failed for a variety of reasons. The success rate of awareness generation training seems to be rated very highly.

16. There are a number of examples of economic employment training programmes that are considered failures. MS is not well placed to provide vocational or income generation training. The assumption that training alone is sufficient is not tenable; there are many necessary conditions like market linkages that are needed to make the training successful. On the other hand, MS is strong in social awareness training.

17. In sum, the identity of MS noted earlier, as a successful *educational* intervention, gets qualified: MS's main strength is in initiating and implementing educational processes that are geared towards awareness generation and knowledge creation. Training for self-employment needs, on the other hand, requires integration with other structures in the economy like the markets, raw material supply and technology.

7. IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES: NARI ADALATS AND MAHILA SHIKSHAN KENDRAS

7.1   Nari Adalats

There are 481 Nari Adalats/ Nyaya Committees functioning in the 11 states. These have handled a total of 30,401 cases up to now. These cases were in addition to the cases resolved at the counselling centres. Data collected from the states indicate that 11,080 cases were handled during 2013-14. A typical Nari Adalat, on average, deals with about 22 cases per annum. A study of the Nari Adalats done by Best Practices Foundation in 2010 (*Grassroots Women's Movement,* brought out by DFID and MS) indicated that in 2009-10 there were only 184 such institutions. The number of nari adalats and the number of cases handled by them have increased substantially, by 161% and 83% respectively (Table 7.1). With the growth in the number of adalats, the cases handled per adalat have come down from 33 to 23. Gujarat, where the innovation was born, and Karnataka, account for 77% of the cases handled. This does not mean that the institution is insignificant in other states. During this study, the importance of this gender-sensitive alternative to both formal and traditional justice structures was emphasized. Overall, it appears that in spite of the strong influence of just two states, the structure of the nari adalat is a niche innovation that is relevant for family-related disputes.

Table 7.1: Nari Adalats, Number and cases handled

	Nari adalats/ Nyaya Committees		Cases		4-year increase %		Cases per adalat	
	2009-10	2013-14	2009-10	2013-14	Nari adalats/ Nyaya Committees	Cases handled	2009-10	2013-14
Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana	9	53	210	314	489%	50%	23	6
Assam	11	13	585	442	18%	-24%	53	34
Bihar	13	72	628	648	454%	3%	48	9
Chattisgarh	0	1	0	1				
Gujarat	29	103	2626	6237	255%	138%	91	61
Jharkhand	11	12	46	20	9%	-57%	4	2
Karnataka	39	55	721	2253	41%	212%	18	41
Kerala	40	16	216	212	-60%	-2%	5	13
Uttarakhand	11	120	436	480	991%	10%	40	4
Uttar Pradesh	21	36	600	473	71%	-21%	29	13
Total	184	481	6068	11080	161%	83%	33	23

The genesis and structure of the nari adalats are described elsewhere (see for instance the report cited above). The significance of the nari adalat lies in its contrast to traditional systems like jati panchayat (known variously as nyaya or gnati panchayat, koota) which have a poor record of supporting the rights of women in matters of marital disputes, custody of children, desertion. Such bodies traditionally do not allow women to serve on them, but play an important role in settling family-related issues. A forum like the nari adalat, which is also a grassroots initiative of the sangha women of MS, provides a gender-sensitive, cost-effective and quick response to problems that are in the family domain. Within the set of family-related issues taken up by the nari adalats, most have to do with domestic violence or marital conflict—the nari adalats do not take on criminal cases such as murder. An undated analysis carried out a few years ago in Gujarat of a few districts reported that domestic violence, wife-beating, sexual violence and other forms of harassment constituted about 54% of the cases taken up by the nari adalats; divorce accounted for 16%, dowry issues for 12%, property and family disputes for 18% and child custody for less than 1%. All cases accepted are women-centred and the complainant has to be a woman. The adalats are now reported to be taking up many cases that are from non-sangha members.

The process followed by the nari adalats has become fairly standardized. Usually, a complaint is first taken up at the sangha by the Legal Committee of the sangha and then at the federation level. Many cases get solved at this level. Additional data collected indicated that in 2013-14, 7406 cases were resolved this way. This is against 11080 which went up to the nari adalats. The latter figure includes cases from non-sangha members—assuming that this number can be ignored, that is treating them as equivalent to cases not solved by sanghas, it appears that about 40% of the disputes are resolved at the sangha/ federation level. This is a significant achievement of the MS sangha/ federation structure. Discussions reveal that of the cases that do come up to the Nari Adalats about 25 in 30 or about 83% get settled—only five in 30 go on to the courts; these cases are usually maintenance cases or property dispute cases. The time that a case takes on average is two to three months or about four to five sittings. Often, the respondent does not appear the first time.

In the nari adalats, the focus is on discussing the issue with both parties, trying to work out a compromise and trying to change perceptions and viewpoints through peer support. In other words, persuasion through discussion, combined with the fear of embarrassment and social censure when a dispute is subject to examination by the wider community, is the strategy commonly used. The members of the nari adalats also follow up every case. When they fail, they seek support from the community, the police and the courts.

The nari adalats function under the aegis of the federations. In other words, the nari adalat is located very much within the federation/ sangha framework. Each adalat comprises about 20 members and the dates for the adalats are announced in advance. The older adalats have begun to levy a nominal fee. In Gujarat, the older nari adalats charge a fee ranging from Rs. 101 to 251. Sometimes, the parties to a dispute make a small donation of Rs. 1000 or so after the dispute is settled. The nari adalats have established close linkages with the Gram Panchayat, the Social Justice Committee of the local Panchayat, the police, the courts, other government departments, NGOs and activists.

Some of the changes noted by the state offices include the following: The leadership qualities exhibited by the Nari adalat members have been recognized and honoured publicly in many cases. Such recognition has made it easier for these members to network with other organisations in the area. The nari adalats have instilled confidence among the poor communities and given more women the courage to come forth with their grievances. More importantly, the adalats' verdicts serve to communicate a decision making process that is more sensitive to the violence perpetrated by gender

discrimination. This in our view is one of the most significant messages that the nari adalats send out. Some nari adalats plan to acquire the status of Arbitrator under the Arbitration Act in Karnataka. In Uttar Pradesh, the help provided by a nari adalat in a murder case was recognized by the Allahabad High Court. According to the State office, where phase-out has happened, the adalats continue to function.

In the year 2001, the Department of Women and Child Development (Government of Karnataka) set up counselling centres under the Santwana project in each district in the State to offer support and assistance to women who were subjected to violence. Mahila Samakhya was invited by the government to run the centres in the MS districts. In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana as well a number of women have been identified as para-legal volunteers by the District Legal Services Authority; 23 Nyaya committee members have been included in mandal grievance cells set up by the district administration in the districts of Medak and Karimnagar. One innovation worth noting is the Samatha Dandu (Equality Legion), an alternative structure initiated at Nellikuduru mandal of Warangal district in 2011-12. The major focus of the samatha dandu is to act as Watch Committee to sense and stop the violence against and abuse of girls and women. With the experience gained from this mandal, the intervention expanded to 341 villages in six districts of Telangana and five districts of Andhra. The Warangal initiative won the Naveena Mahila Award for 2012-13 (sponsored by TV9 channel) for its impact on reducing violence against women and girls. In Gujarat, the nari adalat intervention has taken a unique trajectory.

7.1.1 Nari Adalats in Gujarat

The Nari Adalat innovation began in Gujarat's Vadodara district (Waghodiya Block) in September 1995. The growth of the nari adalats in the early years has been documented by MS in various reports. This section focuses on the current structure of the nari adalats which does not have a parallel elsewhere in the country. MS Gujarat sees the nari adalat as a social justice forum that will include all women irrespective of their caste, marital status, age, religion, location or profession/ business. For a long time the requirements for establishing a nari adalat were the existence of sanghas and cluster level/ federation structures. In 2007, the current Chief Minister of Gujarat observed a nari adalat in action and was impressed by its impact. She initiated the idea of taking this MS innovation to other districts as well. Following from this, support from the Mahila Ayog (Gujarat Women's Commission) was made available for the expansion. At present (2014) there are two sets of nari adalats in the state, the MS nari adalats and the "new nari adalats" which have their own structure. Gujarat has 12 MS districts. The nari adalats in 30 blocks of seven of the 12 districts are directly managed by MS; these are similar to the nari adalats elsewhere in the country. The nari adalats in the new blocks in these seven districts (post-2008), the other five MS districts, and the remaining 21 districts—a total of 66 blocks—are handled through the Government of Gujarat's Nari Adalat Project which is a project funded by the Women's Commission but implemented by MS. (The data for Gujarat presented earlier includes both types of nari adalats; the 103 figure for Gujarat indicated in Table 7.1 refers to the latest position; at the time this study was done, data for 96 blocks were available.) Thus, with the expansion through the Government of Gujarat project, the nari adalats as of 2014 covered 96 of the 246 blocks in the state (39%). All these are directly or indirectly under MS. The plan is to extend the Nari Adalats to 142 blocks by 2015.

The differences between the two sets—the 30 blocks set and the 66 blocks set—are presented below.

Table 7.2: Two models of Nari Adalats in Gujarat

Original MS nari adalats in the old blocks (as of 2008) of seven districts; total 30 blocks	New nari adalats under project funded by Gujarat Women's Commission; total 66 blocks
Formed as in other states, voluntary association of members selected from the legal committees of the sanghas who contribute their time to the activity and work as volunteers.	Planned top-down intervention, with targets. Staff have been appointed under the project.
Greater involvement of sangha members in the running of the nari adalats.	In the absence of the sangha structure, there is greater involvement of the staff of the Mahila Ayog.
Meet twice a month at the block level. Only cases that are not resolved at the sangha level come up to the nari adalats.	Nari adalats function throughout the month, on all working days, but the hearings are held on specified days in a month.
The members of the nari adalat receive para-legal training of a minimum of three months, in three to four stages.	The members of the nari adalat undergo a two-day training programme.
One member of each sangha is made a representative of the nari adalat; these members are rotated periodically.	One to two women from the villages covered are nominated as representatives.
The process of resolving cases takes longer.	The cases are disposed of much faster.
A fee ranging from Rs. 101 to 251 is charged per case.	There is no fee but a token registration amount of Rs.11 has to be paid.
The nari adalats usually function in some space made available by a government office or in the compounds of such offices. Where the block federations have some space, the nari adalats use that space.	The nari adalats function in rented premises, for which funding is made available from the Mahila Ayog. In addition, the office has a computer, printer and invertor and other office furniture.
The complainant is given a chance and time to think about the complaint after some preliminary discussion.	The complainant is not given a chance to think about the complaint and reassess the situation.

