

A study on efficacy & relevance of services offered by mahila samakhya federations to its member sanghas

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Abstract

A case study of Kapila Mahila Okkuta Federation of Mysuru district initiated by Mahila Samakhya-District Unit Mysore of Mahila Samakhya Karnataka (MSK), Bangalore a HRD ministry project of GOI. The study has interviewed MSK functionaries, Executive Members and Women Members of Federations, Cluster Association Members and Sangha Members formed and nurtured by Mahila Samkhya Karnataka. The study focus on Federation management by women members, improving their ability to access financial services and quality life improvement aspects.

MSK having started its operation to mobilize women at the village level in 1989, after 13 years, viz during 2002 starts to work on mobilizing them at the block and district level as a withdrawal strategy as well as laying foundation for consolidating women strength to serve themselves, have their own network, build up as pressure group and offer services to others. In this direction, it is observed that federations have successfully adopted the dreams of MSK in terms of carrying out programs such as Nari Adaalath, Nari Sanjeevini, Legal literacy, Literacy, Convergence actions, savings, bank linkage and livelihood programs. However, they are yet to evolve to chalk out their own programs to fulfill their needs, aspirations of their member sanghas. Facilitation by MSK in this direction is the need of the hour is the core finding of this study.

Keywords: Mahila Samakhya Karnataka (MSK), Federations, LAs (Cluster Level Associations), Sanghas

Introduction

Mahila Samakhya was conceived to achieve women empowerment of the marginalized women in rural and tribal areas under the light of National Education Policy 1986. The project was implemented in selected states of India on pilot basis during 1989 and Karnataka was one of the states. Accordingly a few districts in Karnataka were selected to pilot the project. Since then, the project aimed at mobilising marginalised women through the grassroots women workers of Mahila Samakhya guided, supervised and monitored by a District Project Unit at the district level headed by the District Program Co-ordinator.

The DPU consisted of Senior Resource Persons and Junior Resource Persons to continuously visit the villages, attended the meetings of women, design trainings needed for them. Implement all the programs for women through CRPs & VRPs. The project staff thus aimed at making women to feel self-confident, keep up their self-esteem and self-image establish networking with similar sanghas at village level and have continuous dialogues/ meetings with development departments at the taluka level. To have close contacts with Gram Panchayats and the avail development benefits from the Gram Panchayath for their Sanghas and villages. The women were made to think about their Health, Education and Awareness levels, their primary duty to prevent child marriages, promote girl child education, conduct meetings independently, to build leadership qualities, learn to work in teams, analyse the society and understand why women are considered to be the secondary citizens, understand the role of men in patriarchal society and the reasons for their domination, try to work in harmony with men. The important strategy was community mobilization and creates awareness among women of the selected villages by the Sahayoginis, the grassroots level functionaries. Thus the planning of the works

to be done at the grass root level always came up from the bottom. Thus top down planning was discouraged. Bottom up approach was strongly advocated. In the later years MSK also felt the need to mobilise men and efforts were made to take them into confidence in the process of empowerment. The complete efforts of MSK may be considered to be having an action – reflection – action process. In Karnataka State, the Sanghas were guided to work clearly on the following six issues viz., Women & Health, Women & Education, Women & Literacy, Women & Panchayathi Raj, Women & Law, and Women & Self Sustenance. Adolescent girls were also recognised to be the future women and hence they were provided with necessary capacity building programs on adolescent health and education issues. Mahila Shikshana Kendra (Centre) were established to function as residential school for the adolescent girls who are dropped out of the school and would like to continue the education. They are being coached to pass out their 10th std and II PUC.

Objectives of MSK

1. To create an environment where women can seek knowledge and information and there by empower them to play a positive role in their own development and the development of the community.
2. To set in motion circumstances for the larger participation of women and girls in formal and non-formal education programmes.
3. To enable Mahila sanghas to actively assist and monitor educational activities in the villages, including primary schools, AE, NFE/EGS/AIE centers and facilities for continuing education.
4. To enhance the self-image and self-confidence of women, thereby enabling them to recognize their contribution to the economy as producers and workers, reinforcing their

need for participating in educational programs.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the efficacy of management of activities by federation
2. To understand the perspectives of sangha members to make the federation more participatory and successful.
3. To provide recommendations for better management practices to make the activities successful by Executive Committees of federation.

