THE NARI ADALAT
Gender justice of the women, for the women, by the women
Acknowledgment

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Dr. Sangeetha Purushothaman
Director, Best Practices Foundation
Why the toolkit on Nari Adalat?

This toolkit takes you through the “why” and “how” of setting up the Nari Adalat or Women’s Court, by Mahila Samakhya, a program for the empowerment of poor rural women. It has been developed by the MS Gujarat team, based on the experiences of MS Gujarat which was the first of the Mahila Samakhya states to start the Nari Adalats. Other MS states have set up Nari Adalats since. The toolkit gives the context, perspective, non-negotiables as well as the step-by-step processes for setting up and functioning of the Nari Adalat. It also includes a section on the challenges that have come up during the functioning of the Nari Adalat.

The toolkit serves the following purposes:

● To document and showcase the MS experiences
● for use in new areas of the MS program
● for use by other programs working on women’s empowerment and gender justice

Related documents include a case study of the Nari Adalat, MS documents and reports for an in depth understanding of the programme.
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The Context for the Nari Adalat: Some FAQs

What is a Nari Adalat?
A Nari Adalat or Women's Court, is an alternative justice system for women which is based on a strong understanding of gender justice. It is set up and run by women with experience of working on gender issues.

What is gender justice?
There are many ways to understand the term “gender justice.” The 1999 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), makes the absence of gender-based discrimination as the indicator of gender justice. CEDAW’s legal definition of ‘discrimination against women’ in Article 1 of the Convention is: “The term 'discrimination against women' shall mean any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”

What are the problems faced by women that are taken up by the Nari Adalat?
Cases taken up by the Nari Adalat include denial of rights and opportunities, for example, related to property, maintenance, custody of children, recognition of marriage. Many cases relate to violence faced by women.

What is VAW?
VAW stands for “Violence against women,” violence faced by a woman because of her gender. Violence against women includes any act that hurts women's dignity and sense of well-being and/or results in harm or suffering to women.

Does VAW cover only physical acts of violence?
No, VAW covers any harm or suffering caused to women that is physical, sexual or psychological or a combination of the three.

Does VAW refer only the actual act of violence?
VAW is both the actual act of violence as well as any threat to commit an act of violence. It includes force, coercion as well as arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life.

Do many women face violence?
Unfortunately, yes. The UNIFEM report on the status of the world's women for 2008, based on extensive research, shows that one out of every three women across the world faces some form of violence in their lives.

What are the negative effects of VAW?
VAW harms and demeans the woman who is the victim, prevents her from leading a life of dignity and from realizing her full potential. VAW also demeans the perpetrator, usually men, since their violent behavior deprives them of the respect and affection of women and prevents them from reaching their potential to be good and productive human beings.

Why do women and girls across the world face gender-based violence?
Gender based violence is the result of social stereotypes and patriarchal systems that devalue women and girls and typecast them as second class human beings. Gender stereotypes often portray violence and ability to “control” women, as desirable qualities in men. VAW is often not recognized in society as offensive, harmful and criminal behavior. Legal systems and institutions reflect these patriarchal values making it difficult for women to access and enjoy their rights and opportunities.

Any efforts to empower women need to address the issues of denial of women's rights and opportunities and VAW. This will help to build more gender just communities and societies. This is why Mahila Samakhya, a program for the empowerment of poor rural women, facilitates the formation and functioning of the Nari Adalat or Women’s Court.
The state of women in Gujarat:

Gujarat faces a long history of violence against women both within the rural and urban circles. Women have been discriminated based on their gender on a daily basis at their homes and public spaces. In a study conducted by an Ahmedabad based NGO, more than 50,000 cases of violence against women have been reported from 12 districts of Gujarat from the period of 1995 to 2007. In this period alone, there were 53,395 cases of violence against women. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) has been legal measure to check the violence against women and bring the perpetrators to justice. Often, many cases of violence go unreported. Especially those relating to domestic violence. In a male dominated society, women feel apprehensive to report violence subjected by men and silently suffer. In the rural set-up, women in Gujarat find their voices muffled in system heavily biased against women. The Nari Adalat is the channel through which rural, poor women find redressal to cases of violence and injustice.

Background of Mahila Samakhyaa Gujarat

Mahila Samakhyaa in Gujarat (MSG) was established in 1989 in three districts; with the goal of working towards women’s participation in education, health, justice, economic empowerment and Panchayati Raj. Presently, MSG has spread its activities across 2,203 villages in 39 blocks in seven districts in Gujarat. MSG aims to achieve the goal of women’s empowerment by harnessing their collective strength through the development of self-reliance and confidence. Gujarat was the first state in the country to establish the Nari Adalat as an alternate system of justice. There was an ardent need to address the common concerns relating to the violence against women. The Nari Adalat in Gujarat has its origins from the Legal Committee of the sangha. The first Nari Adalat started operating beneath a neem (margosa) tree. Even today, the symbol of the Nari Kendra in Gujarat is the picture of women in discussion under the neem tree. In September, 1995, the legal committee of the sangha renamed itself as the Nari Adalat. The Nari Adalat started in Vadodara district and later was replicated in Rajkot, Panchmahal, Sabarkantha and Surendranagar districts. Now, it is established in all districts with the exception of Dang. The nomenclature of the Women’s Court was decided upon as Nari Adalat after considering names like Mahila Panch and Mahila Manch. At present, there are 29 Nari Adalats in six districts in Gujarat.
What is a Nari Adalat?
It is a women's collective formed across caste, marital status, age, religion, region, and occupations which addresses issues of violence against women and helps women, especially those from marginalized communities, access their rights as citizens.

Objectives of the Nari Adalat
- To provide justice to women from a woman's perspective at less expense and time
- To empower women to raise their voices against injustice
- To safeguard the self-esteem and rights of women in the family and society
- To create a social space for justice for women in a patriarchal society

Why a Nari Adalat?
The rate of violence and atrocities against women is very high and needs to be reduced. In a patriarchal society, there is no space or platform for women to dialogue on issues related to injustice and violence against women. Judicial process is expensive, time consuming and inaccessible to poor illiterate women. Both the mainstream judiciary, traditional and caste-based justice systems are patriarchal in nature. Thus there is a need:
- To create a justice system of the women, for the women, by the women
- To create a platform for poor, illiterate women to be heard and for their judgment to be respected
- To create a space where poor, illiterate women can get justice

Who can form a Nari Adalat?
- Members of women's collective have sensitive to women's issues and are not biased towards any caste, religion or political party
- They must have a good understanding of gender issues
- They must have experience of working on women's issues, including denial of women's rights and violence against women at local level
- They should have won the respect and confidence of poor women as well as the community through such work
The Structure of a Nari Adalat

The Nari Adalat is typically formed at the block level and builds on the structures at village and cluster levels of sanghas and legal committees within these sanghas. The legal committee is formed within village level collectives and is trained to solve problems faced by women and legal issues at the village level. Federations of sanghas act as conduits to the Nari Adalat to both reach out to women facing injustice as well as to support the Nari Adalat in solving their cases.

Why is this toolkit important?

- To showcase an effective alternative model for justice delivery that has a women's perspective
- To demonstrate how to create new Nari Adalats in areas where they do not exist
- To strengthen existing Nari Adalats and expand their roles

What needs of Nari Adalat?