Process in non-MS districts: The members of the MS district nari adalats, along with the MS resource persons, have played a key role in campaigning in the non-MS blocks to raise awareness about gender injustice and to explain the role and functioning of the new nari adalats. They have also carried out a baseline survey and established initial linkages with other organizations that could assist the new nari

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adalats. The campaign has included poster preparation, rallies, slogan writing, celebration of Women's Day. The experienced women in MS nari adalats acted as the judges in the initial days of the non-MS nari adalats by staying at the block headquarters. The non-MS nari adalats, being part of a planned intervention by the state, have a well-defined structure. At the Block level there is a coordinator. In all, as of 2014, there were Block Coordinators in all the blocks. They are supported by District Coordinators who have a degree in law (LLB). In addition, there is one state-level MIS person, five accounting staff and 29 administrative staff for all the districts. The MS DPCs are supposed to guide the non-MS districts as well. This has led to some problems at the field level—the DPCs find it difficult to reach out to the other districts on account of time and travel constraints; also, the relationship between the District Coordinator, Nari Adalat and the District Coordinator, MS, sometimes leads to misunderstanding.

Regardless of the differences, the impact of the old and new nari adalats is appreciated by the state office of MS. The gender-based alternative justice forum seems to be working, regardless of the format that has been adopted. However, the MS nari adalats are more organic, have roots in the sangha structure and are volunteer-driven structures. This is an example of an MS innovation being scaled up by the state government, of course with some compromises on the process elements that characterized the 30 Nari Adalats directly initiated and developed by MS. In spite of these compromises, what has to be appreciated is that there is now a new alternative justice forum in nearly 40% of the state's blocks.

7.2   Mahila Shikshan Kendras and other Educational Interventions Targeted at Adolescent Girls

Mahila Shikshan Kendras (MSKs) is a direct MS intervention for adolescent girls, with a non-recurring budget of Rs. 300,000 in the first year and an annual recurring budget of Rs. 876,000 for a centre of 30 girls. Other forums that have been set up include the bala sanghas (including kishori sanghas and jagjagi manch for adolescent girls); linkages with SSA include the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas and the National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL).   The details of the MSKs and Bala Sanghas are presented below (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3: MSKs and Kishori Sanghas (as of September 30, 2014)

No. of MSKs	102
No. of learners	2989
No. of Kishori Sanghas	23026
No. of Members	523701
NPEGEL centres	802
KGBVs	187

In this section we consider the MSKs. The MSKs are residential learning centres meant for girls above 14 years of age. Over a period of eight to twelve months, the content of Classes 1 to 5 is covered along with the provision of some life-skills and gender awareness. As of September 30, 2014, there were 102 MSKs with 2989 learners. The MSK work has been documented in various reports including the volume titled *Grassroots Women's Empowerment*, brought out by DFID and MS, which documents the status as of 2010. The MSKs cater particularly to girls neglected by their parents or who have dropped out from school. The accelerated learning model used in these centres begin slowly and once the girls are

comfortable pick up speed so that five years of formal education can be compressed into one year. The teachers are trained to use a participatory method of teaching. Periodic team visits, health check-ups and counselling to the girls enhance their readiness to face the work on graduation. Many examples of graduates who started with low levels of self-esteem but developed into confident young women were cited. In Andhra and Telangana there are 15 MSKs with 380 girls, but up to now 5673 girls have been graduated, since the first MSK was established in 1995. As they graduate from MSK, many of them join the mainstream schools, KGBVs or in the residential hostels. The older girls are motivated to write examinations directly through AP Open School System. MSK students have participated in many competitions and have won prizes in Karate, Taekwondo at the district and state levels. Three girls from Adilabad MSK have won bronze medals at the national level.

In Karnataka, the first MS Kendras were started in 1992 in Bijapur district (3 women and 10 girls) and in Mysore (30 girls from tribal communities). In Bijapur, getting women to enrol was a problem, but the students brought new members when they returned from their holidays and within 18 months the strength rose to 30. The early years saw poor enrolment and long stays in the MSKs. Many students stayed for five years at the MSKs. There was no strictly defined curriculum. The students could enrol into a module (formal or non-formal education) that suited them. In fact, according to state functionaries the MSKs may have become "rescue homes for women who wanted to escape from discord in the family or just to seek some temporary respite." By 1997 there were five MSKs with the inclusion of three districts. But four of these were shut down temporarily between 1998 and 2000. Starting 2007, new MSKs were opened in other districts, and as of 2014 there were 13 MSKs with 302 students. The MSKs here also cater to Class IX and X levels. Since MS runs KGBVs, some girls who study up to Class 8 here transfer to MSKs so that they can continue up to their Class X examinations. Overall the numbers are small, and the MSKs perhaps cater to a small proportion of the girls who really need the residential education that will make up for their poor educational starts in life. In spite of these limitations, the State office observes that the MSKs have provided a space and a platform for some girls. Girls who have completed Class X in MSKs are known to have taken up further studies or employment, though the MSKs do not track the alumni. Some girls continue to work in MS as gender trainers. A few others have broken stereotypes; Saakamma, an MSK alumna, became the first woman autorickshaw driver in Mysore.

In Uttar Pradesh, where there are at present 508 girls studying in 16 MSKs, many needy girls have benefited. Some of the graduates have continued to work in MS, for instance, as a teacher in Gorakhpur, and at other levels in Sitapur, Auraiya, Chitrakoot districts. In Gujarat, there were three MSKs as of March 2014. The MSKs in Gujarat have focused on the Class I to VII curriculum and on mainstreaming the graduates after that. Reliable data are available from 2006-07. The number of MSKs during a particular year has ranged from zero (in 2009-10 when grants were not sanctioned on time) to four; on average a MSK had 38 girls who studied from June to April of the following year.

However, the MSKs do face some problems. In Telangana/ Andhra the girls sometimes become homesick or are compelled to return by their families. Many of the girls identified as eligible by the sanghas or federations do not join since their motivation levels are low; there may also be a fear of staying away in a hostel. Now there is a practice of holding annual district-level MSK alumni forums which are creating more confidence in the MSKs. Retention of the teachers and improving their capacities to handle difficult situations is another concern. The State is now designing training programmes to address these issues.

In Karnataka, maintaining a regular inflow of girls to MSKs poses problems. The MSKs also need to address caste issues so that they do not creep into the functioning of the MSKs; issues related to

adolescence and sexuality, food habits, and growth in general also pose special challenges to the staff. There is a dearth of experienced teaching staff equipped to teach specialized subjects (Science, Maths and Hindi). The infrastructure is also felt to be inadequate. Also, there are procedural problems with admissions of the girls into mainstream institutions after they pass the Class X exams. Some girls found it difficult to readjust to their village environments and traditional social structures; the MSKs, however, do not track their alumni and so the present status of the girls is not known to them.

In some places, short-term MSKs have been organized for adults; these have been small-scale demand-driven activities. Some MSKs have also tried to develop alumni forums, but the feedback is that this has been difficult to establish. Such MSKs do have annual gatherings of the girls with whom they are in touch; these girls are usually the recent graduates.

7.3   Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalayas

Sumitras

As an innovation under girls' education Sumitras, counsellors cum special educators, were placed in KGBVs. Their main role is to address the special needs and issues of adolescent girls by providing individual counselling periodically. It was first implemented in the autonomous federations in seven districts in 2013-14. It has now been scaled to non-MS mandals also. 166 were placed in KGBVs Sumitras could establish good relationship with girls as well as staff of KGBVs. The initiative is supported by SSA. The Sumitra idea originated from the then Principal Secretary, Department of Education. MS identified suitable sangha women and trained them. The Sumitras visited the KGBVs thrice a week and stayed overnight at the hostels. They counselled the girls, took up unhygienic issues and practices with the officials concerned and helped in building the life-skills of the girls.

Karnataka partnered with SSA and was involved in helping out the KGBVs in MS districts. According to the State office, the partnership was successful. Now, with the consolidation in eight districts (Bagalkote, Bellary, Bidar, Bijapur, Chamrajnagar, Koppal, Mysore, Raichur), the 32 KGBVs in these district have been handed back to SSA (since September 2014).

7.4   Summary: Impact of alternative structures

1. The Nari Adalats are fairly significant in nine of the 11 MS states. Their impact has been positive in terms of making available an alternative social justice forum that is gender sensitive, cost-effective and time-efficient to marginalized women.
2. The states should continue with the organic model of Nari Adalats that is rooted in the sangha-federation structure, established and managed by the federations, and works in tandem with supporting agencies of the state. However, if a state decides to scale-up the effort as a project, the experience of Gujarat can be studied.
3. The fact that Gujarat saw it appropriate to scale up this particular innovation is an indication of its perceived usefulness. True, such scaling-up decontextualizes the Nari Adalats, and ignores the organic location of such justice forums in the sangha-federation structure. However, it seems from Gujarat's experience that the perceived value of this kind of a forum outweighs the advantages of the federation-driven model of Nari Adalats. It is too early to predict the fate of

the scaled-up model when the project cycle comes to an end, but for the time being the project model of Nari Adalats seems to be serving a social need.

4. MS has had a positive impact on a small number of girls who have been through the Mahila Shikshana Kendras. Likewise, MS involvement in KGBVs has had a positive impact on the counselling that is available to girls and the management of these structures. However, with the progressive strengthening of focused education programmes like the SSA and now the RMSA, the need for continued involvement in implementation of activities for adolescent girls' education has reduced. MS's MSKs and KGBV involvement may therefore be phased out as an element of the consolidation phase, by integrating with RMSA and transferring the girls to other state-run hostels, or in the case of KGBVs reintegrating with SSA.

7.4.1 Directions for the future

5. The Nari Adalat is a significant initiative and should be an important aspect of the activity-mix of a federation when it is being prepared for consolidation.
6. The original model in which the Nari Adalats are rooted in the sangha-federation structure is in alignment with MS philosophy and approach and should be the training model for new federations. (If any state wants to scale up the Nari Adalat initiative to non-MS districts, the Gujarat model, which is a project-based model, not in line with the MS approach, may be shared.)
7. With the progressive strengthening of SSA and now RMSA, MS's MSKs and KGBV involvement may be phased out as an element of the consolidation phase, by integrating MSKs with RMSA and transferring the girls to other state-run hostels, or in the case of KGBVs by reintegrating with SSA. No new MSKs need be granted for districts which are about to enter the consolidation phase. In consonance with these steps, the federations may be advised to evaluate the extent to which they need to become involved in forums aimed at young boys and girls, like the kishori/ bala sanghas, and act accordingly.
8. While the need for MS to get involved in implementation of activities directly related to adolescent girls has reduced since the early days of MS, MS still has a role to play in advocacy of issues affecting adolescents. To maintain an indirect focus on adolescent girls, it is recommended that the state have one resource person in charge of an adolescent resource centre, which will focus on information providing, which is one of MS's strengths. This resource centre should move towards greater and innovative use of ICT in its production and dissemination of materials to the federation. The Resource person should also explore the possibilities of convergence of MS with other agencies like the departments dealing with youth and adolescents and NGOs, and convert these into federation/ sangha training opportunities (see Chapter 9).

