



# Karnataka Envisioning Workshop Report

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By

Best Practices Foundation



## Background

Mahila Samakhya (MS) is a government initiative for education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly from socially and economically marginalised backgrounds. Over last three decades, the MS movement, has created a paradigm of empowerment for a generation of women, young girls, men and even the state. The movement has massive scale and has touched the lives of more than 20 lakh women and girls directly in the country through its various grassroots innovations namely the Nari Adalats (informal women's court), Kishori Sanghas (adolescent girls groups), Mahila Shikshan Kendras, informing the design of the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas since 2004, and bringing the adolescents girls too within its ambit. The large-scale impact of these different innovations has set the ground for MS federations and Sanghas to take the next steps forward which would be to become autonomous bodies.

Federation Dialogues 2017: As a first step to planning a long term agenda for partnership in 2017, the Alliance for MS carried out a series of dialogues with MS federations in Telangana, Karnataka, Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam. The objective of these dialogues was to rethink the federations' organisational structure, identify capacity building needs for the federation leaders to take on new roles, and map resource support networks who can help build leadership with voices at higher levels. The dialogues culminated in two workshops where federations came together to define an actionable agenda for themselves with the aim of building an institutional structure in the future, by defining their objectives and functions and designing a sustainable operational framework model.

AJWS 2018-2019: In 2018-19, Best Practices Foundation (BPF) was requested to take on the role of Secretariat for four states where the MS programme has been in operation – namely Assam, Bihar, Karnataka and Telangana. AJWS is the funding partner and Nirantar and Bhoomika Women's Collective are the lead organisations in Bihar and Telangana.

The goals of the project are broadly divided into 2 categories -

- Institutional Strengthening of Sangha and federations and
- Empowerment of Adolescent Girls to become change agents to support their access to education and employment

In order to kick-start the project, four envisioning workshops were organised in the states of Assam, Bihar, Karnataka and Telangana. The Karnataka workshop was attended by office bearers from three federations across two districts namely Ballari and Mysuru.

## Issues

Women face all types of discrimination from even before they are even born. Female foeticide, early marriage, dowry, violence upon the women by their in-laws, rape and all other forms of sexual harassment and unequal wages of men and women. Evils like superstition and the *Devadasi* system still exist in these villages. High rate of school children dropping was another issue that was highlighted.

## Activities Planned

The women were clear about their expectations from their federations, including employing office staff and the need to strengthen the institution. The women from Periyapatna decided in order to strengthen their federations, they needed to create a network with government departments and NGOs. Through local movements, campaigns, health camps and by creating awareness about the evils of child labour, the federation leaders envisaged strengthening Kishori Sanghas. Collaboration with local committees including Balya Vikas Committee, village level health committee and social justice committee, was also seen as important activities. Another important activity was to create Kishora/Kishori Sanghathan in places new areas, and give information about changes that happen at adolescence, give life skill training, help drop outs through vocational training, give children nutrition training and inform them about child rights. Women and children will be provided legal awareness through school programmes and andolans. Efforts will be put in to stop selling of alcohol.

## Methodology

*Digital Session:* A digital training session was conducted during the workshop, to show the women how smartphones can be used as a tool to achieve empowerment. Women learnt about video calling and group messaging on Whatsapp and Facebook. Achitha Jacob, one of the founders of Mentornship led the session. Federations across the state need to have each other's support throughout the year, and connecting via a smart phone will ensure this. The women learnt how to video call each other and understood its value in times of emergency.

## Vision

### *Girl's Education: Periyapatna Federation*

Periyapatna envision seeing every child in their village educated. They want to put an end to gender based violence and casteism and wanted their federation to be honest, free of corruption, internal politics any political pressure. They want all school drop outs to be mainstreamed know their rights. The women sang a song about children being the light of the house and ensuring they go to school and get an education.



Periyapatna taluk has a large tribal population who are unaware of the value of education and have not yet received an educated. Those who do want to go to school have to face problems like long distances, lack of proper roads and no transport to the school. The women from Periyapatna planned to do surveys across villages and conduct village wise meetings, trainings and andolans, promoting education for all. Federation women also planned to approach the government to provide the required facilities to make it easier for children to attend school.

### *Violence against Women: Nanjungud federation*

Federation members from Nanjungud said that they wanted to end discrimination against its women and see them empowered. In order to achieve their vision they said they needed to do village surveys, andolans and involve other federations and the media in their fight.

#### *Role play about violence against women*

Federation members from Nanjungud demonstrated how they wanted to end domestic violence due to alcohol consumption, through a role play. The play started with a drunk man beating his wife. The wife calls the villagers for help but the man refuses to listen to them claiming his right over his wife. The women of the village then reach out to the federation. The federation members intervene to put an end to the sale of alcohol in the village by requesting the government officials to cancel the license of the liquor shop. They do campaigns and hold *dharnas* against alcoholism and eventually the government officials are forced to take action and cancel the license.