- There should be active sanghas with a strong gender perspective in the target villages
- There should be legal committees formed within the sanghas. The legal committees should be active and effective in addressing problems faced by women
- Women should be organized at the cluster level and preferably at the block level as well for legal cases to reach the Nari Adalat
- There should be a need and demand voiced for a Nari Adalat in the area
- Women should be involved in planning and implementing the Nari Adalat
How to form a Nari Adalat

**FORM THE NARI ADALAT**

**Step 1**
Hold community meetings and mobilize women into sanghas

**Step 2**
Form legal committees in sanghas

**Step 3**
Introduce the Nari Adalat concept in Legal Committees

**Step 4**
Hold Legal Committee meetings at Cluster/Block levels and select Nari Adalat members

**Step 5**
Train Nari Adalat members on the Nari Adalat concept and provide legal literacy

**Step 6**
Create networks with government and non-government structures

**Step 7**
Decide the venue, time, day and frequency of the Nari Adalat hearings

**Step 8**
Start the Nari Adalat

**STRENGTHEN THE NARI ADALAT**

**Activity 1**
Conduct regular monthly meetings among Nari Adalat members

**Activity 2**
Conduct regular trainings for the Nari Adalat

**Activity 3**
Sensitize and coordinate with Government and Non Government Institutions

**Activity 4**
Coordinate among members of different Nari Adalats

**Activity 5**
Create a support system for Nari Adalat members
When?
- At the very beginning of the Mahila Samakhya programme, once the intervention areas are selected

Why?
- To develop an understanding of women’s issues through meetings with the community
- To have a strong women’s collective at the village level
- To help women access their rights
- To sensitize the community on women’s rights
- To address violence against women and denial of their opportunities and rights

How?
- Train Cluster Resource Persons of MS on the role of the sangha
- Network with village leaders and institutions for their support (schools, Panchayats, social justice committees, ICDS centers, etc.)
- Do a baseline survey of the women in the area (age, marital status, economic status)
- Hold meetings in the village about forming sanghas
- Start visiting the village regularly to develop rapport with the women and start conducting sangha meetings
- Start conducting sangha meetings at a fixed venue, time and date suitable to all members
- Address local issues along with the women
- Conduct issue specific trainings on education, gender, legal issues, panchayats, natural resources, various schemes and provisions and so on. This process occurs simultaneously in 5-10 villages of 1 cluster and in several clusters of a block

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for common resources required. In addition, we also need the following:
- Village map from Gram Panchayat
- Baseline Survey forms
- Information about guiding principles and strategies of MS
- Training resources
This step needs to be facilitated by one field staff from the block level and 2 staff from the cluster level.

Please do the following:
- Visit every house in the village for the baseline survey and fill forms personally
- If possible personally speak to every woman
- Select area in the village to start sangha. Start sangha meetings with sharing of women’s experiences and take the process forward according to MS principles.
- Make sure that the poorest of the poor are included

Take care of the following:
- Do not collect information from village leaders. It is always better to get information from the women directly so that they take ownership of the process and we get the women's point of view.
- Be careful not to allow caste and religion to affect your decisions and actions.
- Be careful that you do not get pressured by politicians, upper caste and rich people
Time frame
This time frame is specified keeping in mind the field staff handling 20 villages.
- Hold 3-5 days training sessions four times a year for sangha formation
- Conduct exposure visits for field staff at cluster, block and district levels for 1 day with 2 days of travel
- Hold meetings with communities in 20 villages over 3 months
- Hold meetings with the women - 2 visits in a month for 6 months to 1 year
- Cluster level field staff should conduct a baseline survey for 20 villages of 1,500 population over 30 days
- Hold Sangha meetings once a month for villages (1,500 to a maximum of 4,000 population)

Expected Outcomes
- A common understanding of ground realities in the village, among the community members is built
- The trust of women is gained
- The field staff is able to select the issues that need to be addressed
- Women begin to share and discuss their concerns in the sangha meetings

Women’s collects get their dues
In Piparadi village panchayat members would take the benefits of government schemes for themselves and not share it with the communities for whom it was meant. Then sanghas were formed and women got awareness of schemes like National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. They approached the Sarpanch and demanded its benefits that any of the Panchayat work had to be offered to them. The Sarpanch gave in to their demands and the women got gainful employment through government schemes.

However, they were not paid for their work so they submitted a letter to the Sarpanch demanding their wages. The Sarpanch refused to act so the sangha women approached the Block Development Officer (BDO) who in turn visited the village and confronted the Sarpanch. After investigating the situation, the BDO took firm action against the Sarpanch and gave the women the money they were due.
When?
- Once the sangha meetings are held regularly, women are able to share their plans, hopes and problems and the identity of the collective is well established.

Why?
- To get information and develop an understanding of violence against women in villages and to reduce this violence
- To identify cases where women are denied their rights
- To develop the sangha as a forum to support any woman facing violence or injustice

How?
- Once the sangha begins to function effectively, the different issue based committees (education, legal, health, panchayat raj etc) can be formed.
- Identify sangha women interested in legal issues. When selecting legal committee members, make sure that they have a good gender perspective and sense of justice, have leadership qualities and have basic literacy skills.
- Arrange legal literacy training for the legal committee members
- Encourage them to address and solve problems faced by women, sangha and non-sangha, in the village

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for common resources required. In addition, we also need the following:
- Legal literacy training resources
- Instruction manual with information on the Nari Adalat

Please do the following:
- Select only those women interested in legal issues, especially those actively raise their voices against violence experienced by women and oppose discrimination.
- Select women who are strong but are prepared to listen to the viewpoints of others

Take care of the following:
Do not select women who discriminate on the basis of caste, religion, politics, or those with vested interests

Time frame
This time frame is specified keeping in mind the field staff handling 20 villages.
- Hold community meetings in 20 villages - 3 months
- Conduct sangha meetings once a month (cover 20 villages)
- Conduct training - 2 days (10 hours total)

Expected Outcomes
- An understanding on violence against women is developed among sangha women.
- Legal Committee and sangha members will form pressure groups that will collectively address injustices faced by women.

Form Legal Committees in Sanghas and enable them to take up problems faced by women

Legal committees stop the harassment of women
Hiruben from Dadhali of Jasdan block of Rajkot district was harassed by her in-laws and therefore she got a divorce through the caste panchayat. After some time her parents approached another family for her re-marriage. Hiruben’s ex-in-laws began harassing her, saying that she could not remarry as she was already married. After the sangha was formed the Legal Committee members intervened in Hiruben’s case and told her ex-in-laws that they must stop interfering as the girl was divorced from their son. The Legal Committee members acted as a pressure group and successfully solved the case. The girl’s ex-in-laws stopped the harassment and she is now happily re-married.
Step 3

Introduce the Nari Adalat concept in the sangha, Legal Committees and in the community

When?
- Once the sangha is fairly strong and its legal committee members have some experience of solving problems faced by women at village level
- When there is a reasonably strong network of collectives at village, cluster, together with some presence at block level.