8. ISSUES RELATED TO IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

8.1   Capacity and capability to ensure 'negative freedom' exists

The most significant difference that MS has made to the women it has worked with is its success in converting the 'personal interest' of an individual woman into a collective interest. In the context in which MS was started many years ago, the assumptions that MS made regarding freedom were the correct ones: Individual freedom is incomplete; the conditions of community subjection demanded that the struggle be for the freedom of the whole community; prioritizing freedom for everyone is the way forward for individual freedom. Hence, the sangha (collectivization) approach which intuitively addressed the well-known collective action problem—individuals would have felt inhibited to undertake empowerment action on account of its risky nature. One consequence of this, and it is not surprising that MS has seen this in practice, is the attempt of the women to first secure a "negative freedom", to borrow a phrase from the literature on movements. This only means securing freedom from a particular kind of external interference—in MS this has taken the shape of taking charge of space, whether it is a private space like the sangha kutir, or a public space, both of which lend themselves to expression of collective resistance—whether it is through songs, street plays or meetings. The importance of control and ownership of physical space cannot be overemphasized; the efforts of many sanghas to try for an "office" or a "kutir" are understandable and deserve to be appreciated. The second expression of securing 'negative freedom' has been the regular and hard-hitting responses to sexual violence and violence against women in general. The need to be free from the kind of interference that this phenomenon represents has been a great motivation for the sanghas; securing this kind of freedom can only come from a collective, a community. A lot of investment has gone in over the last 25 years in securing this negative freedom, through the educational process that is MS's strength: awareness training, legal training and capacity building for political participation. The results are evident, as described earlier. Are these changes likely to be permanent? Evidence from elsewhere suggests that when the overall environment, as it is in India, is moving towards a more open public space as evidenced by the greater reporting of incidents of rape or more media visibility and monitoring of violence, such secured negative freedom is likely to be long-lasting. Also, change at the individual level follows such securing of freedom, so that the collective action problem becomes less serious.

At the moment, it appears that securing the kind of negative freedom described here is still an unfinished task, though with the generally more favourable environment in recent times, establishing this freedom should take less time in the new educationally-backward blocks and districts. There are many leaders who have spearheaded this 'freedom movement' successfully—a quick recall and naming exercise in one state generated more than 50 names in a matter of minutes—and who certainly have the potential to become expert spearhead team members in the new districts. In the new districts or expansion blocks, it is more efficient to allow these spearhead teams, rather than MS functionaries or even many of the federation members, to undertake the task of expansion. Such teams, directly coordinated by the state office and working in collaboration with the neighbouring block federations, should be paid an honorarium to cover daily wages and an additional amount, and travel and boarding costs. This idea was discussed with a few leaders of two federations which have been successful in expansion, and the reception was enthusiastic.

8.2 Capability building for positive freedom to be enhanced

The ability of the sanghas to develop what is called "positive freedom"—shaping the nature and actions of the legal and political institutions that they interface with, along with obtaining positive benefits in terms of economic and welfare improvement, is in evidence though to a more limited extent—where securing negative freedom has been successful, the spin-offs for positive freedom are greater—refer to the examples of the linkages with the police and other officials mentioned earlier. The sanghas are certainly limited in their capacity to negotiate the formal structures for securing their positive freedoms—the federations seem to be more successful. Training for working for positive freedoms at all levels has to be an on-going task for MS. In Table 8.1 we present the feedback from 120 districts on aspects of training which will help in developing the positive freedom-building ability. (Note that this list includes some constraints (low staff honorarium) which will be taken up later.)

Table 8.1: Capability building needs: District survey

Item	Importance (A = most important, B = next important; C = third in importance)
Capacity building of staff	A
Convergence: Ways of achieving this	A
Networking with government departments	A
Programme Evaluation/ Results Framework training	A
Staff honorarium to be increased	A
Autonomy promotion	B
Federation management training	B
Gender awareness training	B
Programme management training	B
Resource mobilization for federations	B
Team building	B
Account training	C
Budget release issues	C
Computer training	C
Data maintenance and analysis	C
Government schemes and new laws	C
Managing DRG	C
Organizing activities like development fairs	C

Note: The responses were coded using a combination of the number of responses in each item and the strength of the item as interpreted through the descriptions provided. An A-B-C classification was used. Within each category, the items are listed alphabetically.

From the table it is clear that convergence and networking are important areas for training. This is in consonance with the needs of the sanghas and federations. In recent times there has been talk of applying the 'Results Framework' but at the field level there is no clarity on what this means or how it is to be interpreted.

8.3   Institutional identity of MS to be enhanced

The development of the positive freedoms noted above needs support from not just from the wider social environment, but from the institutional environment represented by MS itself. Some of the feedback obtained during the study, along with some observations, is presented below, along two dimensions: the 'small' nature of MS and its 'low-cost' nature. Both these descriptions are not ours; they were used by many stakeholders related directly or indirectly to MS.

MS is a 'small' programme—in the context in which the government operates. The small size is reflected in small annual budgets, relative to what other education programmes command. This is perceived to have led to less attention from the state authorities, at least less than what MS expected. The 'small size' is also believed to be the reason for the routing of financial flows through the SSA—an administrative arrangement that came into effect from April 1, 2014. This move, though rational, has been greeted with some apprehension. There is a fear that managing financial reporting to SSA and physical reporting to the Education Secretary (Chair of the Executive Committee) will be stressful. A second concern is that SSA is a target-oriented program, aiming at the 6-14 age group whereas MS looks at women's empowerment processes and at women of all ages; this may lead to the different sets of expectations coming into conflict. What does not seem to be understood is that the administrative arrangement distinguishes the central level of SSA from the state level of SSA. While funds are routed through SSA at the central level, at the state level, the funds go to the MS society through the state government. This will promote greater involvement of the states' educational leadership, and should help MS.

The society format was used by MS to allow the programme some flexibility that a departmental programme would not get. It is felt that in the initial days of MS, the society format gave it some flexibility. Right from day one, Central government guidelines have been used to frame state-level procedures, but within these guidelines the states had some flexibility in matters of spending and appointment of resource people. However, our discussions in the states visited indicate that the society has continued to implement the programme while assuming that the Government of India is the only financial supporter. At the state it is seen as a "GOI project"; there have been limited attempts to examine issues like the financial sustainability of MS or its vehicles like the federations. The resource personnel in the state have also played only advisory roles, but sustained work on longer-term issues seems to be weak.

Despite the impact that MS has created in the field, it is not evident that MS has managed to establish its own institutional identity within the larger governmental structure. It is perhaps a little ironic that a programme that derives its strength and purpose from the identity it provides marginalized women still seemed to be struggling on this account. As a government-sponsored or organized structure, we heard several instances where the MS programme has had to walk a fine line between challenging powerful interests (often represented in the government) and yet continue to be seen as a part of the government structure. In one of the states, the Chairperson of the EC clearly felt that MS was "like any other NGO;" "as an NGO there will be a problem of funding." In the Gujarat case, the "project model" of the Nari Adalat initiative (see Chapter 7) is being routed through MS—the MS SPD is nominally responsible for all 33 districts since officially the programme in 26 districts is "supported by the Women's Commission and managed by Mahila Samakhya"—in only seven districts does the MS directly runs Nari Adalats.

In contrast to the lack of a distinct identity within the government machinery, a facet of MS that came out vividly in our state and district level meetings was its ability to network with other NGOs. For instance, in Karnataka, we studied the work done by MS in the clean election campaign (also documented in: "A Grass-Roots Drive for Clean Elections in Karnataka." *India Ink*. Accessed October 21, 2014. http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/05/15/a-grass-roots-drive-for-clean-elections-in-karnataka/.) Similarly, MS had worked with IT for Change in using technology for the creation of community media. At our visit to the Mysore DIU, NGOs remarked on the value that local MS district office brought to enhancing their work. They stressed the fact that while the other NGOs typically had a specialized focus, the MS unit acted like an umbrella organization bringing together several NGOs to work on issues affecting marginalized women. The same was the case in Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana where MS has brought together NGOs and some quasi-research bodies that collaborate with it.

The "low-cost" label that is applied to MS by many functionaries is perhaps an unfair one. We do not subscribe to this view. As noted earlier, MS can be proud of the fact that it is perhaps one of the few programmes to have successfully leveraged the voluntarism inherent in the people for social change. As noted in Chapter 1, for every rupee that MS spends, very conservatively speaking, it mobilizes four rupees from the people. Yet, one has to acknowledge that when the label is used, it usually refers to the allocations that are made for the management costs. The salary levels which are perceived to be low came in for criticism from many quarters, especially the district units. In one place we were told that "we are hoping that the 12th Plan will increase our remuneration." Our view is that there is a widespread perception that the current levels, especially at the district level (Consultant Rs. 12000-18000 p.m; DPC Rs. 11500-15000; DRP Rs. 10000-12000; JRP Rs. 6500-10000 and Sahyogini (CRP) Rs. 4500), are low. This is an issue that is best taken up by the National Project Office.

The salary structure and related working conditions may be responsible for the high turnover that MS project offices witness. High turnover is a problem that is recognized even in the XI Plan Document. As an example the experience of Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana is presented in Table 8.2 (details are presented in Annexure 3). In less than three years, the entire organization experiences a turnover. Other states visited also report a high turnover. A revision in remuneration may bring this churn down to some extent. We recommend that the National Project Office set up a small internal taskforce to review the honoraria structures that would be appropriate for the XII plan period. In the early years of MS, salary levels may not have been that critical in retaining functionaries, but with the greater opportunities now and the greater incentives offered to trained people by other agencies like NGOs, there may be a need to take a close look at appropriate honorarium levels.