#### *Early Marriage: Ballari federation*

The federation women want to promote the importance of getting girl's consent and their right to make decisions regarding their futures. They want to send out the message that marriage by force and without consent, takes away the agency of an individual. Strategies include forming *kishora* and *kishori sanghas* by mobilising children in schools. Through *kishori sanghas* the federation will mobilise girls to demand their rights. Besides this the federations also plan to create awareness throughout the entire village through street dramas, by putting up walls writings, organising protests and running campaigns.

#### *Role play on early marriage*

The Kamadhenu Mahila federation, Hadagali block, Ballari did a role play to put an end to early marriages in their village. They portrayed the creation of an environment of awareness throughout the entire village. Schools were surveyed to identify under aged girls who are being lined up for marriage. They showcased organising structured federation level and Executive Committee level meetings to plan activities to end early marriage. Campaigns, publicity and awareness raising on the importance of ending early marriage, were held at the panchayat level and with the communities.

#### *Roles and Responsibilities of Federations and Staff*

Women were divided into groups by federations and asked to discuss what their expectations are of the person being hired to assist them in their activities.

Federations should revive and strengthen sanghas and Kishori sanghas. They should create networks and partnerships with government and non- government departments and external stakeholders. They should organise awareness campaigns for women and adolescents' rights. Federation women should provide skill development trainings for adolescents.

The women said that they their federation members must monitor the work of *Sakhis*. *Sakhis* must not discriminate amongst the federation members and they must monitor the work of the federation. They should regularise federation and EC level meetings and submit reports on time. *Sakhis* along with federation members must strengthen federations, kishori sanghas and create partnerships with external stakeholders including government departments and non-government organisations.

### *Mapping of Structures and Committees*

The federation women were given topics to discuss in groups.

**Ballari federation** has 104 sanghas in 50 villages

**Nanjangud** federation has 79 sanghas in 50 villages

**Periyapatna federation** has 73 sanghas in 52 villages

Over the next four months the federation women will streamline processes to ensure structures like the EC and General Body (GB) are functional and hold regular meetings. They also planned to hold discussions with Nari Adalat members about regular functioning and ensure that the core committees are functional. Paralegal training was required for Nari Adalats. Working groups will be formed consisting of four EC members, the *Sakhi* and adolescent girl representative. Audits had to be conducted and renewed. Experienced women were selected as EC members

To improve sangha management they need to regularise the weekly and monthly meetings and ensure that they continue savings. Sanghas must be linked to EC members, the village resource persons and Kishoris. To achieve this, EC members decided to visit sanghas and village and revive those that were defunct and strengthen the weaker ones. Besides this, they decided to review sangha's functionality and their savings practices. Once information on each sangha is collected, they would provide training and linked to local departments, in order to access entitlements. Also, if a federation had excess funds, they they can give it out as loans and can be linked to banks. All federation profits belong to the members who are from sanghas.

### *Women's Rights and Entitlements*

Dowry, violence, no capacity to be self-reliant, government departments not prioritising women's issues, problems from within families for single women and a lack of rights, where women experience domestic violence from the husbands, parents and others, are some of the many examples of inequality that are present in village societies. Women are unaware of their rights and where to access legal services when violated their rights. Information and awareness on some of their rights they need information on are property, laws to fight rape and sexual harassment and

second marriage, the right to education, self-reliance and on care for the elderly. Parents restrict girls from going out and therefore this lowers their mobility.

### *Adolescent girls*

Adolescent girls need a platform where they are able to share their issues. They also need to be empowered to take their own decisions on marriage, education and all aspects of their lives. The federation women listed education, health and child rights as focus areas for adolescent girls. They believe that education will bring equality and that children must be given information regarding their rights regarding early marriage and education. In order to help young girls know their rights and make informed decisions, the federation women want get information on child rights, constitution rights, and entitlements, in order to impart the same to young girls. The women also said they wanted to organise awareness camps to spread awareness. They require information on free legal services that can guide them on their right to education and other rights. For this mobilising girls into *Kishori sanghas* and building the movement would be the next step.

### **Budgets**

The three federations presented their respective budgets which amounted to INR 9 lakhs, INR 6 lakhs and 5 lakhs for Nanjungud, Ballari and Periyapatna respectively. The honorarium for field staff for all three federations amounted to INR 1,20,000 each per year. Costs for organising meetings was the same in two federations accounting for INR 60,000 and Ballari for INR 48,000. Rents for project purposes amounts to INR 30,000 for two federations and INR 60,000 for Nanjungud.

All three federations allocated INR 1,20,000 for one year's salary for their field staff. Ballari and Periyapatna allocated a monthly expenses of INR 4000 towards organising monthly meetings, while Nanjangud estimated one thousand rupees less. A high amount of INR 1,20,000 was estimated by the federation women in Nanjungud towards supporting their federation and other federations in their area, towards networking and improve their institutional mechanisms. Periyapatna and Ballari estimated only around INR 22,000 for the same activity. Ballari further broke up the amount into INR 2500 for 4 networking and activities to improve their institutional mechanisms, 4 district meeting at INR 2500 and INR 13,000 for campaigns and protests.