Why?
- To build the understanding in sanghas about the Nari Adalats and the Legal Committees
- To spread awareness among caste panchayat members about the Nari Adalat
- To select women from the legal committees for the Nari Adalat

How?
- Conduct meetings at sangha and cluster levels
- Conduct trainings on legal literacy for the legal committees
- Help women identify different types of violence
- Help women understand differences between courts and Nari Adalats
- Conduct discussions in sanghas on possible solutions to violence faced by women
- Hold discussions on the need for a Nari Adalat (see context on page 31 of this toolkit)
- Conduct training on the Nari Adalat at village level
- Encourage informal discussions by legal committee members with panchayat as well as Caste Panchayat members about the Nari Adalat
- Conduct study tours to other Nari Adalats

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for common resources required.
This step needs to be facilitated by:
- Field staff at cluster level (to mobilize women from village to block and facilitate Legal Committee meetings)
- Field staff at block level (to plan exposure visits and trainings according to the needs of women)
- Field staff at district level (for documentation)
- District Programme Coordinator (for financial support)

Please do the following:
- Impart rigorous trainings to Legal Committees (on strategies to solve cases)
- Organise training at suitable times (when the women are free)
- Instructions to the legal committees include:
  - Legal Committee members must be rotated every five years
  - Do not take cases that are already in court
  - Always select a space to hold the Nari Adalat that is convenient for women
  - Do ground work on relevant issues before forming Legal Committee
  - Distribute posters and pamphlets about the Nari Adalat at village level to spread awareness
  - Have frequent meetings at village level with sangha women to discuss the Nari Adalat
  - Select three members from the Legal Committee of each sangha for the preliminary Nari Adalat training (60 women for a cluster of 20 villages)
Time frame

- Meeting - 1 day (4 hours)

Expected Outcomes

- Women's pressure groups are formed at cluster and block levels
- Identity of the Nari Adalat is created and differences between courts, caste panchayats established
- Existing community forums like the panchayat and the caste panchayat are aware of Nari Adalat processes
- Women's issues are identified and women are able to understand how to identify violence
- More women will get legal literacy
- Capacity of legal committee members to intervene on problems faced by women (violence, land and property, marital problems) will be built
- Preliminary identification of potential Nari Adalat members is done by field staff

Legal committees refer cases to the Nari Adalat

Champaben from Raydi village, was thrown out of her house by her husband along with her two children 16 years ago. One day Champaben came in contact with Sudhaben, a member of the Legal Committee. Sudhaben talked to Champaben about the Nari Adalat, its objectives and processes. As a result, Champaben registered her case with the Nari Adalat of Jamkandro Block in Rajkot District. The Nari Adalat members sent Champaben's husband a notice twice but he did not present himself. The Nari Adalat then decided to visit his village. On reaching his village they organized meetings with the local caste panchayat, the Sarpanch and also Champaben's in-laws. In this way, the Nari Adalat successfully settled the case. Today Champaben is now living with her husband and is being treated with respect after 16 years of separation.

Introduce the Nari Adalat concept in the sangha, Legal Committees and in the community
Step 4

Hold Legal Committee meetings at Cluster/Block levels and select Nari Adalat members

When?
- When the MS collectives and community and its forums are familiarized with the idea of the Nari Adalat
- When sangha women are confident that they can handle cases beyond their own villages

Why?
- To choose the right candidates for the Nari Adalat
- To organize meetings of all Legal Committee members to elect Nari Adalat members

How?
- Hold group discussions to decide criteria for who can be a Nari Adalat member
- Organize legal committee meetings at sangha level
- Elect Nari Adalat members at these meetings

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for common resources required.
This step needs to be facilitated by field staff at district level and the District Programme Coordinator for logistics and financial support

Please do the following:
- Select women who are vocal, literate, have some experience, are able to travel to the block, and can give time
- Select women who are sensitive and who understand issues of the most marginalized women
- The right members must be selected and therefore the selection process should be carefully done

Time frame
- Hold sangha meetings, once a month for 4 months
- Hold cluster meetings, once a month for 6 months
- Hold block level meetings, once a month for 2 months
- Hold legal committee meetings, once a month at block level
- Conduct follow-up meetings, once in 3 months

Expected Outcomes
- The appropriate legal committee members are selected for the Nari Adalat
- Members who are selected will be able to participate actively and take unbiased decisions.
Step 5

Train Nari Adalat members on the Nari Adalat concept and provide legal literacy.

When?
As soon as the members of the Adalat are selected

Why?
● To develop an understanding among Nari Adalat members of the law, sections of the Indian Penal Codes, what violence is and on types of violence. The Nari Adalat members need more focused inputs than they received as sangha legal committee members
● To help women gain awareness of the judicial system
● To help women strategize and solve legal issues
● To help women obtain information on new Acts and laws
● To develop a feminist perspective among members
● To increase participation of women towards getting justice
● To help women raise their voices against patriarchy and discrimination
● To help women take collective decisions on gender issues
● To get support and build the women's movement
● To run an alternative justice delivery structure
● To be independent and improve women's decision making capacities in their own lives
● To enable members to get funds from the government and other sources

How?
● Hold regular Nari Adalat meetings and develop a plan of action for it.
● Liaison with resource persons like expert lawyers, judges and experienced Nari Adalat members
● Invite local legal experts to train the women
● Hold Para legal trainings
● Update women about new Acts or changes in laws
● Hold cluster level training (five days)
● Form an advisory committee to support the Nari Adalat (five members per block)
● Coordinate and network with legal experts, government and non government organizations
● Organize exposure visits to the police station and Lok Adalat
● Organise personal visits to various legal and judicial departments.

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for common resources required.
In addition, the following resource is required:
● Nari Adalat training reports

Please do the following:
● Provide a clear understanding of the law to the women
● Design the training content according to the cases that are likely to come up in the area. (For example, if IPC 125 on maintenance is needed, it should be included)
● Choose the location of the training according to the women's convenience.
● Invite outside resource persons
● Emphasise importance of written records of each case
● Distribute responsibilities among women
● Keep the training in simple language, regular and participatory using songs,
Nari Adalat member uses legal skills to reclaim her land

Jayshreeben Kanaiyalal Parmar, a Nari Adalat member, from Rampar Pati village in Padadhari block, received an order from the panchayat asking her to vacate her land. When the officials came to demolish her house, she stopped them asking for the list of houses to be demolished. The panchayat members refused to give the information to her. From the Nari Adalat training she had received, she learnt that she can get the information under Right to Information Act within 30 days. She then filed an application and got this information, which helped her understand that she was not living on government land. She then applied to the Revenue Collector (Tehsildar) to register the land in her name. The Tehsildar gave the order to the Gram Panchayat and 250 square feet of land was registered in her name. Jayshreeben was thus able to retain her land because of the training received through the Nari Adalat.

Step 5

Train Nari Adalat members on the Nari Adalat concept and provide legal literacy

Take care of the following:

- Do not use the lecture methods alone in the training
- Do not have more than 30 women in a training group
- Do not provide monetary incentives to trainees

Time frame

- Initially one training a month (2 days) for 6 months
- One training every 3 months (2 days)
- Administrative training once in 3 months (2 days)
- Training to prepare proposals (3 training sessions in a year for 2 days each)

Outcomes

- Women will get an understanding of law and of different sections of the Indian Penal Code
- Women will get recognition and respect in the block level, in the community and in courts
- Women will gain in confidence and courage
- Women will understand problems, analyse it and collectively solve it
- Women will be able to understand and network with legal structures
- Women will be able to get justice for poor women
- Women will be able to ensure that violence does not take place and act as a pressure group for realising women's rights

poster, etc.

- Take feedback at the end of the training
- Have regular follow up training (second phase training)
Step 6

**Build networks with government and non government structures**

**When?**
This can start in the early stages of setting up the Nari Adalat. After that, it is an ongoing process.

**Why?**
- To get support from government and non government structures for Nari Adalat functioning
- To share information across these agencies
- To get updated information on laws
- To get benefits of government schemes
- To work as a pressure group
- To create a movement to address violence against women
- To get recognition from block level officials
- To increase women's participation in economic, social and political spheres

**How?**
- Network with different (government and NGO) agencies, like the police.
- Participate in trainings organised by other NGOs and use new information learnt
- Use the networks to monitor implementation of new laws, Acts and schemes (Eg. Right to Information Act, MGNREGS).