Table 8.2: Staff turnover: Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana, 2010-14

	2010	2010-14	2010-14
	Opening status	Left	New staff joined
State level	11	14	19
Resource Centre	3	2	4
District level	216	302	344
MSK	37	47	41
Total	267	365	408

Another issue which is entirely within the control of the states is the filling up of vacant positions. There are bound to delays in this matter—depending on how urgently the Chairperson of the EC and others in

the EC take up the issue. For instance, in Gujarat, at the time of this study, at the state level both posts of State Resource Person, one of the two consultants positions, and the Associate Programme Director position were vacant. Thus, out of six positions (including the SPD) four were vacant. These posts should be filled in due course of time, but delays in doing so can harm the programme. At the district level, three of the 12 DPC positions, 8 of the 16 District Resource Persons, and six of the 11 Junior Resource Persons and 43 of the 171 CRP positions were vacant—total vacancies are about 23 per cent, but excluding the CRPs, the vacancy is 38%.

8.4   Summary: Issues related to implementation capacity

1. MS's implementation has shown significant capacity and capability to ensure 'negative freedom' –securing freedom from a particular kind of external interference. In MS this has taken the shape of taking charge of space, whether it is a private space like the sangha kutir, or a public space, both of which lend themselves to expression of collective resistance and of regular and hard-hitting responses to sexual violence and violence against women in general.
2. The need to be free from the kind of interference that this phenomenon represents has been a great motivation for the sanghas.
3. A lot of investment has gone in over the last 25 years in securing this negative freedom, through awareness training, legal training and capacity building for political participation.
4. These changes are likely to be permanent given the growing evidence that India is moving towards a more open public space as evidenced by the greater reporting of incidents of rape or more media visibility and monitoring of violence.
5. Establishing this freedom should take less time in the new educationally-backward blocks and districts. There are many leaders who, having spearheaded this 'freedom movement' successfully, have the potential to become expert spearhead team members for the new districts.
6. Capability for positive freedom needs to be enhanced: the ability for "positive freedom"— shaping the nature and actions of the legal and political institutions that they interface with, along with obtaining positive benefits in terms of economic and welfare improvement, is in evidence though to a more limited extent.
7. The sanghas are certainly limited in their capacity to negotiate the formal structures for securing their positive freedoms.
8. Training for working for positive freedoms at all levels has to be an on-going task for MS. Convergence and networking are important areas for training. This is in consonance with the needs of the sanghas and federations also.
9. Institutional identity of MS has to be enhanced. MS is perceived to be a 'small' programme, and may not receive the kind of attention within government circles that it expects.
10. In spite of having a flexible society format, issues like the financial sustainability of MS or its vehicles like the federations need more attention.
11. MS has developed a reasonable ability to network with NGOs in many states.
12. The "low-cost" label often applied to MS is a misleading one, since MS has been very successful in tapping into the voluntarism of people in order to achieve social change. However, the label also refers to the perceived low honoraria levels which came in for criticism from many quarters, especially the district units.
13. The salary structure and related working conditions may be responsible for the high turnover that MS project offices witness. We recommend that the National Project Office set up a small internal taskforce to review the honoraria structures that would be appropriate for the XII plan period.

9. MAHILA SAMAKHYA: MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY, A REVIEW

Mahila Samakhya (MS) is "an on-going scheme for women's empowerment that was initiated in 1989 to translate the goals of the NPE into a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly of women from socially and economically marginalized groups." MS aims to bring together women so that they can collectively solve their problems through the agency of the mahila sangha (women's collective) and the federations they form. This bringing together of the women is expected to be a flexible and facilitative process, and not a target-oriented intervention. The hope is that the women themselves will influence the shape and pace of the programme, create a learning environment and promote the acquisition of information and skills needed for informed decision making.

The specific objectives of MS (XI Plan Document) are the following.
- Create an environment in which education can serve the objectives of women's equality
- Enhance self-image and self-confidence to recognize their contribution to the economy reinforcing the need to participate in educational programmes
- Create an environment in which women can seek knowledge and information for empowerment
- Set in motion circumstances for larger participation of women and girls in formal and nonformal education programmes
- Provide necessary support structures and informal learning environment to create opportunities for education
- Enable Mahila sanghas to assist/ monitor educational activities in the villages
- Establish a decentralized and participatory management structure to facilitate participation.

MS's strategy has been guided by these statements of mission and objectives. In the table below, the aspects of MS work—the programmatic areas—identified during this study (see Chapters 3 and 4), and the vehicles that are in use, are presented. The sangha is the core vehicle in achieving the programmatic objectives, though with the move towards greater autonomy the federations are now becoming important.

Table 9.1: Summary of programmatic areas and implementation vehicles

Programmatic areas of MS work	Vehicles in use to achieve programmatic objectives	Recap of broad assessment discussed in detail earlier
Developing organizational capacities within sangha and federation	MS training set-up (district units, resource centres), Information Centres run by Federations	Sanghas/ federations are primarily social organizations. MS may be seen as a successful *educational* intervention, initiating and implementing educational processes that harness the power of information for awareness generation and knowledge, leading to action.

Women's issues including violence against women, legal awareness	Sanghas, federations, Nari Adalats	Sanghas/ federations have been successful. MS, as an educational process, has harnessed the power of information for action.
Networking with government and other agencies for economic empowerment	MS training set-up, federations	Adequate capabilities do not exist. Training for self-employment needs requires integration with other structures in the economy like the markets, raw material supply and technology.
Working for economic empowerment	MS training set-up; sporadic networking with other state agencies	Adequate capabilities do not exist; past experiences demand serious review.
Creating Gender awareness	Sanghas, federations, MS training set-up	Sanghas/ federations have been successful. The identity of MS as an educational process is its main strength.
Education	Sangha, Adult literacy centres (network with KGBVs)	Sanghas/ federations have been successful.
Education of adolescents	Sangha, MSK, Kishori sanghas	Though limited, useful reach. The need to engage in implementation has come down over the years, but the need to remain involved in advocacy exists.
Health action	Sangha, Sanjivani Kendras run by Federation	Sanghas/ federations have been successful.
Political participation	Sangha, MS training set-up	Sanghas/ federations have been fairly successful.

9.1   Summary of strengths and weaknesses

A brief recap of the strengths and weaknesses arising from this combination of programmatic areas and implementation structures is provided below.

Strengths
1. Government ownership of the programme.
2. MS has established a strong "educational" identity. Its training capability for social and gender awareness is one of its key strengths.
3. Experience of 25 years and a large number of leaders from the most disadvantaged sections of society who can be called upon.
4. About 65% sanghas reported to fairly active or very active.

5. A group of 325 federations has been established; the more active ones are willing to help neighbouring areas.
6. Significant progress down the autonomy path has been made—60% of the federations and possibly 60% of the sangha membership will be autonomous by the beginning of 2015-16.
7. Social impact has been positive. Significant proportion of membership is from marginalized sections of society and so this positive impact is a great strength as well as achievement.
8. MS is primarily a volunteer-driven programme. The contribution of volunteers has been significant. There is no reason to believe this will not be maintained in the future.
9. There is strong capability to address gender awareness and violence-related issues. Similar capability to take up health and education issues exists.
10. Block-level structures like the Nari Adalats and Information Centres, which are playing a significant role in gender-related issues and promoting the power of information.

Weaknesses
1. Sanghas have limited ability to raise funds or negotiate formal institutional structures.
2. Internal management and networking both have to be termed weak if the federations are to substitute for the DIUs in the future.
3. The federations' capability to network and work out financial sustainability plans is not strong.
4. Institutional identity within government and related circles needs strengthening. MS is often seen as a "small" programme.
5. There is a widespread perception that the honorarium structures are poor and it is believed that these may be the reason for the high turnover that MS project offices witness.
6. The turnover also makes training and capacity building of MS functionaries problematic.

9.2   Implementation structures needing modification

In the light of the expected changes in the current programmatic areas, the structures implementing them require some modification. The approach taken here has been to align the proposed changes with current structures, which are familiar to MS staff. However, there are certain new skills that are required. These are presented below.

Table 9.2: Programmatic areas to be continued and suggested modification of implementation structures

Programmatic areas of MS work (current implementation structures are given in brackets)	Modification of implementation structures
Developing organizational capacities of sanghas in old districts (Sanghas/ federations)	MS has been fairly successful in this programmatic task. In all districts where MS has been present for 10 years or more, and where 25% of the district's villages have been covered, consolidation should end by March 2015. In other words, DIUs will cease to exist in these districts. States may absorb the current DIU staff in neighbouring districts. In the phased-out districts, federations should be able to maintain this work.
Developing organizational capacities of sangha in entirely	The DIU has played two roles up to now: mobilization and capacity building.

new districts (including sangha formation) (Sanghas/ federations)	The mobilization role for new districts should now be given to spearhead teams drawn from a range of old federations/ sanghas. The traditional DIU structure may be operated in new districts for five years, but as (a) support to the spearhead teams in mobilization; (b) a set-up with primary responsibility for capacity building training in the new districts, so as to cover 25% of the villages by the end of the five-year period.
Developing organizational capacities of federations in all districts (MS)	MS has been partly successful in this task. The proposed Resource Groups should be responsible for this task. The DIUs, wherever they exist, can assist in the task. The Resource groups will have to (a) draw up a road map for all the federations on the basis of the nature of support needed; (b) the support could follow an A-B-C system: intensive phase for the new/ weak ones; indirect support with visits for the medium ones, and only phone call support to the well-established; (c) work on financial sustainability of federations as social organizations as recommended elsewhere in this report.
Women's issues including violence against women, legal awareness (Sanghas, federations, Nari Adalats)	MS has been successful in this programmatic task. The proposed Resource Groups to support federations (in whatever stage they are) in this programmatic task. This involvement is critical for MS's broader goal and has to be continued as one of the primary tasks.
Working for economic empowerment; networking with government and other agencies (MS training set-up; networks with other state agencies)	Adequate capabilities do not exist; past experiences are not encouraging. The federations are social organizations engaged primarily in securing negative freedoms as discussed earlier. They are not capable of taking up sustained, long-term collective economic ventures, either for their own financial sustainability or as demonstrations to the sanghas. The recommendation is to leave production to the private/ individual sphere. However, Work and Livelihoods is an important area (see note below) and in the proposed Resource Group we recommend an entrepreneurship cell which can provide facilitation by connecting opportunities in the government and private sector with the federations.
Creating Gender awareness (Sangha, Federation, MS training set-up)	MS and the Sanghas/ federations have been successful. MS can continue to play an information-provider and capacity building supporter to the federations through its Resource Groups. This is MS's key strength and it should be leveraged.
Education (Sangha, Adult literacy centres and network with KGBVs)	Sanghas/ federations have been successful. However, the macro-environment has changed. Programmes like SSA, RMSA and Shakshar Bharat are large-scale programmes that have made an impact. MS's limited resources may be better utilized if it confines itself to an information-provider role and promote convergence with these state-run programmes.
Education of adolescents (Sangha, MSK, Bala sanghas)	Limited but useful reach. A useful service to adolescents has been provided up to now. However, the macro-environment has

	changed. Programmes like SSA, RMSA and Shakshar Bharat are large-scale programmes that have made an impact. MS's limited resources may be better utilized if it were to promote convergence with these state-run programmes, and advise inclusion of adolescents in the sanghas (see Chapters 2 & 3). While the need for MS to get involved in implementation of activities directly related to adolescent girls has reduced since the early days of MS, MS still has a role to play in advocacy of issues affecting adolescents. This role is best played by a member of the Resource Group.
Health action (Sangha, Sanjivani Kendras run by Federation)	Sanghas/ federations have been fairly successful. MS should continue to play its information provider role and help in converging with government and private resources on behalf of the federations/ sanghas.
Political participation (Sangha, Federation, MS training set-up)	Sanghas/ federations have been fairly successful. MS should continue to play its information-provider role and support the federations with capacity building through the proposed Resource groups.