Ballari and Periyapatna federation women allocated INR 7500 per month to spend on mobilisation of adolescent girls. Nanjangud estimated that their expenses for this activity would amount to INR 10,000 monthly. Ballari justified their estimated amount of INR 1,72,00 for training activities as follows. They estimated an amount of INR 19,200 per meeting in 3 clusters, thrice for the year. Nanjungud estimated INR 16,500 per month and Periyapatna estimated INR 1,20,000. All three federations put aside some money for incidental expenses over the 12 months.

The federations need to mobilise and manage their resources and revenues better to streamline and mobilise their revenues. They will have to think in terms of long term sustainability. The above budget has only INR 5 to 10 lakhs but the actual budget is only around INR 1 lakh along with the honorarium budget of about Rs.6,500. While it is a priority and important to have staff to guide the whole process and monitor the federation, it is equally important that the budget in the long term start reflecting a greater ownership on the part of the federation and lessening of money spent on

staff because in three years there wouldn't be any budget to spend on staff. In the future the money spent on Sakhi will have to be reduced and federation's role in doing the same job will have to increase. In future EC members will have to be trained to take over those roles and the jobs will have to be localised by hiring people from the villages. This would help the federation in prioritising their expenditure on the sangha members.

## Way Forward

The federations decided the following action plan they want to move forward -

1. *Institutional Strengthening* - In order to strengthen their institutions, women want to focus on their basic building blocks, namely the *sanghas*. Secondly, the ties between federations and sanghas need to be strengthened. Thirdly, they also need to resolve the issues of the defunct Sanghas and revive them. Finally, they needed to mobilise *kishoris* into *kishori sanghas*. Some of the older *kishoris* can be brought into the sanghas because of their experience and help create new *kishori sanghas*.
2. *Networking* - Federations want to foster partnerships with external stakeholders (like government departments for various entitlements). They also need to extend their operations by linking to other NGOs who are working on gender, rights and entitlements, education and health, all areas they already work in.
3. *Creating Awareness* - The federation women shared that the last time they had engaged in awareness campaigns was 10-15 years ago. More awareness campaigns on various issues especially education, women and girls' rights.
4. *Compliance* – Federations need to update their compliance records, including filing their pending 3 years audit. Therefore they need to re-register their federations if necessary.
5. *Streamlining Processes* - They will streamline processes and ensure that structures like Executive Committee (EC) and General Body are functional and their members are rotated and elections are happening). Sangha members need to ensure that EC meetings take place on time, and its members are rotated.
6. *Revenue mobilisation* - EC needs to collect revenues from sanghas. Periyapatna EC members have to collect INR 250 from its members. Federations also need to manage their revenues better and ensure that it is not wasted. Nanjungud saves INR 5 lakhs out of the 12 lakhs they generate unlike Periyapatna who spends all their earnings. Funds that they generate are their only source of income which can be spent on activities that the federation takes up towards bringing about a change (like stopping child marriage and child labour, and mainstreaming school drop outs).

There was a pledge made as a methodology designed to take federation and themselves forward.

## Annexure 1: Expected roles of Federations and Sakhis

### Ballari

Role of Federation	Role of Sakhis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervise and support programmes</li> <li>• Network with departments</li> <li>• Strengthen sanghas and Kishori groups</li> <li>• Monitor the Sakhi</li> <li>• Prepare a monthly plan of activities with Sakhi</li> <li>• Help the movement grow</li> <li>• Revive defunct sanghas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No discrimination</li> <li>• Maintain confidentiality</li> <li>• Report and monitor and regularise EC meetings</li> <li>• Engage in planning exercise</li> <li>• Conduct regular visits</li> <li>• Establish linkages between federations and departments</li> <li>• Strengthen federations and Kishori groups</li> </ul>

### Periapatna

Role of Federation	Role of Sakhis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervise Sakhi's work.</li> <li>• Network with government and non-government departments</li> <li>• Work on strengthening of sangha and kishori sanghas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare monthly report with EC members</li> <li>• Organise federation level meetings and provide training.</li> <li>• Prepare report in federation office, visit government offices and gather information about programme subsidies</li> <li>• Strengthen sanghas and kishori sanghas with help from EC members</li> <li>• Monitor, document and manage federation activities</li> <li>• Supervise activities of federation</li> <li>• Annual report</li> <li>• Sakhi must be honest and confident and should not discriminate</li> </ul>

### Nanjungud

Role of Federation	Role of Sakhi
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare monthly report and programme report</li> <li>• Hold meetings on kishora/kishoris and their activities</li> <li>• Provide departmental, computer and internet training</li> <li>• Organise awareness campaigns - kishori mela</li> <li>• Improve skills on documentation</li> <li>• Mobilise resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen kishora/kishori groups and give them information</li> <li>• They should segregate department information and provide them to Kishori sangh</li> <li>• Ensure kishoris should attend village EC meetings</li> <li>• Village unit level programme is to be held by kishori</li> <li>• Submit monthly report to federation</li> <li>• Participate in monthly EC meetings, prepare monthly report and be aware of next month's plans</li> </ul>