**What do we need?**
Please refer to page 34 for list of common resources.

**Please do the following:**
- Visit and invite government and non government agencies to meetings and trainings to sensitize them
- Plan for legal awareness for other agencies (role play, rally)
- Celebrate 8th March at block level in large scale
- Personally visit the court
- Read books on laws (stories)
- Work using a feminist perspective
- Work towards getting financial support

**Take care of the following:**
Ensure that Nari Adalat members have the following information
- Do not get influenced by outsiders, including politicians on any case
- Make sure that laws are not misused or misinterpreted
- Do not take cases which are already in the court
- Do not take complicated cases on land and property
- Do not work against basic objectives and rules of the Nari Adalat

**Time frame**
- Hold two networking meetings per month
- Visit court, police and other block level offices every month (group of 5 women visit on rotation basis)
- Create a network between the Nari Adalat and legal structures at block, district and state levels over the first year
Expected Outcomes

- Government and non-government structures will gain familiarity with and enable the smooth functioning of the Nari Adalat
- Nari Adalat members will get new information on government schemes
- Nari Adalat members will work as a pressure group
- Nari Adalat members will get support from local agencies
- There will be a decrease in the incidence of violence
- There will be an increase in literacy levels among Nari Adalat women
- There will be increased interaction and recognition with government officials at the block level
- The Nari Adalat will be able to network from block to state levels
- Justice will be delivered using a feminist perspective
- There will be an increase in confidence and courage of the members
- The women will develop a sense of their identity as a collective
- Women will establish networks with new NGOs

Networks with Police help the Nari Adalat solve cases

Anilaben Purohit from Rajkot city got married to Maheshbhai Bhatt from Veraval town. She was tortured by her in-laws for almost 12 years because she could not conceive. She filed a case with the Upleta Nari Adalat. The Nari Adalat sent notices to the other party thrice but they did not attend. The police helped them solve the case and provided their mobile van to the Nari Adalat to visit the second party along with two police personnel. Meanwhile Nari Adalat members also met the Gram Panchayat. The police, the Nari Adalat and Gram Panchayat members then discussed the issue of a divorce with the opposite party. Anilaben wanted a divorce but her husband was unwilling. Finally they decided on a divorce based on mutual consent and she got back all her Streedhan. From this point on, the police started referring cases to the Nari Adalat.
Step 7

Decide the venue, frequency, day and time for the Nari Adalat hearings

When?
Right at the start, after members are selected and trainings begin

Why?
To develop a regular system for the functioning of the Nari Adalat

How?
- Nari Adalat members will network with government structures
- Select venue for the Nari Adalat
- Hold meetings to decide a convenient time and day for Nari Adalat hearings

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for a common list of resources. In addition, we also require the following:
- Rented space
- Electricity payments
- Cupboard, shelves, seating
- Stationary including stamp pad
- Nari Adalat training reports
In addition, it will be helpful to have the advice of a woman lawyer from the government

Please do the following:
- Decide time and day for the Nari Adalat keeping in mind women's convenience and government schedules and timings
- Select the Nari Adalat venue near government offices

Take care of the following:
Do not hold the Nari Adalat meetings on a holiday

Time frame
- Hold 2-3 meetings with block panchayats
- Conduct meetings at cluster level, once per month for 2 months
- Hold 1 meeting at block level to finalise decisions
- Hold the Nari Adalat twice per month (11 am to 5 pm)

Expected Outcomes
- Nari Adalat will start functioning in a regular and systematic way

The Nari Adalat uses government buildings as venues for their meetings

In Vakaneer since Nari Adalat meetings were held at the village level, it was accessible only to cases from nearby villages. If the meetings were held at a sangha member's house her family members can object, people would gossip and stop the Nari Adalat activities at the woman's home. But if the Nari Adalat meetings were held at the block level, there would be less interference and it would be more accessible to a larger population. Due to this, women decided to conduct the Nari Adalat proceedings at the block level. They felt that the panchayat office was well known, easily accessible by public transport and hence the most suitable place to hold the Nari Adalat. Also, the police station and all government offices were situated at the block level. So, a few women met the block development officer Mr. Gul Mohammed and the MLA, Mr. Javid Baba and with their support held the Nari Adalat hearings at the Ambedkar Hall at the Block Panchayat office. In 2001, after the earthquake in Gujarat, Javid Baba provided a room for the Nari Adalat in the Marketing Yard (Danapith). These networks helped provide a venue for the Nari Adalat.
When?
- When members have training and information to handle the cases that come up in the area
- Venue and meeting details have been worked out

Why?
- To increase the participation of women in struggles against injustice
- For women to raise their voices against patriarchy
- For women, especially those who are poor and marginalized, to get justice in less time and expense
- To provide justice to poor, marginalized women

How?
- Have an opening ceremony of the Nari Adalat
- Invite government and non government representatives.
- Start registering the cases.
- Start case proceedings
- Create an enabling environment so that women can feel at ease in running the Nari Adalat

What do we need?
- Please refer to page 34 for common list of resources. In addition, we also need the following:
  - Case forms
  - Notice forms
  - Notice Board
  - Templates with information on law
    This step needs to be facilitated by 2 cluster level field staff, 1 block level field staff and select taluk level officers.

Please do the following:
- Spread information about the Nari Adalat
- Conduct Nari Adalat meetings regularly
- Maintain the Nari Adalat registers responsibly
- Responsibilities should be distributed among all Nari Adalat members
- Coordinate with government agencies

Take care the following:
- Do not give too much responsibility to any one individual
- Ensure that Nari Adalat members do not become too close with political parties or other people whose interests will be in conflict with those of the Nari Adalat

Time frame
- Nari Adalat will be held 2 times a month from 11 am to 5 pm

Expected Outcomes
- Women will get justice in less time and expense
- Women will have a space to speak out
- Women will have a greater understanding of each other's problems, legal rights and how to get justice
- Women will have a greater understanding about domestic violence and the laws
- Participation of women in the process of justice will increase
- The Nari Adalat processes will help women get identity and respect in their communities
Types of cases that come to the Nari Adalat

- Dowry Harrasment
- Second Marriage
- Rape
- Domestic Violence
- Child Custody
- Child Marriage
- Alcoholism
Handling cases in the Nari Adalat - The procedure

- Women apply in writing to the Nari Adalat requesting them to handle the case
- The Nari Adalat listens to the woman's problem
- The woman is asked what she wants
- The other party (family and friends) is called to listen to their side
- Both parties are heard together
- The other party is asked what they are willing to give
- If the other party is unwilling to accept the woman's terms, the Adalat members try to reconcile the two positions
- Invite responsible members of both parties to a hearing
- Nari Adalat gives their views to both parties
- Instruct the perpetrators not to apply pressure on the family of the victim
- In the case of solved cases:
  - Get both persons to sign a written-up consensus on stamp paper
  - Get witnesses to sign the agreement
  - Follow up on cases directly or through the sangha to implement the agreement.