A note on the entrepreneurship task: As noted earlier, the federations are not equipped to promote economic activity on a sustained basis. However, the demand for livelihood and vocationally-oriented options cannot be ignored. Taking this task up seriously would demand a broader understanding of the relationships between training and other structures like the markets. Further linkages with broader programmes like the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and other technical support agencies have to be built up systematically. Other resources like the National Mission for Empowerment of Women should also be explored.

9.3   Programmatic and structural elements needing change

Table 9.3: Action required for structural changes

Programmatic areas of MS work	Structural elements	Action required
Developing organizational capacities of sanghas in old districts	Federations remain as they are	No change in current approach, as seen in autonomous blocks; but lessons can be documented for new federations.
Developing organizational capacities of sangha in entirely new districts (including sangha formation)	Proposed: Constitution of Spearhead teams (region-wise) by state office with responsibility for new districts. A state should be able to easily identify about 50 such experts from the sanghas/ federations	Teams to be constituted irrespective of whether members are office bearers of federations or not. Their track record is more important. A preliminary check indicates that they may be willing to work with the nearest federation.

	who can be paid an honorarium and other incidental costs.	
Developing organizational capacities of federations in all districts	State to take responsibility through Resource Group	Resource Group to be strengthened. Some members of the Resource Group may be stationed in regional locations. One specific person to coordinate "Federation Institution Building."
Women's issues including violence against women, legal awareness (Sangha, Federation, Nari Adalats)	All structures to continue as they are; support from state whenever needed through Resource Group	
Working for economic empowerment; networking with government and other agencies (MS training set-up; networks with other state agencies)	Federations to be discouraged from experimenting with collective activities or welfare activities that are risky in terms of surplus generation. If there is a promising proposal, Entrepreneurship Cell member to examine and approve.	Work and Livelihoods is an important area; but the difficulties and the work needed to make meaningful interventions in this area have been underestimated up to now. One Resource Group member to be designated specifically as "Entrepreneurship Cell" to work out convergence options and respond to federations' requests.
Creating Gender awareness (Sangha, Federation, MS training set-up)	Existing programmes to continue and to be strengthened.	One Resource Group member to be designated Gender, Education, Health Information coordinator; to focus on training and material development and provision of relevant information to sanghas and federations.
Education (Sangha, Adult literacy centres and network with KGBVs)	Convergence with SSA, RMSA and other relevant programmes	Sanghas are free to carry out these activities on their own, but MS should promote convergence with other state programmes by withdrawing from KGBVs and similar activities.
Education of adolescents (Sangha, MSK, Bala sanghas)	Convergence with SSA, RMSA and other relevant programmes	MSKs in the consolidation districts to be converged with other programmes like RMSA, Tribal Welfare, etc. Phase-out in other districts to be planned over a two-year period. Gender, Education, Health Information coordinator to specifically track adolescent

		convergence possibilities and supply necessary information to federations.
Health action (Sangha, Sanjivani Kendras run by Federation)	Federations to support	Gender, Education, Health Information coordinator of Resource Group to support federations/ sanghas.
Political participation (Sangha, Federation, MS training set-up)	Federations to support	The person in charge of Federation Institution Building to take up information provision and capacity building support in this area.

9.4   Implementation structures: A synthesis

1. The DIU will be relevant in the new districts, but will focus on the capacity building aspect of their work.
2. The foundations of the new sanghas should be laid by spearhead teams drawn from the old federations/ sanghas.
3. The DIU at present has a District Programme Coordinator and Resource Persons (one per 100 districts) supported by the JRPs and CRPs. Vacancies and high turnover have affected the work of the resource persons. The resource persons at the lower levels integrate multiple functions within themselves; they carry out awareness generation, provide training and assist in all kinds of issues—violence, health, education. There is no need to disturb this model in the new districts.
4. For the phased-out districts (and for MS as a whole in the state), the alternative to the DIU proposed is the "MS Resource Group". It is not necessary to designate this as a "State" group or a "regional" group. It has to be seen as an "MS Resource Group" which can be visualized as a network of resource persons. In other words, some members of the Resource Group may be stationed in regional locations. The current Resource Centre may be integrated with this MS Resource Group.
5. The Resource Group has to focus on three programmatic areas:
    - First, "Federation Institution Building." The person in charge must work out roadmaps for all the federations in the state. This person/team is also to focus on information provision and capacity building support in the area of political participation, since with greater visibility of the federations, political participation at higher levels also becomes important. A total of three persons, with at least one of them in the state headquarters, may be required.
    - The second area is "Entrepreneurship." This group, perhaps with two persons, will have to work out convergence options and respond to federations' requests, and should be preferably based at the state headquarters. The person in charge may coordinate from the state level and maintain electronic/ phone contact with the federations. The work may include providing training in preparation of project proposals and working out opportunities for the sanghas/ federations. This aspect of MS's work has not been approached with due appreciation of the difficulties involved in promoting economic empowerment. It is an important area, and with due planning and strategic attention,

there is no reason why the sanghas/ federations cannot receive more result-oriented support than at present.

- The third area is Gender Awareness, Education and Health. This group should focus on training and material development and provision of relevant information to sanghas and federations on these aspects. Three resource persons may be considered. One of them, the Gender, Education, Health Information coordinator may also specifically track convergence possibilities for adolescent girls and supply the necessary information to federations. This is a traditional strength area of MS and the capabilities built over the years in training and material development have to be leveraged.

- The total number of staff may be decided at the state level, but eight resource persons may be needed at a minimum. (Some rationalization of the current resource person set-up after withdrawal from the old districts should also be possible in many states.) The salary levels can be worked out along with any revision of the current staff scales. The qualification and experience needed can be specified at the state level; what will be crucial is the ability of all three groups to network with NGOs and state departments to achieve the institution building, entrepreneurship, gender awareness, education and health goals.

Elements of the structure:

- **State:** SPD, assisted by an Associate SPD and a Resource Group with three thematic areas:
- Federation Institution Building (3 members)
- Entrepreneurship (2 members)
- Gender Awareness, Education, Health (3 members)
- **DIU:** DPC and two resource persons
- Recommended village coverage norm: 25% of villages in district. (Assumed here to be around 200 villages per district.)
- One Junior Resource Person and two Cluster resource persons per 40 villages or 5 JRPs and 10 CRPs per district.
- Sahyoginis to be appointed and phased out as per current XI Plan norms.
- Spearhead teams for new blocks/ districts

Figure 9.1: Broad organizational structure
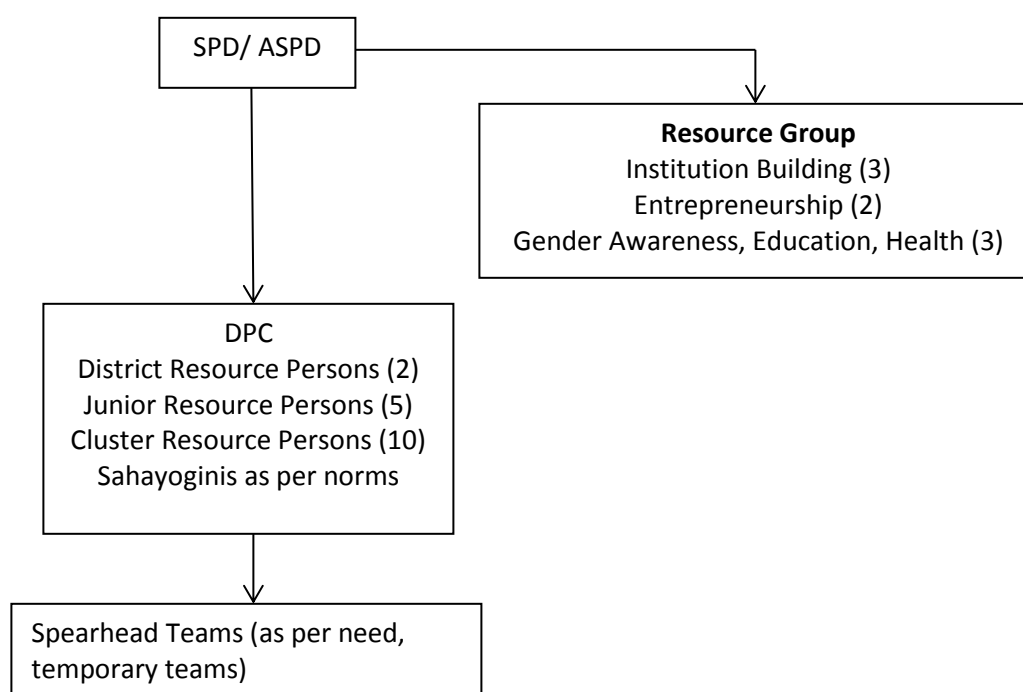
9.5   Technology to support federations

Use of technology to support the federations has to be augmented. The current status of the use of IT for programmatic development is poor in MS. The use of IT for the MIS also shows a lot of scope for improvement. MS must prepare for the time when computers, computer literacy and connectivity will be within the reach of the federations. Mobile technology, which is already being used for communication, can be used for information sharing also. A strong recommendation is to engage the services of an IT designer to suggest a platform for MS, which can be multilingual and enable sharing across the country.

