CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS IN THE MAHILA MANDALS

FORMATIVE PERIOD

Introduction

Development practitioners and other policy makers, in general, have now acknowledged the importance of organizing women into Mahila Mandals. Mahila Mandal forms the main part of the strategy for the development of women. Being an effective instrument of change, it has come to stay in the development scenario. This research study examined the question of sustainment of these Mahila Mandals in being productive over long time in the lives of the members. This chapter contains the conclusions and suggestions derived from the data and the findings of this study.

The first part of the chapter presents the conclusions. These conclusions are listed according to the findings in each of the sub-sections found in the four chapters of analysis. The second part of the chapter has suggestions arrived at from the findings and the conclusions. The suggestions have been divided into two sub-sections - one relating to the techniques of organizing Mahila Mandals and the other referring to topics for further study in future. These conclusions and suggestions are aimed at contributing to the growth of Development Science and of Community Organization.

Change-Agent

Development is initiated among a target group always by a change-agent. This has been proved by the following findings. Among the thirty Mahila Mandals, the following have played the role of change-agent. In a majority of the instances,
it was the NGOs. In a small percentage of the instances it was the local volunteers or the health workers. The women leaders from within the community and the leaders from neighbourhood Mahila Mandals have played this role equally in a very small percentage of instances. Thus, in all the thirty Mahila Mandals there have been change-agents initiating the development process. Of these, only the NGOs were from outside the target community. These different categories of change-agents are addressed as promoters in this report.

Building Rapport

The NGOs being outsiders to the target community especially needed to establish rapport with the local women. They did it in the following manner. These have been listed below according to the descending value of the percentages of the incidence except the first two that are equal with a sizable percentage of the instances. All the rest scored small percentage values.

- Establishing direct contact with the community.
- Establishing contact through persons known to both the parties.
- Organizing coaching classes and non-formal education.
- Making use of their ongoing programmes such as health programme for women and children, micro-enterprises, savings, and sanitation.
- Organizing awareness education programme through street plays, and dramas.

Basically, the human contact with the target group had been established either directly or through an intermediary or neutrally through programmes. The first two categories, those of non-programme together constitute a majority of the instances.

Introducing the Idea of Mahila Mandal

The NGOs and the volunteers, in a sizable percentage of instances, spoke about the formation of Mahila Mandals to an individual woman in the community. The neighbourhood Mahila Mandals, in all the reported instances, spoke to an individual woman. Altogether, these three categories of promoters first spoke about the formation of Mahila Mandals to an individual woman in a majority of the instances. On advice from these promoters, the individual person spoke to other women in the community one by one and convinced them of lending their support to the formation of the Mahila Mandal. In the rest of the instances, the promoters
first spoke about this idea to two or three women or women in general or to local
leaders like Panchayat presidents.

This, indeed, had been the starting point of the leadership process within
the Mahila Mandals. The promoters chose women as contact persons, who had
certain leadership characteristics especially dynamism, sociability, and taking
initiative. But these persons, addressed as contact persons in this report, did not
have at that time any recognition as leaders in the community. These contact
persons did what a leader does, that is influencing the women to join the Mahila
Mandals. The strategy of talking to women individually carried home the
conviction of joining the Mahila Mandal easily.

Initial Purposes

The promoters told the contact persons or the women of the community
the purpose for establishing the Mahila Mandals. The initial purposes were either
ideological or material or both. In one third of the thirty groups it was only
material purposes. A little less than one third had both ideological and material
purposes. In the same number of instances, the women had just wanted to have
one Mahila Mandal for them after seeing one in their neighbourhood. Only a few
had ideological purposes alone.

The facts show that the ideological purposes to be accepted by the
women at the canvassing stage required a prior awareness orientation. The
small percentage of groups that had only ideological purposes had prior
awareness education. Without this foundation, these women would not have
agreed to from the Mahila Mandal only on ideological grounds. The material
purposes were based on the felt-needs of the women and therefore were
motivating the women to form the Mahila Mandals.

NGOs' Contribution to the Formation of Mahila Mandals

In a vast majority of instances, the NGOs had given ideological support
such as awareness education, guidance and direction, staff support, and
trainings. Only a small percentage of the NGOs had given material support such
as development projects and programmes. The ideological orientations in the
early stages of the Mahila Mandals have laid a strong foundation for the future sustainment of these groups.