Phase 2: Activities to strengthen the Nari Adalat

It is not enough just to form a Nari Adalat. Once formed, the trainers and field staff should invest in the Nari Adalat regularly in order for it to function effectively. The following activities are necessary to both strengthen and sustain the Nari Adalat over time:

- Conduct regular monthly meetings among Nari Adalat members
- Conduct additional capacity building sessions for the Nari Adalat
- Consolidate the coordination with Government and Non Government Institutions
- Coordinate members of different Nari Adalats
- Create a system that gives recognition for Nari Adalat members e.g.: Identity cards, uniforms, sitting fees among other support mechanisms
Step 9

Conduct regular monthly meetings among Nari Adalat members

Why
- To develop an understanding among Nari Adalat members of their roles and responsibilities
- To strengthen the Nari Adalat and keep it active
- To create an enabling environment for members to participate
- To coordinate among women so as to generate support for all members
- To discuss difficulties faced by the Nari Adalat members and brainstorm solutions
- To discuss, review and plan all activities
- To maintain accounts
- To follow up on ongoing, new and solved cases
- To prepare case records on each case

How
- Create meeting agendas through participatory discussions
- Avoid hierarchy by requesting members sit in a circle at meetings
- Create a comfortable atmosphere by singing songs
- Understand the expectations of the whole group
- Use participatory methods to get a better understanding of legal issues
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of Nari Adalat members
- Discuss examples of how Nari Adalats deal with women's experiences through cases, strategies and practices
- Analyze women's experiences, difficulties faced and strategize solutions
- Display posters on legal issues at the meeting venue
- Get guidance from police, lawyers and Free Legal Advice Center
- Prepare records of all cases, successful and not successful
- Discuss the Nari Adalat members' personal problems and try to address them

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for a list of common resources.

This activity needs to be facilitated by resource persons at cluster, block and district levels

Please do the following:
- Give women the space to speak out
- Listen and analyze what women have said
- Act on areas where support is needed
- Encourage members to act on several tasks simultaneously
- Contextualize a personal issue as societal or as women's issues
- Organise meeting times according to everyone's convenience
- Hold meetings in a participatory way
- Discuss activities to be done by Legal Committee members

Take care of the following:
- Do not use lecture type discussions
- Do not interrupt while women are sharing their experiences
- Do not allow one person to dominate
- Do not blame one individual, instead encourage team responsibility
- Do not give more responsibility than what a person can handle
- Do not discriminate among members
Time frame

- Preparatory time: Preparation is done for about 2 hours by field staff a week in advance
- 1 day monthly meeting: (4 - 5 hours) per month

Expected Outcomes

- The Nari Adalat's capacity is built to make unbiased, neutral decisions
- Women in the Nari Adalat get exposure to women's issues
- The Nari Adalat women develop a greater understanding about violence
- Networking and coordination with government and non-government institutions improves
- Sources of legal information for the Nari Adalat grows
- Nari Adalat members will become literate as demand and motivation for literacy increases
- Women will learn documentation methods
- Nari Adalat members will develop a feminist perspective for themselves, their homes, and in the community
- Nari Adalat members will develop the ability to work in a team
- Women will have a better understanding of women's issues, will become more confident and improve their decision making capacities
- Identity and respect for the Nari Adalat will increase among their families, relatives and society
Why?
- To provide information on women and child related laws and changes in laws
- To explain the importance of documentation and administrative work
- To prepare the Nari Adalat members to function independently
- To use information obtained in training at the Nari Adalat in the correct way
- To develop a common understanding among all members

How?
- Introduce each member
- Understand all the members’ expectations
- Conduct training according to the expectations and the agenda
- Use role plays, drawings, group discussions, films on law and case studies as methods for training
- Invite subject-specific resource persons
- Network with local experts (lawyers, Free Legal Advice Center)
- Develop an understanding on how to record case details

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for a list of common resources. This activity needs to be by subject-specific resource persons.

Please do the following:
- Give training in the local dialect
- Create a participatory environment
- Conduct the trainings at either the block or the district level
- Respect the views of the trainees

Time frame
- Conduct training sessions 4 times a year, for 3 days per training

Expected Outcomes
- Women will get information on the different laws and on changes in laws
- Training sessions will help women solve cases more efficiently and transparently
- Women’s will be better able to deliver justice
- Legal Committee members will start writing down case details

Knowledge of the law helps a Nari Member resolve her own case
Manjula got married and moved to Shivarajpur. Her husband kept beating her as he always suspected her of having affairs with other men. One day he threw her out of the house and she returned to her father's house in Vrinagar. Here Manjula started participating in sangha meetings where she came to know about the Nari Adalat and registered her case with them. The Nari Adalat sent a notice of summons to Manjula's husband and her in-laws twice but, unwilling to take Manjula back, they did not attend the hearings. Her case was not solved at this stage but Manjula was seriously interested in the Nari Adalat and its proceedings and eventually became a member. She went for training and learnt about the law. With this knowledge, she invited two judges from the Nari Adalat to help solve her case. The Nari Adalat members felt that Manjula must return to her husband's house because she had three children who needed care. They traveled with her to her in-laws' village and successfully resolved her case. As a result, Manjula was accepted back in her husband's home and today is treated with dignity and respect because of her knowledge of the law.
Step 11
Consolidate the coordination with Government and Non Government Institutions

Why?
- To give information on the Nari Adalat
- To give awareness to government and non government institutions on women's issues and sensitize them
- To publicise the work of the Nari Adalat
- To get infrastructure facilities for the Nari Adalat
- To gain economic support
- To share opinions on women's issues
- To provide and gain legal support

How?
- Members give information about the Nari Adalat to Block Panchayat and administrative offices, Sarpanchs, caste panchayats, police stations, social justice committees, courts, lawyers, judges and non government organisations
- Nari Adalat members should elicit institutional and individual support in difficult cases
- Nari Adalat members should seek economic and social support from the government
- Members should constantly update government institutions about the Nari Adalat
- Nari Adalat members should get information from government institutions about schemes
- Nari Adalat members should invite government and non government officials to training
- Nari Adalat members should support each other
- Nari Adalat members should coordinate with media
- Nari Adalat members should publish success stories of Nari Adalat through the media

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for a list of common resources. In addition, we also require the following:
- Brochure about organisation and the Nari Adalat
- CDs

Please do the following:
- Field staff at cluster levels and the Nari Adalat members must work according to their aims, roles and responsibilities
- The Nari Adalat members should elicit benefits from government schemes

Take care of the following:
- The Nari Adalat must not get pressurized or used by government or non government agencies
Step 11

Nari Adalat gets the support of the block panchayat and caste panchayat

Muktaben Malerambhai Aahir belongs to the Ahir (Rajput) community, known to value its privacy and is highly respected, Muktaben's husband went to Madhya Pradesh for a job and left her with her in-laws for three years. He rarely came home and when he did, he never spoke to her. Muktaben came to know that the reason for this behaviour was that he was having extra marital affairs. She left her husband's house and went to her parents. There she met Nari Adalat members and filed her case. The Nari Adalat sent a notice to her husband to appear before them. Muktaben's in-laws attended but her husband did not. The Nari Adalat insisted that they bring their son. The Block President was from the same caste as Muktaben's husband and the Nari Adalat got his support and that of the caste panchayat in this case. The Block President was shocked to see the kind of problems the women in his community were facing. Because of this external support, the Nari Adalat could more easily solve the case. From then on, the Block panchayat and caste panchayats started attending Nari Adalat proceedings.