9.6   National Resource Group and National Office

9.6.1   National Resource Group

The National Resource Group (NRG) has been visualized as an advisory body that will guide MS. The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, nominates members to the NRG. Women who have achieved eminence in the fields of education, health, rural development, journalism, research on gender issues, and legal activism, are nominated to the NRG. The NRG draws in members from all over the country so that they can bring in not only their expertise, but also their experiences of various regional and social contexts. The MS SPDs are ex-officio members of the NRG. From the Department of SE&L, MHRD, the Secretary, SE&L and Additional Secretary, SE&L, are ex-officio members

of the NRG. The National Project Director of MS programme is the Member Secretary of the NRG. In addition there are also members from the Central Government departments like Education, Women & Child Development Rural Development, Skill Development and Health. The NRG of 2012-14 had 21 nominated members, excluding the ex-officio members. The NRG is reconstituted every two years.

As an advisory body, the NRG is not concerned with programme implementation. It provides an interface for MS with the nongovernmental sector, the women's movement and research and training institutions. The role NRG plays in MS programme is as follows:

1. "Advise and guide GOI in policy matters concerning women's education; and the future role of MS strategy in larger educational intervention.
2. Safeguard the non-negotiables of MS and ensure they are treated as such at all levels.
3. Plan the future expansion of the programme and contain it to an optimum size.
4. Discuss and debate issues, concerns and concepts that arise from the field and evolve strategies.
5. Participate in internal evaluations/reviews in order to be in tune with the emerging needs of the programme.
6. Draw upon the experience and knowledge of similar intervention by different groups/individuals in the field of research and action.
7. Devise mechanisms to safeguard the national character of the programme as members of the State ECs."
Source: National Project Office, MS.

The nominated NRG members contribute to various processes like selection of SPDs, appraisals and state EC meetings. For instance, in Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana, during 2012-13 the NRG contributed seven days (seven members at one day each) and in 2013-14 five members contributed six days. In Karnataka, some members have carried out external reviews of the state MS, and their involvement in terms of number of days has been greater.

The NRG members play a valuable role in advising the programme and in ensuring that the national character of the programme is reinforced at the states. However, as noted by some states, sometimes the members allotted to their states are very busy and are unable to set aside time for MS. It may be better to think of the NRG as a resource group, any member of which may be drawn upon to help out whenever any of 11 states requires the participation of the NRG. This assumes that familiarity with a particular state is not a necessary condition for attending that state's meetings. The NRG members bring in a national perspective and so should be able to ensure that the national character and the programmatic non-negotiables are stressed in the states they visit.

In addition, it appears from state feedback that the current presence of about seven days of the NRG per state may be increased marginally. A suggested norm, at the rate of two days per quarter, is eight days of NRG presence in each state. Thus 88 days of NRG presence will have to be planned for. With about 20 nominated members, this works out to about four to five days of commitment per member per year.

Recommendations
1. The NRG may have up to 20 nominated members.
2. A nominated member of the NRG will be required to contribute about four to five days during the year, or about eight to ten days during her 2-year term, to MS programmes in the 11 states. Attendance in national-level meetings will involve an additional commitment of time.

3. The nominated members may be treated as a resource collective, any member of which can attend the processes at any of the 11 states, depending on her availability and convenience.

9.6.2   National Project Office

MS is managed by the Elementary Education Bureau within the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The National Project Office (NPO) of MS is headed by a National Project Director, a senior official of the Government of India, not below the rank of Director. She is assisted by an administrative cell and a few full-time consultants. The NPO functions as the coordinating body of the programme in the Department of School Education and Literacy, MHRD and is a key link between the Department of School Education and Literacy and the MS Society. The role of National Project office is as follows:

- "Provides the secretariat for MS
- Seek financial support for the programme, look after finance and administration
- Ensures monitoring and reporting on the targets set for the plan period by helping MS Societies in implementing monitoring and reporting systems
- Co-ordinate with State Programmes for effective implementation of Mahila Samakhya
- Liaise with international funding agencies and State Governments
- Facilitate evaluations, and help integrate the MS approach with larger educational/ women's development programme initiatives
- Constitute, provide platform to and coordinates with National Resource Group
- Represent on ECs, selection panels, appraisal committees of MS Societies
- Facilitate coordination with NRG members for harnessing their support for MS Societies
- Nominate NRG members of EC's of the MS Societies, and facilitate their active participation in various activities."

Source: National Project Office, MS.

The NPO plays a coordinating role. Our discussions support the conclusion that this body may continue as it is.

9.7   Longer-term strategic issues

While it is not part of our mandate to discuss the longer-term strategic issues, we conclude with a very brief account of four issues which may be taken up for consideration in the future. These are not directly connected to the present report and are presented only as additional items.

We had noted in the beginning that MS's progress up to now has raised questions about MS's lifecycle and the expansion to other states. This is of course an issue on which the national structure has to initiate debate, but we highlight a couple of views. The rationale for these views is present in various parts of the report. First, it seems that MS cannot aim for universal coverage. It has played a "trigger role" in defined educationally-backward blocks and has achieved significant social outcomes in the last 25 years. Following from this is the argument for 25% coverage of a district as a significant presence, which should then trigger off change in contiguous areas. The latter is a task for the women who have been mobilized, the state and wider society. There are roughly 3500 educationally backward blocks in the country and MS is present in approximately half of these. Aiming for coverage of all educationally

backward blocks would complete MS's lifecycle, but this would mean going into some states where MS is not present at the moment.

Expansion into new states is a decision that has to be taken concurrently; at the moment it does not seem feasible to extend into new states. However, if some states with sizeable numbers of educationally-backward blocks want to extend MS into their districts, ways of providing technical support, and financial support if possible, have to be found out. At the moment though, it appears that MS will do best to confine itself to the 11 states in which it is present and aim for coverage of all educationally-backward blocks in these states—if necessary by managing districts with very few such blocks from neighbouring district units. Every state should formulate an expansion plan based on the EBB, accepting that in some districts a District Implementation Unit may not be justifiable.

The third issue is the role of the State Societies and the National Resource Group. As mentioned earlier, the State societies can play a larger role in governance, especially in thinking about sustainability of MS in their states. The resource personnel in the states and at the national level have played crucial advisory roles; they are experts in their fields and their contribution has to be enhanced. In this context, the issue of the administrative convergence at the state level with SSA has to be examined. This is a recent move, and has significant advantages in the long term. However, its effect may be studied after a couple of years. While there is a strong administrative rationalization argument for the move, the implications of a fuller integration with SSA, while maintaining the identity and non-negotiables of MS, may also be examined.

Finally, part of MS fulfilling its mission is increasing the spread-effect MS experiences can have. There are a number of lessons that MS has learned over the years—about the negative freedoms that women have come to secure for themselves, the struggles in attaining positive freedoms, the question of gender and social justice, the empowerment of women subject to multiple modes of marginalization, the role of the next generation, and so on. The impact of these lessons on other systems, for instance the formal education curriculum, or rural development, or women and child welfare, is still to be seen. This is a challenge for the national and state level leadership. Ultimately, even if MS were to confine itself to some states and to only the educationally-backward blocks in those states, the lessons it has learned have to be offered to the whole country and used to promote the cause of social justice.

9.8   Revisiting baseline levels and use of evidence

In the Introduction we had referred to the lack of attention to the use of baseline figures that had been developed in 2008 for assessing annual progress at the state and even district levels. However, annual reviews of the progress of the programme at the national level against the baseline indicators were made, primarily by the agency supporting MS. The summary reports of these reviews do indicate that on many of the quantitative indicators, MS had exceeded 2014 end-line levels. For instance, a March 2013 review document available at iati.dfid.gov.uk/iati_documents/3965679.doc (last retrieved on October 28, 2014), indicates that 60% of the sangha women were expected to be involved in local self-governance processes and over 10% increase in sanghas (33.8%) with microcredit activities and 25% increase in members (59%) with independent bank account were expected. As indicated earlier in the discussion of the sample study, 77.4% have MNREGA card; 74.9% the BPL card; 56.9% the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana card; 72% per cent of the women have their own bank accounts; 65.6% of them report that at least one member of the family has availed of the benefits of reservation; and a large number (86.4%) report regular participation in the gram sabha.

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Regarding expansion, the same document cites a baseline of 83 districts and 2014 target of 115 districts; MS now operates in 130 districts. Chapter 1 has presented other details of the coverage and federations. Against a sangha baseline of 29,808 and 2014 target of 46,000, MS now operates with 55,402 sanghas. Against a baseline of 701,000 members and 2014 target of 11,50,000, the membership stands at 14,41,928. A similar situation applies to Nari Adalats. Against a baseline of 186 and 2014 target of 250, the number of nari adalats stands at 481. The number of autonomous federations however seems to be below the targeted number—against a 2014 target of 200 federations, there are 325, but for the autonomous federations, against a baseline of 98, a 2014 target of 550 has been stated in this document. We have not been able to verify this, and are subject to correction, but this figure seems unreasonably high.

MS's role in increasing participation of women and girls in formal and non-formal education is expected to be important. We have already noted that attributing causality to district-level or even block-level improvement is a difficult task. The annual review document cited above notes that, based on DISE data collected from EBB and MS districts (2012), the specified milestones were being achieved and that 2014 targets were likely to be exceeded in matters of enrolment and dropout. An Annual Review in 2012 had noted that enrolment and dropout among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes had already met the targets for 2014. Similar positive trends were noted in enrolment of girls in secondary education and share of girls' enrolment.

What can be concluded overall is that on most of the quantitative indicators for which baselines were estimated and targets proposed MS has done well. This has already been stated in the annual reviews such as the one discussed above. However, as noted in the Introduction, many of the areas covered under the present study had to be covered through a broad assessment of the processes MS follows. The larger issue that can be considered in the future, along with the four issues highlighted in Section 9.7, is the issue of setting up a robust MIS to gather evidence.

As far as using information effectively is concerned, it should be realized that it is relatively easy to set up a monitoring system. What needs to be ensured is that the states use it to track their progress at a decentralized level. This will need more capacity building at the state level than has been possible up to now. In fact, the role of IT needs a serious examination—at the moment, routine tasks like accounting are contracted out, but the role of IT in monitoring programme progress and communicating with the federations/ sanghas needs serious consideration. Second, MS has recorded a number of incidents and cases that illustrate the successes of the programme. Building these into a body of sound evidence that will inform not just future MS strategy, but related activities of other departments, is a task for the future. This point is not a new one, and we only reiterate what has been stated earlier by others including the annual review cited above and the fourth Joint Review Mission. As noted above in Section 9.7, the spread effect of MS has been limited, and focusing more on the evidence of empowerment that MS has dealt with will help it have greater influence.