Compelling Circumstances to Start Mahila Mandals

The compelling events or circumstances were those in the absence of which the women would not have formed the Mahila Mandals. In a majority of the Mahila Mandals the encouragement and direction from the NGO, the voluntary and health workers, and the women leaders and also the examples of neighbourhood Mahila Mandals together have been the most important reasons for the formation of the Mahila Mandals. This again emphasizes the need for a change-agent’s intervention to initiate a development process. Also to a small extent the problems in the community including the social problems faced by the Dalits had been the additional reasons.

PRIMARY GROWTH PERIOD

Leadership Attributes

At the inaugural meeting of the Mahila Mandals, the members elected their first set of office-bearers democratically. They were the president, the secretary, and the treasurer. The following were the considerations based on which the members elected their office-bearers in all the elections held in the Mahila Mandals.

The most important considerations the members had in electing their presidents were the following, listed according to the descending value of percentages. These were the ability to speak boldly particularly before authorities, founder of the Mahila Mandal, seniority in age, education, skill in public speaking, being proactive, responsibility and commitment. The first two have a small percentage of responses. The rest have very small percentage value. The last three attributes have equal percentage value.

A question arose whether these selection criteria and the initial purposes for establishing the Mahila Mandals had any relationship. The considerations that the members had in electing their presidents had direct relationship, only in a sizable percentage of instances, to the initial purposes for which the Mahila Mandals were established. But these considerations in general cannot be
dismissed as totally irrelevant because the vast majority of the presidents either successfully completed their tenure or were reelected or continued to hold office. Several groups had used the same considerations in the next elections of the presidents held in intervals of three years on an average.

In electing the secretaries, the Mahila Mandals gave priority to the education of the person in a sizable percentage of instances and elected the highest educated in the group nearly in all the instances. The members in electing the treasurers primarily had the personal integrity of the person in mind. This was only to a sizable percentage of instances. Next, to a small extent, they considered education a requirement, though literacy was essential to maintain financial accounts. The rest of the answers for all the above three office-bearers were spread over various other attributes in very small percentages.

Balancing Leadership Qualities

The Mahila Mandals had elected the office-bearers under different prime considerations so that the qualities required to play both the task and the maintenance roles were balanced. When one puts together the attributes for selecting the three office-bearers, one finds that in a vast majority of the Mahila Mandals the distribution of attributes got balanced so that the set of office-bearers became players of both maintenance and task roles. This contributed to the smooth functioning of the Mahila Mandals in the long run and thereby to their sustainment.

Contact Persons as Office-bearers

The members of the Mahila Mandals elected all the contact persons to different offices in recognition of their being founders of the Mahila Mandals. The promoters of the Mahila Mandals had initially selected women with leadership qualities as their contact persons. These leadership qualities combined with the fact of being founders of the Mahila Mandals gave these persons a better chance of getting elected to the various offices. These founders have proved their leadership skills and abilities over the years, and this had got them vertical mobility in their offices. These founders formed the first set of leaders of the Mahila Mandals. They continue now as presidents in a vast majority of the
instances. The emerging second set of leaders from among the ordinary members is seen in the lesser offices in a vast majority of the instances.

Education a Criterion

In a vast percentage of the Mahila Mandals, the members also gave importance to education of the members in the selection of office-bearers. This is particularly so in the selection of the secretaries. The highest educated individual got the preference nearly in all the instances.

Categories of Selection Criteria Used for Different Offices

For the choice of presidents, the behaviours of the person had been the utmost important consideration for selection. The percentage was only to a sizable extent. In the case of secretaries, it was the skills and traits. This was found in a majority of the instances. Treasurers had been selected on the consideration of their personal integrity. This consideration is included under the category namely others. This was in a sizable percentage of instances. The overall emphasis had been on the skills and traits of the persons. This has been again in a sizable percentage of instances.

Extent of Change in Holding Office Currently

A majority of the office-bearers was continuing in the same office except the vice-presidents of whom only a sizable percentage continued in office. The reason was that the members were satisfied with their performance that they did not want to change them. In a vast majority of the instances, the Mahila Mandals that selected office-bearers different from the incumbents chose them from among the ordinary members. But this was so only in the case of lesser offices such as the secretaries, the treasurers, and the vice-presidents. But, while replacing the presidents, they chose from the ordinary members only in a majority of the instances.