Methodology

1. Available secondary data will be gathered and perused from MSK, Bangalore, all Concerned DPUs, Federations and Sanghas.
2. Data was collected through structured questionnaire and interview guide
3. Participant Observation method was used
4. Focused Group Discussions (FGD) were held to record the impressions and opinions.
5. Briefing and debriefing sessions were organized to get clarity on the gathered information. It also serves the purpose of cross checking the information.
6. SWOT method was used to record the current situation

Sampling

1. One federations and a cluster were selected at random out of six federations for the study.
2. A total number of 40 sanghas were selected at random who are the member sanghas of this federation

Presentation of Data

Table 1: Of HH Covered by Federation

No. of GPs	No. of village	No. of Sangha	No. of HH	No. of Women
30	57	40	2020	2020

Table 2: Membership by Category

Sc	St	Minority	Others	Total
1578	149	167	126	1550

Table 3: List of Federation Programs

Prog	No. of Prog	No. of Participants
Nari Adalath	11	109
Mahila Shikshana Kendra (MSK)	-	-
Nari Sanjeevini	12	102
Legal literacy	02	79
PRI activities	-	-
Sakshara Samakhya	03	382
EDP trainings	03	90
EDP marketing	-	-
Electoral literacy	02	65
Gender Training	03	315
Kishori Health Programs	02	N A
KGBV	-	28
Information Dissemination centre on development progs.	-	71
Andolana (Movement) on various social issues	05	1928

Table 4: Convergence Actions of Federation

Prog	No. of Village	HH	Sangha	No. of women benefited
Mg Nrega	04	65	06	65
Vhsc	-	-	-	-
Nrhm - Asha	-	-	-	-
Sgsy	07	07	07	85
Icds	-	-	-	-
Sdmc	16	-	-	-
Pds	01	-	-	-
Housing	21	-	-	-
HH Toilets	02	18	09	18
ANM Services	35	-	-	-
SHG Linkage	28	296	29	296
Watershed Prog	-	-	-	-
SC ST & Minority Corporation	-	-	-	-
Pmry	-	-	-	-
Yashaswini Insurance	-	-	-	-
Rsby	-	-	-	-

Table 5: Social Net Working

No. of GPs	No. of CLAs	No. of Sanghas	Frequency of meetings
30	03	120	Every month

Table 6: Thrift & Credit Management of Federation

No of Sanghas	Total savings	Internal lending	Credit Linkages	Name of the banks
40	1,86,000	7,50,000	7,50,000	DCC, SB, KGGB

Table 7: Income Source of FederationS

Sources	Income	Expenditure
Sangha renewal fee	7500/-	-
Counselling service fee	3500/-	-
Service charges	26,315/-	-
Donation	-	-
Program support grant	-	-
other source	-	-
Total	37,355/-	15,940/-

Table 8: Sangha Renewal Details with Federation

Year	No. of Sanghas Renewed
2011-12	10
2012-13	10
2013-14	20
Total	40

Analysis, Discussions & Findings

At present, Cluster Level Associations are not much stronger but meet to discuss at a formal level to understand the situations in Sanghas. Based on the activities, meetings, savings internal lending, bank linkages and records maintenance, social issues addressed by the federations, the Sanghas have been categorized into three types.

Category/type	Indicators
Weak	Federation meetings started, bank linkages established, social issues addressed, records with the help of MSK functionaries. Record maintenance are very poor
Medium	Regularity in federation meeting increasing Some rules started to set within the federation viz. fixing date and time of meeting, have action plan but confidence level is not enough to face the challenges, the activities done at federation level are not much known to all sangha women at grassroots level.
Strong	Federations have strong bank linkages backed up by regular savings and internal lending's, they are able to struggle independently without the support of MSK functionaries, conducting Nari Adaalath, Nari sanjeevini, legal literacy, Electoral literacy, convergence activities, KGVB activities independently and are able to keep their independent identity at the district level.

Federations need to articulate a clear convergence strategy namely which are the core programs it will work with, what will be the role of each partner, what are the resource implications and how it will be monitored. This will ensure that MS does not fritter away the groups' energy and becomes a service delivery platform but more as well defined partnerships. These relationships can be spelled out at the State level and can be adapted by the districts. Livelihoods' and financial inclusion are clearly two areas where a more coherent approach needs to be articulated. Convergence should not be limited only to ground level implementation but also to build evidence to inform and influence policies programs and budget allocations. MS across the districts requires to critically examine its engagement with other stakeholders and convergence to see whether it is strengthening MS vision and how to make it more effective and regular. Similarly new spaces for convergence owing to changing needs of the girls and women need attention.