9.9   Summary: MS: Mission, objectives and strategy

1. The programmatic areas that form the basis for future work include the following: Developing organizational capacities within sanghas and federations; Women's issues including violence against women, legal awareness; Networking with government and other agencies for economic empowerment; Working for economic empowerment; Creating gender awareness; Education,

including education of adolescents; Health action; Political participation. In all these thematic areas, the educational focus that is MS's key strength has to be leveraged.

2. There are significant strengths, mainly in the capability to address social injustice, on which future strategies can build. At the same time there are weaknesses related to inability to negotiate formal institutional structures and network for economic empowerment. The programme structure also has some weaknesses related to staffing.

3. Modifications of implementation structures have been suggested. These have mainly to do with establishing spearhead teams drawn from sangha/ federation leadership for new sangha mobilization, and establishing Resource Groups in three areas of focus: Institution Building (especially focusing on the federations); Entrepreneurship; and Gender Awareness, Education and Health. The total number of staff may be decided at the state level, but eight resource persons may be needed at a minimum. Some rationalization of the current resource person set-up and the Resource Centre is possible.

4. Use of technology to support the federations has to be augmented. The current status of the use of IT for programmatic development is poor in MS. The use of IT for the MIS also shows a lot of scope for improvement. MS must prepare for the time when computers, computer literacy and connectivity will be within the reach of the federations. Mobile technology, which is already being used for communication, can be used for information sharing also. A strong recommendation is to engage the services of an IT designer to suggest a platform for MS, which can be multilingual and enable sharing across the country.

5. The NRG may have up to 20 nominated members, and a nominated member of the NRG will be required to contribute about four to five days during the year, or about eight to ten days during her 2-year term, to MS programmes in the 11 states. Attendance in national-level meetings will involve an additional commitment of time.

6. The nominated members of the NRG may be treated as a resource collective, any member of which can address MS-related requirements processes in any of the 11 states, depending on her availability and convenience.

7. A few longer-term issues like MS's lifecycle and expansion to new states, integration with SSA and the role of the state societies, and the spread-effect of MS experiences, have been suggested for discussion.

8. MS has done well on certain quantitative parameters for which baselines were developed in 2008 and targets specified. It can profit from using the information that it has at its disposal through an information system to develop a body of evidence for processes of empowerment.

ANNEXURE 1: Sampled Sanghas and Federations

SANGHAS

Karnataka			Uttar Pradesh		
District	**Block/Mandal**	**Village**	**District**	**Block/Mandal**	**Village**
Mysore	Hunsur	Abalti Hunsur	Auraiya	Auraiya	Bahadurpur
Mysore	KR Nagara	Akala	Auraiya	Auraya	Sekhpur
Mysore	KR Nagara	Arallahalli	Auraiya	Achalda	Mishripur
Mysore	Mysore	Gikhalli	Auraiya	Achalda	Gapkapur
Mysore	Hunsur	Hoswaranchi	Auraiya	Bhagyanagar	Kakkariya
Mysore	Mysore	Ichanahalli	Auraiya	Sahar	Sahbazpur
Mysore	Hunsur	Munduru	Auraiya	Sahar	Gadheva
Mysore	KR Nagara	Sampge Nagara	Auraiya	Bidhuna	Lukkhaddaura
Mysore	Hunsur	Unnduwadi	Auraiya	Bhagyanagar	Gadanpur
Bagalkote	Bagalkot	Muttaladinni	Varanasi	Harhua	Sankarpatti
Bagalkote	Bilagi	Sonna	Varanasi	Harhua	Mohav
Bagalkote	Bilagi	Honnyal	Varanasi	Chakia	Kurthiya
Bagalkote	Bagalkot	Mugalolli	Varanasi	Chakia	Goghara
Bagalkote	Hunugund	Islampur	Varanasi	Sakaldeeha	Bahabalpur
Bagalkote	Hunugund	Amarvadagi	Varanasi	Sewapuri	Bhoolkepura
Bagalkote	Badami	Kalasa	Varanasi	Niyamatabad	Khutahan
Bagalkote	Bagalkot	Nandgaow	Varanasi	Niyamatabad	Dhapari
Bagalkote	Mudhol	Sanganatti	Varanasi	Sewapuri	Bhatauli
Telangana			Gujarat		
District	**Block/Mandal**	**Village**	**District**	**Block/Mandal**	**Village**
Medak	Narayankhed	Sitaram tanda	Sabarkantha	Khedbrahma	Chitrodi
Medak	Regode	Palladugu	Sabarkantha	Aravalli	Hathiya
Medak	Pulkal	Minpur	Sabarkantha	Khedbrahma	Panch mahuda
Medak	Yaldurti	Damarncha	Sabarkantha	Vijaynagar	Jusavada
Medak	Narayankhed	Nizampet	Sabarkantha	Meghraj	Deriya
Medak	Kaudipalli	Rayalapuram	Sabarkantha	Bhiloda	Dhandhasan
Medak	Monipalli	Allapur	Sabarkantha	Bhiloda	Kandar
Medak	narayankhed	Hukreni	Sabarkantha	Vijaynagar	Lakshmanpura
Medak	Andhole	Kasanpalli	Sabarkantha	Vijaynagar	Kodiyawada
Warangal	Kuravi	Kancharla gudam	Surendranagar	Chotila	Gugaliyana
Warangal	Chennarao Peta	Chennarao Peta	Surendranagar	Chotila	Lakhachokiya
Warangal	Guduru	Sita Nagaram	Surendranagar	Muli	Gadhada
Warangal	Chityal	Jookall	Surendranagar	Chotila	Panchvada
Warangal	Neeli kuduru	Madanathurthi	Surendranagar	Muli	Shekhpar
Warangal	Neekonda	Reddlawada	Surendranagar	Sayla	Chitralank
Warangal	Mogullapalli	pedha Komatipalli	Surendranagar	Sayla	Lakhavad
Warangal	Mogullapalli	Akkinapalli	Surendranagar	Sayla	Pipaliya
Warangal	Chityal	Venkatraopalli	Surendranagar	Halvad	Raydhra

FEDERATIONS

Karnataka	Bagalkot	Gyan Jyoti Federation	Uttar Pradesh	Auraiya	Mahasangh Auraiya
Karnataka	Mysore, Hunsur	Swathanthra Chaitanya Mahila Federation	Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi	Mahasangh Sewapuri
Telangana	Medak	Mogullapalli Federation	Gujarat	Sabarkantha	Umang Mahasangh (Bhiloda)
Telangana	Warangal	Mahashakti Mahila Samakhya Federation	Gujarat	Surendranagar	Amardeep Mahila Vikas Sangh (Chotila)

ANNEXURE 2: Impact areas: Telangana case studies

Ryalapalli	Madwar	Jhari Kolamguda	Yerraram	Julurpadu
Children's education & Women's literacy				
Complete enrolment of children under 12 years of age in the village

Sufficient rooms for classes and also brought toilets into usage Appointed ALC teacher from sangham to teach sangham members

18 members are able to read and write and the remaining sangham women are partially literate

3 sangham women appeared for 10th class through APOSS

Mobilized and motivated out of Schools girls into Mahila Shikshana Kendram | Improved the literacy level of sangham women and 12 sangham women become literate and cleared APOSS

Enrolled 58 out of school children and ensured retention

Created awareness among the community on the importance of children's education

Participated in the Badi Bata programmes conducted by the Education Department

Conducted separate counselling sessions to OSC parents and children

Discussed with children and teachers betterment of conditions

Sangham women attending | Significant awareness among community on importance of Children's, especially girls' education
The seasonal dropouts are being identified and sent back to schools. As a result 38 dropout children benefited.

Sangham pressurized teachers to participate in motivating these children to rejoin school

Substantial change in accessing services of Anganwadi by children below the age of 5 years

Sangham active in monitoring effective implementation of Mid-day Meal at school   After formation of federation in this mandal, federation runs | Ensured complete enrolment of children under 14 years of age in the village

Rooms and toilets

Appointed ALC teacher from sangham to teach sangham members

Sangham women are able to read and write and 4 members appeared for 10th class through APOSS

Mobilized and motivated out of Schools girls into Mahila Shikshana Kendram

Participated in the Badi Bata programme

Women improved their literacy levels

Education issues taken up | Strengthened Sangham with 42 members
Members took proactive role in educating community on importance of literacy
Improved the literacy level of sangham women and 5 sangham women become literates and accessed 10th through APOSS
Enrolled 8 out of school children in KGBVs and ensured retention
Participated in the Badi Bata programmes Conducted separate counselling sessions to16 OSC parents and children
21Sangham women are attending literacy centres |

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	literacy centres and improving their literacy levels	Special Training Centre and provides special training for dropout children.		
		11 Dropout children from this village enrolled in RSTC and after one year they were mainstreamed in Ashrama high school		
		School buildings in their village		
		Established BMK centres which are running regularly.		
		Increased awareness levels among the women on importance of women's literacy		
		Sangham women demanded for Adult Learning Centre; started with 15 women		
		Men, youth also realized the need for education		
		In the Adult Learning Centre, 18 women acquired literacy skills such as writing words, framing small sentences. 30 women learnt the their signatures		

Health

Improved awareness of kitchen gardens for fresh vegetables One of the sangham women selected as health worker and regularized the visit of ANM to the village Increase in number of institutional deliveries Increase in accessibility of government schemes and services Created awareness among the sangham women on breast cancer Streamlined the maintenance and updating of health registers maintained by Anganwadis Created awareness among the adolescent girls on the importance of intake of nutritious food and conducted Hb and other health check-ups with the support of Health	Awareness on the need to improve health status of women and girls Sessions for in-school and out-of-school girls on puberty, menstrual hygiene and importance of nutritious food Improved personal and environmental hygienic practices Regularized the visits of ANM to the village Ensured immunization with the support of ANM Revived the use of herbal medicines Accessed safe and purified drinking water to the families of SC colony Organized health camps with the support of health department 2 sangham women are working as Asha workers and	Awareness on importance of personal hygiene practices; significant change Improved hygienic practices among the adolescent girls and women during menstruation Change in social practice of isolating women and girls during menstruation Increased access to Anganwadi services, IFA tablets Increased number of hospital deliveries in this village. Sangham women take responsibility for hospital deliveries and 10 women have delivered in hospitals 4 Tuberculosis cases identified and motivated to take drugs with adherence to protocol Enhanced awareness levels among the women on consumption of nutritious food	Improved awareness about kitchen gardens One sangham woman selected as health worker and regularized the visit of ANM to the village Awareness on use of Herbal medicines, iodized salt, health and nutrition of pregnant and lactating women Participated in the immunization camp, T.B and Filaria campaigns Increase in number of institutional deliveries Increase in accessibility Awareness among the Sangham women on breast cancers Streamlining health registers maintained by Anganwadis Awareness among the adolescent girls on the importance of intake of nutritious food and conducted Hb and other	Awareness on the need to improve the health status of women and girls Regularized the Anganwadi centre timings Improved personal and environmental hygienic practices Regularized the visits of ANM to the village Ensured immunization with the support of ANM Organized health camps with the support of health department Ensuring that deliveries are taking place in hospitals 25 families are using ISLs & 22 families are ready to construct. Villagers improved information levels on open defecation & ill effects Awareness on seasonal diseases & precautions

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| Department

Participated in the pulse polio campaigns

Focused discussions on hysterectomies, care to be taken to overcome the reproductive health problems | 1 Sangham woman as RCH Karyakartha

90% deliveries are taking place in hospitals | Increases awareness on modes of transmission of HIV and 8 persons got tested for HIV; care and support to HIV positive

Use of disposable syringes is gradually increasing

Sensitization to ill effects of Gutka consumption. The number of cases consuming Gutka is gradually decreased, 39 members and 20 adolescent boys completely stopped eating gutka

Village recognized as total immunization village

Change in negative social practices associated with post-delivery, like keeping mother away from the house, not touching the baby & mother, etc.