Activities of the Mahila Mandals during the Primary Growth Period

In accordance with the Mahila Mandals' primary objective of development of village, the priority category of activities has been community-oriented ones. This is seen to be the majority percentage of the activities. Among the member-oriented activities, the principal group activities were small savings and self-help,
and members' economic development. The former is just in the majority percentage of the instances and the latter is in a sizable percentage of the instances. This priority in member-oriented activities was in agreement with the primary purposes for which the individuals joined the Mahila Mandals.

**Group Activities and Initial Purposes/Objectives**

There is a relationship, in all the instances, between the type of group activities on the one side, and the initial purposes, group's objectives, and the individual's purposes for joining the Mahila Mandals on the other. The last three factors determined the nature of group activities. While conveying the initial purposes to the potential members of the Mahila Mandals, the promoters have seen that these initial purposes were based on the felt-needs of the people and were practical. They were within the capability of the people to achieve them. For success breeds confidence in one's capabilities. Failures to achieve the initial purposes have resulted in the members leaving the Mahila Mandals. This might have also been due to subjective assessment of the groups' achievement by those who left the group. The successful implementation of all these activities depended upon the capabilities of the office-bearers and the guidance from the NGOs and the animators.

**NGOs' Contributions to the Mahila Mandals during the Primary Growth Period**

The major support from the NGOs to the Mahila Mandals during the primary growth period has been assignment of staff and trainings and meetings. These have been followed by projects and programmes. Each of these three contributions is in a sizable percentage of instances. The primary growth period is the period of learning new ideas and skills for the members as well as for the office-bearers. The presence of staff, the trainings and the meetings have fulfilled these requirements. The projects and programmes have added action to ideas imparted in the trainings. Both ideas and actions have sustained the Mahila Mandals in their early phase.
Roles of Animators and Office-bearers

The role of the animator had been one of educator, guide, and overseer. She worked closely with the office-bearers of the Mahila Mandals. The task of the president was managing the group. It was she who dealt directly with the members. The other office-bearers, besides the tasks assigned to their offices, supplemented the task of the president. In all the Mahila Mandals, the office-bearers functioned as a team. But the quality of their togetherness varied. In a majority of the groups the presidents were dominant and functioning on their own. In one third of the groups they worked closely. In a small percentage of the Mahila Mandals, the quality of team was medium. In general, the office-bearers particularly the president played the leadership roles within the group. Other members had very minimal role during this phase.

The primary growth period was a period of learning for the members as well as for the office-bearers. The learning was mostly experiential learning. It was supplemented with the trainings and meetings organized by the NGOs for the office-bearers. This learning prepared the Mahila Mandals to graduate into the next phase of sustainment period. These NGOs were aware of the importance of this phase and dealt with the groups as educators and skill developers. The Mahila Mandals that received adequate trainings and guidance from the NGOs were effective in achieving their initial purposes. This was so in a majority of the Mahila Mandals. But a sizable percentage of the groups that received inadequate support from the NGOs either made up because of the strong leadership within them or suffered dissension. Over involvement of the NGOs also proved to be detrimental to a small percentage of the Mahila Mandals. The leaders were able to promote adequate participation among the members during this phase. But the inadequacy of leadership in building a sense of solidarity and in resolving conflicts was evident.

Member Turnover during the Primary Growth Period

Dropouts have taken place in a sizable percentage of the Mahila Mandals. There are four major reasons for dropouts such as disappointment over the group’s accomplishment, opposition to group’s activism, family members
preventing participation, and group conflicts. The first two are found in a sizable percentage of instances. The second two are seen in a small percentage of instances. Such departure of members en masse could have been avoided or at least the number reduced with adequate mental preparation through awareness education of the members, better strategizing, and adequate leadership intervention. Using such measures, the other majority percentage of the Mahila Mandals had corrected similar instances in theirs. All these dropouts had occurred immediately after the formation of the Mahila Mandals when the office-bearers were inexperienced.

Withdrawal of NGO Support from the Mahila Mandals

Though the principle of self-determination was the underlying purpose of the NGOs' withdrawal from the Mahila Mandals, the actual withdrawal had taken place based on several other considerations. They were the managerial capability of the Mahila Mandals, availability of funds to carry on the programme and the need to cover new areas. A vast majority of the NGOs did not use any specific criteria to decide on the time and manner of withdrawal. Discontinuation or reduction in staff visits and stopping of joint planning of Mahila Mandal activities, occurring together in a vast majority percentage of instances, constitute the major form of NGOs' withdrawal.