Federations should reconnect still more strongly with other State level and district level movements and advocacy issues like right to food, monitoring of implementation of Domestic Violence Act, Participatory Natural Resource Management, Social justice and Equality issues, Girl Child Education, Labour, Child Marriage, Girl Child Trafficking Girls with HIV etc

A road map drawing visioning exercise would definitely assist the federations to make informed choice for both programmatic and financial aspects. Such efforts are not seen. Systematic thinking and action is strongly recommended. A clear plan and strategy for enabling CLAs and member sanghas to function independently spelling out federations long term support need to be on high priority.

At the grassroots level there are indicators for strong women leadership emergence but at MS functionaries have failed to give them further guidance and directions when needed. Member Sanghas, CLAs and Federations have thus become weak in planning, executing the activities on their own. There are some strong sanghas, CLAs and federations who should be facilitated to guide the weaker ones.

The issue of long term financial sustainability of Federations has to be addressed strongly by the State and the districts. Capacity building programs for maintaining proper financial records and audited statements/legal compliances, relationship with banks are weak. A well designed training program in this direction and proper handholding for at least three years is essential.

Federations in MS are at various stages of maturity. The vision and practice behind this need to be consolidated and shared at the Districts and State level once in three months. This type of

Cross-sharing and learning, documenting, analyzing and feedback should be followed as an important strategy for the growth and sustainability of the federations. Though it is a long term process, it could be initiated after three years from the date of formation of federation.

Recommendations

1. Federations should evolve strategies to ensure that the inter linkages between thematic sub committees of federations and sanghas to develop along the lines of its vision. For example better working capabilities, ensure that federations grow beyond sanghas to become leaders for change and bring in gender equality in policy and program implementation, better working of PRIs, women's health plans at block level/effective implementation of law on domestic violence, atrocities on SC, ST and its ACT, RTI, women's' views on girl child labour and girl child marriages/exploitations etc. Arguing for better functioning of standing committees at PRI like basic amenities, sanitation, gender justice, social justice etc.
2. The capabilities of Participation, leadership and decision making among federation executive members should be strengthened.
3. The renewal of member sanghas to the federations are not systematic and periodic. In fact the renewal of sanghas to get the membership of federations shows downward curve which is a matter of concern. This also indicates that services offered by Federations are not up to the mark as expected by the sanghas. Federations' capabilities in this regard must improve.
4. Sanghas should recognize that they are the members and their function is to serve women interest. Their priorities therefore have to change to reflect those of the community. Federation structures have to be geared to accommodate women's needs. Gender Sensitization for Officials needed to be organized.
5. Gender training is essential to inculcate the perspective and attitude among the community members and PRI members that women are partners in development and are credit worthy. Series of trainings to be organized for them.
6. Federations should work with the SHG, not individual members of SHG while recommending for loan and benefits of government scheme
7. Federation procedures should change to facilitate easy access to flexible credit to poor sangha women.
8. Federations should have good knowledge on bank guidelines of sangha gradation indicators.

9. Federations should make visits to member sanghas to know their situations, need and work out strategies to work for them. Federation executive members should have good working relations with member SHG. Such efforts by EC members of Federations are not seen.
10. All Federations may create a Sangha cell to attend their needs and queries.
11. Federations should open their office in strategic place in block or district level, but at present locating their office is a difficult task.
12. Federations have to improve communication with banks, government and Sangha. The twin goals of socio-economic, political empowerment of women and an integrated approach to development to be achieved by federations.

Conclusion

The critical focus in MSK is recognizing the centrality of education in empowering women to achieve equality. To move towards this objective, what were the strategies designed by MS especially to equip the federations, so that federations can work in this direction even when Samakhya is withdrawn from its working area. It is interesting to study the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of federations to carry forward Samakhya's dream of achieving gender equality maintain harmony with men at home and in the society especially in the field of livelihoods, health, education, preventing themselves from domestic violence's and keep up their self-esteem and self-image. This study focuses its attention as to the relevancy and efficacy of federations in offering its services to its member's sanghas.

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