3 women under Janani Surakhsa Yojana scheme

Effective access to health services like 104, 108, etc.

Increased use of herbal | health check-ups with the support of Health Department

Enhanced the skills on health and hygiene

Participated in the pulse polio campaigns Discussions on hysterectomies | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

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| | | medicines

Awareness on spread of HIV virus and care & support for HIV positives | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Collective Farming** | | | | |
| Doing collective farming with organic manure

Got recognition as women farmers taking decisions on farming and product sale

Sangham women are included as members in Adarsha Raithu Sangham formed by Agriculture department

Cluster hut was constructed with the collective efforts of cluster Sangham women; the hut is used to conduct meetings and also as training centre to conduct activities

Sangham enrolled 300 members for MGNREGS work and they are getting regular payments

Awareness campaign on ban | Increased daily wage from ₹25 to 30 during the initial years

Prepared Organic manure and used in their fields

Got soil testing done for identifying suitable crops

Planting of fruits and vegetables

5 Sangham women accessed lands on their names | | Use of organic manure

Sangham women are included as members in Adarsha Raithu Sangham formed by Agriculture department

Cluster hut constructed About 300 members enrolled in MGNREGS work

Awareness campaign on conserving the forest and utilizing the non-timber forest products

Awareness on agriculture schemes and services

Constructed Cluster hut and Grain storage bins for storing seeds for the next crop | |

of Plastic usage				
Participation in Panchayats				
25 sangham women accessed pensions for disable Water connections to the houses of SC colony 3 sangham women nominated for the elections held in 2006 and one sangham member, Nagamma, elected as Ward member in 2006 panchayat elections Sangham facilitated village development committee Placed nomination desks at Gram Panchayat to avoid disqualification of applications filed	Created awareness among the community on electing a good leader Streamlined the conduct of Gramasabhas by Gram Panchayats Got houses sanctioned for 30 eligible families Negotiated with the Gram panchayat and\accessed road for the SC Colony Participated in identification of beneficiaries 6 Sangham women nominated for the Panchayat elections and 3 got elected for different positions	Increased awareness on importance of women's role in local governance. One woman from this village got elected as Ward member 8 families got houses under Indira Awas Yojana scheme 6 members got pensions and got 4 pairs of bullocks through ITDA Street light installation 20 members got widow and old age pensions	Physically handicapped and widows pensions Access to basic and minimum facilities at SC colony 6 sangham women nominated for the elections held in 2006 & 2013 and two of the sangham women got elected as Ward members in 2006 and one in 2013 panchayat elections Sangham recognized as body addressing the issues of women and women's development Sangham worked with village development committee Placed nomination desks at Gram Panchayat to avoid disqualification of applications filed Sangham women participated in the Janmabhoomi activities facilitated by the	36 families got job cards MGNREGA works Awareness on importance of water storage & biodiversity Analysis done on women's work load Awareness on electing a good leader Disseminated information on importance of Gramasabha Awareness on importance of vote & reservations 24 members got voter ID cards Streamlined the conduct of Gramasabhas by Gram Panchayats Sanctioned 10 houses & 25 ISLs for eligible families Negotiated with the Gram panchayat and accessed streetlights, bleaching powder 4 Sangham Women nominated for the Panchayat elections and 2 got elected as Ward Members

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			Government	
Social and gender issues				
Awareness on child marriages

Stopped 2 child marriages and postponed 8 child marriages and mobilized the girls to continue their education

Sangham women worked as para legal volunteers recognized by the District Legal Service Authority

Awareness about responsibility of children to look after old parents and seen resulted among 11 families

Intensive campaigns among men on the ill effects of alcohol and with the effort 28 men stopped

Awareness among the Gram Panchayat members and sensitized on gender impact | Awareness among the Gram Panchayat and community on the ill effects of child marriages

Gram Panchayat has taken initiative to maintain marriage register to track the age at marriage

Survey on single women to know the status of single women

Moral and need based support is giving by the Sangham to the helpless women and old age women

Sangham fought against the low wage payment and hiked daily wage from ₹ 25 to 30

Attended cases and counselled on gender issues

Gender perspective among the Gram Panchayat members and community | With increased awareness levels on women's role in local tribal community-panchayat system, women demanded for that and now they are members of Panchayat
Community sensitized on negative impact of consuming liquor and able to take collective decision not to encourage it in the village

Awareness among adolescents on vulnerabilities and education through open school system

60 families got job cards under MGNREGA

18 families stopped usage of plastic in their families | Awareness on child marriages

Stopped & postponed child marriages and mobilized the girls to continue their education

Sangham women worked as para legal volunteers of the District Legal Service Authority

Discussed ill effects of Jogini system and efforts to eradicate it

Intensive campaigns on the ill effects of Alcohol and with the effort 28 men stopped

Awareness among the Gram Panchayat members on gender perspective

Awareness on the provisions of DV act and its effective implementation Discussions with women and men to | Awareness among Gram Panchayat and community on the ill effects of child marriages
Gram Panchayat maintains marriage register to track the age at marriage
Postponed 4 child marriages
Discussed with single women issues and concerns
Support to helpless and aged women
Awareness about ill effects of cheap liquor; many women stopped preparation and changed their living style |

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of alcoholism	Awareness about the ill effects of Jogini system and many of the sangham women came out of the system and changed their living style Discussed with the officials and took support in addressing the legal issues at the village		reduce the violence and harassment against women in and outside the family	
Institution Building				
Strengthened sanghams, clusters Decentralization of the work and collective efforts to strengthen the federation Evolved network of federations and developed rapport with the organizations and departments to widen the objectives and philosophy of Mahila Samatha Gained experience of implementing the projects and built necessary skills of proposal making, record keeping, etc.	Strengthened the autonomous functioning of Federation sangham members have become resource persons on women's issues Federation members built skills of proposal making, accounts management and book keeping Federation members learning how to manage the things on their own Federations got identity as resource agency and got offers from the outside	Strengthened sanghams, clusters Efforts to strengthen the federation Developed rapport with other organizations Experience of implementing projects and skills of proposal making, record keeping etc. Improved convergence with mandal and district officials	Strengthened the sanghams, clusters Efforts to strengthen the federation Developed rapport with other Experience of implementing projects and skills of proposal making, record keeping etc. Skills on accounts management and leadership Played key role in expanding MS philosophy and objectives to non-MS areas	

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	agencies Built network with other agencies and departments Sangham women improved skills on various issues by attending programmes organized by other agencies and departments Played key role in expanding MS philosophy and objectives to non-MS areas		
Natural Resources and Asset Building			
		Increased awareness among the women and villagers on importance of conserving forest Accessed plants from forest office and planted them Formation of Vana Samrakshana Samithi and women as members on that committee, taking up activities through VSS to protect forest Sangham took 2 acres of land on lease and took up collective agriculture once		

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		and got 12 quintals of red gram Started preparing organic manure 5 soak pits constructed in village 11 families availed soil testing service Awareness on mixed crops		
	42 sc, 135 obc, 5 others, 182 families. Started with 15 SC women. Lights and borewell success in the beginning gave credibility. 5 water tanks. 75 sanctioned ISL out 230 applications. Bala mitra kendram. At the moment 45 sc members.	Neem smoke. Anaemia 2006 federation work started.		

ANNEXURE 3: Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana Mahila Samatha Society, State/ District level team turnover of functionaries, 2010-14

S.No	Designation	2010-11			2011-12		2012-13		2013-14				
		Year opening staff	Left	New Joined	Left	New Joined	Left	New Joined	Left	New Joined	Left	New joined	2014 Closing
	State Level												
1	SPD	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
2	APD	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0			
3	SRP	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	2			
4	Consultant	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	1			
5	Sr. Admin	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
7	Jr. Admin	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	1			
8	Accounts Officer	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0			
9	Accountant	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0			
10	Accts. Asst.	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	1			
11	Attender	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
12	Driver	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
13	Watchman	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
		11	7	11	3	2	1	1	3	5	14	19	16
	Resource Centre												
14	Coordinator	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0			
15	Consultant	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0			
16	Attender	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0			
17	Security Guard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
18	Part time consultant	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0			
		3	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	2	4	5

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S.No	Designation	2010-11 Year opening staff	Left	New Joined	2011-12 Left	New Joined	2012-13 Left	New Joined	2013-14 Left	New Joined	Left	New joined	2014 Closing
	District Level												
1	DPC	6	2	3	1	1	3	3	1	1	7	8	
2	RP	21	7	5	4	6	10	11	5	6	26	28	
3	JRP	31	5	3	8	11	10	14	19	9	42	37	
4	CRP	14	11	2	2	0	3	19	12	5	28	26	
5	MK	97	27	35	38	65	64	67	39	46	168	213	
6	Sr. Admin	6	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	3	2	
7	Jr. Admin	9	4	2	1	2	2	3	1	1	8	8	
8	Accountant	6	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	
9	Accts. Asst.	8	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	9	11	
10	Attender	12	2	1	2	2	1	3	3	2	8	8	
11	Driver	6	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
		216	61	55	58	90	97	125	86	74	302	344	258
	Mahila Shikshana Kendra												
12	MSK-RT	11	5	6	2	4	3	3	5	4			
13	Teacher	13	4	3	1	3	6	1	5	4			
14	Cook	8	0	1	1	1	5	5	2	1			
15	Watchmen	5	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1			
		37	11	11	6	9	16	11	14	10	47	41	31

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