SUSTAINMENT PERIOD

The Relationship between the NGOs and the Mahila Mandals during the Sustainment Period

The withdrawal by the NGOs is mainly characterized by stopping or reducing the frequency of the visit by the NGO staff to the Mahila Mandals and stopping all joint planning in activities. A vast majority of the Mahila Mandals became part of federation, a vertical integration. After the withdrawal, the relationship between the NGOs and the Mahila Mandals changed from one of provider and guide to that of an associate. The withdrawal of support by the NGOs and greater independence to the Mahila Mandals are the two sides of the same coin. This is a major move on the road to development and the Mahila
Mandals get graduated to the next level of functioning. The exchange of information across groups in the federation was a learning tool for the office-bearers.

Activities of the Mahila Mandals during the Sustainment Period

During the sustainment period, in a majority percentage of the instances, the Mahila Mandals had village-oriented activities as compared with member-oriented ones. The level of members' participation was above average in the latter, and below average in the former. Small savings topped the list with the highest total participation score followed by the activity, felicitation of members. The successful implementation of all these activities particularly savings demonstrates the skills and capabilities of the Mahila Mandal leaders and the disposition of the members. The successful small savings programme bears witness to the integrity of the group leaders. These group activities achieved the objectives of the Mahila Mandals, gave a distinct identity to them and contributed to their sustainment.

The Dalit Groups

The Mahila Mandals with Dalits as majority of the members have been successful in putting down caste harassments shown to them. The existence of such Mahila Mandals has also prevented such harassments. Though these groups were successful in eradicating disturbances from small number of individuals, they have not been effective in solving the differences with large caste communities of the villages.

With their collective approach these women not only secured better agricultural wages, but also changed their relationship with the landowners from that of master-servant to employer-employee, a contractual relationship. The women were able to earn independent income through micro enterprises. These members have forged a strong bond among themselves, with their community around, and with similar Mahila Mandals in the District. They reinforce this solidarity by sharing in others' joys and sorrows.
The impact of all these factors has resulted in the reinforcement of Dalit identity. It is doubtful whether social mobility and social integration have been achieved.

**Member Dropout during the Sustainment Period**

A majority of the Mahila Mandals had dropouts of members during this period. The major reason for dropout was that a rival NGO and a political party weaned away the members. This was responsible for a sizable percentage of the total dropouts. The other reasons were differences of opinion and dissatisfaction with the Mahila Mandals. Both were responsible for a small percentage of the total dropouts. The important deficiencies in those groups with large dropouts were the following:

High level of deficiencies:
- Inactive or inadequate group leadership.
- Absence of member-oriented group activities.
- Objectives of the Mahila Mandals not broad enough to accommodate the interests of all sections of the members.

Mid level of deficiencies:
- Inadequate orientation and awareness education, and lack of guidance from NGO at the early stages of the group.
- NGO withdrawing from the Mahila Mandals before building their capabilities.
- None in the group to play the role of reconciling conflicts.

Low level of deficiency:
- Leaders monopolizing for themselves the participation in the group activities instead of encouraging members' participation in them.

When compared with the primary growth period, the factor that was now responsible for large dropouts was external to the group. It was internal to the group in the earlier period. There are indications that whenever the leaders intervened actively they had minimized the fallout. The above factors had affected the number of membership but did not affect the continuity of the Mahila Mandals as an entity. Despite all these deficiencies these Mahila Mandals
continued to exist because of the efforts of the leaders, though they were inadequate to cope up with the critical situation.

Critical Events during the Sustainment Period

Critical events were those that threatened the existence of a Mahila Mandal. A majority of the groups experienced such critical situation. Of this, a half of them succeeded in overcoming them. The leaders overcame them in the following manner. The PLRPs either alone or along with member-leaders played the role of reconciling conflicts. In vast majority of the instances the PLRPs acted alone. While reconciling these situations, the dominant leader functions were communication, foreseeing, team building, and motivation. The strategies they used were reminding member of her responsibility, and bring about attitudinal change through persuasion of individuals. They also displayed great perseverance and assertiveness. Keeping in mind the sustainment of the Mahila Mandals, the leaders did not abandon the groups, but took charge of the situation though sometimes belatedly. In such major critical situations it is primarily the PLRPs who have brought the reconciliation of conflicts.