Time frame

- Nari Adalat members should visit government and non government institutions twice a month
- Hold the Nari Adalat monthly meeting where other institutions can be invited
- Conduct the Nari Adalat members training sessions - once in 3 months where other institutions are invited
- Conduct follow-up training 2 months after a training and invite officials to these training sessions
- Time taken differs as per the situation

Expected Outcomes

- Government and non government institutions will become aware of the Nari Adalat, start attending their meetings and trainings and will become sensitized to women's issues
- Government and non government institutions will understand the functioning of the Nari Adalat
- Government and non government institutions will provide social and economic support as and when needed
- Women will gain confidence in speaking to government officials
- Nari Adalats will get facilities like place, stationery, computers, photo copying facilities, and telephones
- Other institutions like courts and the police will refer cases to the Nari Adalat
- Women will become accustomed to travelling to the block
- Women will be regarded with respect

Consolidate the coordination with Government and Non Government Institutions
Why?
- To share experiences across Nari Adalats
- To understand how to strategize and solve different cases
- To get experience-based guidance and suggestions
- To learn new strategies as per the local situation
- To develop their own skills
- To develop unity among members
- To enhance their feminist perspective
- To get information on different types of cases
- To learn documentation and accounting skills

How?
- During monthly meetings plan visits to other Nari Adalats
- Share experiences across Nari Adalats of dealing with cases
- Members go for exposure visits to old cases which have been solved
- Members go for exposure visits to different institutions
- Hold meetings to share experiences after these exposure visits
- Hold discussions on training needs
- Hold legal committee meetings
- Hold public meetings
- Spread the Nari Adalat concept

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for a list of common resources. In addition, we also need the following:
- Brochure about organisation and the Nari Adalat
- CDs
- Vehicle
- Travel Allowance and Daily Allowance

Please do the following:
- Keep other Nari Adalats informed about plans and activities
- Each member must participate actively
- All members should be open to learning
- Give all members a chance to visit other Nari Adalats
- Nari Adalat members should share information openly
- Have proper documentation and transparency of accounts
- Build good relations between members

Take care of the following:
- Do not discriminate between members
- Nari Adalat members should not feel pressurized to implement strategies and functioning styles of other Nari Adalats
Time frame

- New Nari Adalats visit others once a month
- Conduct exposure visits for old Nari Adalats - once in 3 months
- Conduct study tours once a year (2 days)
- Conduct training four times a year (2 days)
- Visit legal institutions 9 times a year
- Conduct special meetings on difficult cases as per need

Expected Outcomes

- The Nari Adalat process and functioning will improve and become more simple and transparent
- Nari Adalat members will get support from other Nari Adalats on strategizing for difficult cases
- Nari Adalat members will become more confident
- Nari Adalat members will develop common thinking
- Nari Adalat members will start developing skills
- Nari Adalat members will start strategizing among themselves
- The Nari Adalat will improve their decision making capacities
- Networks between the Nari Adalat and other departments will improve
- Nari Adalat members will share experiences
- The Nari Adalat will get good publicity
- There will be an increase in cases from outside the block
Step 13

Create a support system for Nari Adalat members

Why?
- To simplify and speed up the process of solving cases with the support of local social groups, caste panchayat, among others.
- To meet Nari Adalat expenses with financial help from case fees, donations, external funding and government support.
- To create a space where there is no discrimination on the basis of caste and everyone is equal.
- To sustain and strengthen the Nari Adalat.
- To build the respect and credibility of the Nari Adalat.

How
- Conduct meetings to network with social institutions, sensitize them and make them aware of Nari Adalat processes.
- Mahila Samakhya, Mahila Ayog and the federation must have a budget for running the Nari Adalat.
- Get funds through case fees, punishment fees and voluntary donations.
- Get financial support from the State Commission for Women.
- Sensitize caste panchayat members, the community and family members of the Nari Adalat.

What do we need?
Please refer to page 34 for a list of common resources. In addition, we also require the following:
- Information and brochures about the implementing agency.

Please do the following:
- Spread awareness about the Nari Adalat so that they can get financial and social support.
- Network with government institutions.
- Use funds according to plans.

Take care of the following:
- Do not give importance to any one social group while dealing with local bodies.
- Do not discriminate on the basis of caste while supporting members.

Time frame
- Address issues of support for members during Nari Adalat meetings - once a month.
- Address issues of support for members during Nari Adalat training sessions - Once in 3 months.
- Annual budget meeting in November-December.

Expected Outcomes
- The Nari Adalat will develop a stronger identity.
- The Nari Adalat will be strengthened.
- Process of solving difficult cases will become faster and more simple.
- Financial support will strengthen Nari Adalat members economically enough to function, travel and allow them to give poor women free service.
- The poorest of the poor will get help to get justice at an affordable price.
- Financial and social support will increase the confidence of the members.
Support systems for emergencies faced by Nari Adalat members

In the Morbi Nari Adalat, the son of one of the Nari Adalat members was very ill and she was not able to bear the expenses for his treatment which was urgently needed. She shared her problem with other Nari Adalat members and they decided to contribute the amount needed for her child's treatment. Because she got the monetary support from her fellow Nari Adalat members for the treatment, her son got timely treatment and was cured.
**Expected Outcomes - Short Term**

- Women will become more empowered
- The Nari Adalat will learn how and where to get financial resources
- The Nari Adalat women will start talking about their problems
- Networking at block and other levels will improve and the Nari Adalat will get support
- The Nari Adalat will learn to solve cases and thereby deliver justice to poor women

**Expected Outcomes - Long Term**

- Women will start exercising their rights
- Women will start taking decisions at home and in the community
- Incidence of violence against women, including female foeticide and deaths due to violence will decrease
- The Nari Adalat will get a space at the Block level to hold their meetings
- The Nari Adalat will get public recognition from Block officials
- Nari Adalat women will become trainers for other organisations
- Courts will recognise and accept the Nari Adalat and provide certificates of recognition as legitimate agents of justice delivery
- Other states will come on exposure visits and start Nari Adalats
- The Nari Adalat will get support and recognition from police
- The Nari Adalat decisions will get accepted by caste panchayat
- Number of cases handled by the Nari Adalat will increase
- The Nari Adalat will get financial support from various sources
- Women's confidence will increase
- Due to this toolkit and documentation, Nari Adalats will be replicated in other places

**Enabling Factors**

- Home and family members support the Nari Adalat
- Caste Panchayat gives support by referring cases and sitting in on Nari Adalat proceedings
- Sangha and Federation provides support
- Police helps the Nari Adalat reach the summoned party and through case referrals
- Block Panchayat provides a space, photo copying facilities and drinking water
- Courts refer cases to the Nari Adalat
- Mahila Samakhya helps in conducting meetings, workshops, trainings and in other areas
- Other organisations give support (eg: Drashti made a film for the Nari Adalat used for training in Gujarat, Janvikas provided para legal training)
- Sangha women contribute financially to the Nari Adalat (Rs.100/- per village per month)
- Local leaders respect and support the Nari Adalat
- Clients pay fees to cover expenses of the Nari Adalat
- Mahila Ayog provides funds to run the Nari Adalat and provides identity cards to increase their credibility.
Lessons learnt from the past

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<th>Challenges faced</th>
<th>How they were solved</th>
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<td>Lack of training lead to lesser decision making capacity and difficulties in handling cases</td>
<td>Training was provided</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women face financial difficulties</td>
<td>Developed understanding of voluntary spirit among members</td>
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<td>Initially caste panchayat, local leaders’ opposition to the Nari Adalat created problems for them</td>
<td>The Nari Adalat got recognition by solving cases which were difficult for the court and the caste panchayat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competing organizations (formal and informal justice delivery systems) harass the Nari Adalat</td>
<td>Networking with police station, Caste Panchayats, Sarpanch and community</td>
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<td>Lack of space to operate</td>
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<td>When the Nari Adalat went to the field for different cases they faced economic, physical and mental problems</td>
<td>Frequent meetings and training sessions for Nari Adalat members developed their feminist perspective and trust</td>
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The Challenges—FAQs

Are the proceedings and decisions of the Nari Adalats accepted by the parties and community?
The MS experience has shown that the decisions taken by the NA are respected in many cases though there have been failures. The reasons for acceptance are as follows:

• The members of the Nari Adalat are usually women who have won the respect of the community by their work as sangha members. They have experience in taking up cases of VAW, property and marital disputes, women’s access to resources and so on.
• Because of their work in their sanghas, the Nari Adalat and its members are respected by the panchayats and community leaders in many cases.
• The processes of the NA are transparent. While giving priority to the women, the NAs also give opportunities to the other parties.
• The Nari Adalats also try, as a first step to find solutions acceptable to both parties and try to reconcile the positions through awareness-building and persuasion.
• The members of the NA are trained in the related laws and decisions are given within the scope of the law. For example, a man who is violent with his wife is told about the existence of the DV Act.
• In general, good laws have been framed to address women’s problems, however both awareness and implementation is poor. The Nari Adalats are able to raise awareness about the laws related to women in their communities and to help in their implementation. This also helps people to respect their decisions.
• The MS network of sanghas and federations help in the follow-up of NA decisions. Offenders are aware that women are “protected” by this network and this helps to implement decisions. It also acts as a deterrent to further offences in many cases.
• The Nari Adalat members try to look for solutions that are sustainable, long term and prevent further offences against women.

Do the Nari Adalats have legal standing?
The Nari Adalats can be considered as one of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (ADR). ADRs are recognised by the Indian Legal System as an important way to resolve disputes that would otherwise involve costly and long drawn out litigation. India also has a long history of community mechanisms to resolve problems. While the Nari Adalats have no formal linkages with legal institutions, they derive their “legitimacy” from the support from panchayats and communities. Further, as long as their decisions are within the legal framework, they need to be acted upon by the parties involved.

How is the Nari Adalat different from caste or traditional panchayats?
The Nari Adalat is a body set up by MS sangha women, who have worked on gender issues in their communities, to address problems faced by women. It is guided by a strong gender perspective and encourages women to present their point of views and experience. It encourages women to speak and to suggest the way forward. This approach is a non negotiable of the NA and the critical difference from the caste and traditional panchayats that reflect traditional biases against women.

What kind of problems do the Nari Adalats face in arriving at gender sensitive decisions?
Some cases that come to the Adalat are difficult to solve. Members have to overcome the biases of some of their colleagues and the parties involved. For example, there have been rape cases in which the victim and her relatives wanted a decision that would compel the rapist to marry the victim. The latter did not see any other future for herself in her village. Reconciliation processes of the Adalat end up this way. In such cases, it is difficult for the Adalat to give gender sensitive decisions and it is compelled to be “pragmatic”.
Such difficulties faced by the Adalats need to be seen in context in urban areas where women are more educated and financially independent, crimes against women continue to happen and women who protest are subjected to horrific crimes like acid attacks. Protection for victims of rape and child abuse is woefully inadequate.

By having Nari Adalats, are we encouraging the legal system to shirk its responsibilities towards women?
There has been a lot of forward movement in framing laws for women. However, their implementation continues to be poor. In a situation, where the legal system is overloaded and inefficient, it is hard for women to get timely justice. Reforming the formal legal system is a long drawn out struggle. In the meanwhile, institutions like the Nari Adalat, help to give women speedy and inexpensive solutions. The answer is “No” having the Nari Adalats does not mean that we are allowing the courts to shirk their duty to women.
Roles and Responsibilities

*Field Staff at cluster Level*
- Create awareness for all rural women on violence, mobilize, unite them and help them bring their issues to the Nari Adalat
- Plan training according to the needs of women and use different mediums for training
- Provide district information to the villages and village information to the district
- Facilitate networks with the Gram Panchayat, community leaders, police station, government and non-government agencies and the Nari Adalat
- Provide constant support, motivation and encouragement to the Legal Committees to empower them
- Identify women with leadership qualities, train them at the block level to enhance these qualities and strengthen them
- Create an enabling environment for the Nari Adalat so women can take appropriate decisions when faced with difficulties
- Convey the need for meetings, training sessions and workshops at the district level

*Field Staff at block Level*
- Network with cluster level functionaries at the block level
- Facilitate networks with government and non-government agencies at district level (court, police, caste panchayat) and the Nari Adalat
- Planning and documentation of the Nari Adalat success stories
- Plan meetings and training sessions and provide necessary materials according to the needs of the Nari Adalat
- Prepare reports of meetings and training sessions
- Provide guidance for cluster level functionaries and Nari Adalat members
- Organise exposure visits for the legal committees and Nari Adalat members to empower them on delivering justice
- Give guidance to the federation and Nari Adalat on linking with each other to ensure support
- Share challenges faced by the Nari Adalat with the district office
- Provide district level information to Nari Adalat members
- Publicize the Nari Adalat

*Field Staff at district Level*
- Coordinate between block and district
- Plan educational tours for the Nari Adalat
- Do a complete documentation of the Nari Adalat
- Plan workshops, trainings and meetings for and with the Nari Adalat
- Prepare monthly, quarterly and annual reports
- Network with government and non-government agencies
- Plan for the district as per the needs of the block and organize trainings
- Plan budgets as per the needs of the Nari Adalats in the whole district

*District Program Coordinator*
- Get funds from the state level to support the Nari Adalat activities
- Network with government and non-government institutions
- Prepare budget and provide financial support for Nari Adalat meetings, tours, trainings, educational tours and materials
- Network at every level
- Give support to existing Nari Adalats in the district
- Plan expansion of Nari Adalats in new geographical areas
- Give information and guidance to field functionaries
- Documentation of district programme activities and results
- Provide all field functionaries with information and ensure implementation
- Sanction funds at the time required
- Monitor and administer programs
- Provide strategic guidance to all functionaries especially during times of crisis

**State level consultant**

- Plan and organize programs and workshops
- Liaison and network with organizations and agencies
- Work with district teams to implement programs effectively
- Provide specialised consultancy services to district and state offices
- Represent the organization in seminars, workshops, trainings and other programs
- Document the work of the Nari Adalat and report on it

**State level resource person**

- Take over responsibilities in the absence of the State Head
- Compile budgets from the districts and plan based on this compilation
- Conduct monthly meetings with district programme heads for review and future planning
- Compile monitoring and information system (MIS) with district data and send quarterly reports to the national office
- Create the annual reports of all activities and outcomes
- Plan and coordinate all state level activities
- Document programme activities and results for the state

**State Program Coordinator**

- Network with government and non government agencies
- Provide programs with appropriate direction
- Ensure transparency in implementation and administration
- Ensure timely fund flow from national to district levels
- Provide district offices information on new programmes and other national information
- Ensure success stories are showcased nationally and in other states
- Sanction grants as per plan and budget
- Mobilize resources for programmes
- Plan exposure visits for the Nari Adalat to other states
- Plan long term training for the Nari Adalats and organize expert resource persons to provide training
- Coordinate uniformly with equal attention to all districts
- Plan training sessions and workshops for all Mahila Samakhya functionaries to strengthen the Nari Adalat
Capacity Building of Nari Adalat Members, Gujarat

The Nari Adalat members have their capacities built on a number of laws concerning women rights covered under the Indian Penal Code and parliamentary legislations. The laws include:

- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005,
- Sections 304B, 498a and 506 of Dowry Act of the Indian Penal Code,
- Women and land rights under Property Laws
- Section 125 of Maintenance laws under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
- Section 3a and 14, Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986
- Indian Muslim laws on marriage

Apart from the general training sessions on laws, refresher sessions are also conducted for members on these laws from time to time. Initially, the members were not provided training on filing FIR (First Information Report), on search warrant and Right to Information (RTI). Now, the women have their capacities built around these areas as these legal provisions are important in dealing with the cases.

In cases under which women find difficult to interpret the laws, especially regarding murder, rape or property rights, they either refer the case to the traditional courts or take help from the police. In these circumstances, the Nari Adalat members provide counselling and help on the formalities. If a Nari Adalat needs legal information while handling a case, they solicit assistance from local lawyers, Social Justice Committee or the police departments.

On an average, three to five sittings are required for solving each case. But it varies from case to case. Sometimes, cases require 10 to 12 sittings or one to one and half years to be solved.

If members cannot reach a common understanding on a case, they either

- consult the opinions of experienced and long-time members and arrive on common understanding.
- Or they take help of MS staff.

Besides capacity building on laws, the Nari Adalat members are provided training on documentation (how to fill case forms) and maintaining account books. Specific trainings have been given on maintaining books of accounts while Gujarat State Commission for women has started funding to NA from the year 2007.

Common Resources required for the Nari Adalat toolkit

**Stationery**

- Chart papers
- Pens & Blank ruled papers
- Stapler & Staple pins
- Cello tape
- Paper clips
- Paper punch machine
- Files
- Registers of meetings and case hearings
- Strings for the banners, posters and chart papers

**Reference materials**

- Case studies
- Films specifically on violence against women, their experiences and laws pertaining to women
- Posters on violence against women and law
- Subject specific posters, films and training manuals for Nari Adalat capacity building sessions
- Banners depicting violence against women and laws concerning women
- Booklets and materials on law specifically on women's issues
- Booklet of women's songs (particularly for step 1 and Activity 1)

**Documentation and logistics materials**

- Travel Allowance forms for participants for Step 5, Step 7 and Activity 4
- Camera for Step 8, Activity 1, Activity 3 and Activity 4
**Rollout Plan**

*Formation of Nari Adalat*

- 60 villages
  - Create sangha in each village
  - Formation of Legal Committee in Sangha
  - Selective members of Legal Committee (180 women)
  - Identify 60 women for Nari Adalat training

- 3 CRPs (1 CRP for 20 villages) + 1 JRP (for 60 villages)
  - Approximately 30 women in each sangha (1 year)
  - 6 women in Legal Committee at sangha level (6 months)
  - Workshops for identification of women for Nari Adalat (60 women – 1 woman per village) – time – 1 day

**Cluster Level**

- Selection of 3 strong women (1-2 months)
  - Selective members of Legal Committee (180 women)
  - Identify 60 women for Nari Adalat training

- Legal training for Nari Adalat – 5 days

**Block Level**

- Identify 60 women for Nari Adalat training
  - Selection of 30 women for Nari Adalat
  - Paralegal training – 4 phases

- Legal training for Nari Adalat – 5 days

- 1st phase – 15 days
- 2nd phase – 7 days
- 3rd phase – 5 days
- 4th phase – 2-3 days
## List of attachments

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>‘Nari Adalat in every Taluka’ DNA 17th April 2010</td>
<td>Newspaper cutting announcing Govt. of Gujarat intent to upscale the Nari Adalat</td>
<td>Included in the Toolkit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 2.     | Sample forms  
a. Preliminary information  
b. Consent form  
c. Case details  
d. Details of proceedings  
e. Summons | Used by the Nari Adalat during cases | Included in the Toolkit |
| 3.     | Identity cards –samples in Gujarati | Used by Nari Adalat members | Included in the Toolkit |
| 5.     | Banners (in Gujarati) | Used for training | Included in the Toolkit |
| 6.     | Posters (in Gujarati) | Used for training | Included in the Toolkit |
| 7.     | Film: Legal course 8.8.96 (Disk 3) in Gujarati | Used in Training | Included in the Toolkit |
| 8.     | Visual Documentation of Nari Adalat in Gujarati | Used in Training | Included in the Toolkit |
| 9.     | Newspaper cuttings with English Captions | Used in advocacy and publicity for the Nari Adalat | Included in the Toolkit |
| 10.    | Training Material  
a. Illustrations – Gujarati  
b. Material photographs with English captions | Used in training | Included in the Toolkit |
| 11.    | Rape & violence | 1. Legal Committee training  
2. Legal awareness campaign | MS Gujarat |
| 12.    | Women & law | 1. Legal workshop | MS Gujarat |
| 13.    | Police Malpractices | 1. Paralegal training | MS Gujarat |
| 14.    | Police & people | 1. Meeting of legal committee members  
2. Legal awareness campaign | MS Gujarat |
| 15.    | Dowry & domestic Violence | 1. Legal committee training  
2. Nari Adalat Committee members training  
3. Para legal training | MS Gujarat |
| 16.    | Guidance for Women | 1. Nari Adalat Committee members training | MS Gujarat |
Glossary

BDO - Block Development Officer
Cluster - Collective of 10 villages
MS - Mahila Samakhya
MSG - Mahila Samakhya, Gujarat
CRP - Cluster Resource Person
DPC - District Project Coordinator
SPD - State Project Director
DIU - District Implementation Unit
DRP - District Resource Person
Federation - Collective of sanghas
GP - Gram Panchayat
GS - Gram Sabha
NA - Nari Adalat
NGO - Non-Governmental Organization
PRI - Panchayat Raj Institution
Sangha - Collective of women at village level
Sahayogini - Village level functionary
WCD - Women and Child Development Department
Zilla Parishad - District Council
What is Mahila Samakhya Programme?

Education in Mahila Samakhya is understood not merely as acquiring basic literacy skills but as a process of learning to question, critically analysing issues and problems and seeking solutions. It endeavors to create an environment for women to learn at their own pace, set their own priorities and seek knowledge and information to make informed choices. It seeks to bring about a change in women's perception about themselves and the perception of society in regard to women's "traditional roles". This essentially involves enabling women, especially from socially and economically disadvantaged, and marginalized groups, to address and deal with problems of isolation and lack of self confidence, oppressive social customs, struggles for survival, all of which inhibit their learning. It is in this process that women become empowered.

The Mahila Samakhya programme, launched in 1988, in pursuance of the goals of the NPE brought both together through the overarching objective of education for empowerment of women. The MS programme has been designed to address women's education as a way to enhance women's agency. Thus 'education' does not refer to just formal educational systems but includes the whole gamut of lifeskills related to better access and control of opportunities and resources for women related to health, dignity, freedom from violence, and political decision making.

The Mahila Samakhya objectives are as follows:
To create an environment in which education can serve the objectives of women's equality.
To enhance the self-image and self-confidence of women and thereby enabling them to recognize their contribution to the economy as producers and workers, reinforcing their need for participating in educational programmes.
To create an environment where women can seek knowledge and information and thereby empower them to play a positive role in their own development and development of society.
To set in motion circumstances for larger participation of women and girls in formal and non-formal education programmes.
To provide women and adolescent girls with the necessary support structures and an informal learning environment to create opportunities for education.
To enable Mahila Sanghas to actively assist and monitor educational activities in the villages including elementary schools, AE, EGS/AIE centres and other facilities for continuing education.
To establish a decentralized and participative mode of management, with the decision making powers devolved to the district level and to Mahila Sanghas which in turn will provide the necessary conditions for effective participation.

For the first time through the MS Programme for Action (1992), education was seen as an empowerment tool and included mobilization, critical thinking, information about rights, and legal literacy. The MS programme is implemented in the ten states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand in identified educationally backward blocks. Among these blocks, programme expansion was prioritized in areas with higher concentrations of tribal, scheduled caste, and minority populations.