Crucial Events

Crucial events were those that contributed in a special way to the advancement of the Mahila Mandals. A small percentage of the Mahila Mandals took advantage of such events for their growth. It is the conscious intervention of group leadership especially that of the PLRP that goes to identify a crucial event and turn that event into a group promotional incentive. Directing a crucial event into creating a beneficial impact on the Mahila Mandals becomes another role of the group leaders. This role further helps the sustainment of the Mahila Mandals.

GROUPS' OBJECTIVES AND PERSONAL PURPOSES

Objectives of the Mahila Mandals

A) The Objectives of the Mahila Mandals as Mentioned during the Group and Members' Interviews: The following are the prime group objectives identified by the members and listed here in the order of priority.

1. Development of village
2. Women's development, their rights and security
3. Collective action and unity
4. Self help and small savings
5. Awareness education and empowerment

The following are the categorization of the priority group objectives identified by the members.

Ideological:
1. Development of village
2. Women’s development, their rights and security.
3. Collective action and unity
4. Awareness education and empowerment

Of the four, only the first two objectives are above the average percentage of member responses, among the ideological objectives.

Material:
1. Self-help and small savings
2. Members’ economic development
3. Government and NGO assistance

Among the material objectives identified, only the above three objectives are above the average percentage of member responses.

- The order of priority among the different objectives of the Mahila Mandals as seen in their overall ranking shows that the Mahila Mandals are development oriented through self-help and collective action. They show importance to awareness education and empowerment, and to enlarging the members’ perspective. They have only secondary importance to economic development of women through external assistance such as the NGO and the government.

- Despite a vast majority of the Mahila Mandals being Dalit Mahila Mandals, the need for Dalit protection as a group objective is very low. This shows an absence of active caste discrimination or atrocities in this area.

- Ideological objectives as opposed to material objectives have the majority percentage of the members’ endorsements as the objectives of their Mahila Mandals. These ideological objectives, the results of awareness education by the NGOs have contributed to the sustainment of these groups.

- There is a vast lack of conformity among the members on what the objectives of the Mahila Mandals are. The percentage of conformity is low. In the absence of unity in perception, it may be concluded that the overall goal of
social and economic development of women had generally unified and motivated these women.

B) The Group Objectives as Mentioned by the PLRPs

The following are the prime group objectives as identified by the PLRPs listed here in the order of priority.

1. Development of village
2. Self-help and small savings
3. Awareness education and empowerment
4. Women’s development, their rights and security
5. Assistance from Government and NGO

The priorities listed from the responses of the PLRPs appear to be those appealing to the individual interests of the members. After the development of village, it is small savings that give immediate and continuous benefit to the members. Also, the PLRPs have given importance to the procuring of financial assistance to the members from the Government and the NGOs, but did not mind whether it was used to advance the economic development of the members or not.

The PLRPs have higher agreement than the members have in the perception of the objectives along with the group as a whole. The extent of PLRPs’ agreement is just at mid-level. With the degree of agreement at mid-level it is still inadequate for the PLRPs who need to direct the group activities and to motivate the members using the objectives. Apparently the PLRPs have used the objectives of women development and the immediate purposes of the groups to motivate the members.

Individuals’ Purposes

A) Member-Respondents’ Purposes for Joining the Mahila Mandals

The following are the prime purposes listed in the order of priority. In the list of purposes, only the following five purposes are above the average percentage of responses.

1. Self-help and small savings
2. Members’ economic development
3. To learn several matters and to get exposure to outside world
4. Development of village
5. Collective action and unity
These purposes show that the members had decided to join the Mahila Mandals primarily moved by what they individually could get out of the Mahila Mandals. Only secondarily they have been motivated by the considerations of women's solidarity and benefits to community.

B) PLRPs' Purposes for Joining the Mahila Mandals

The following are the first four purposes listed in the order of priority. In the list of purposes, only the following four purposes are above the average percentage of responses.

1. Women's development, their rights and security
2. Development of village
3. Awareness education and empowerment
4. Self-help and small savings

The PLRPs, therefore, had primarily development intentions as their original purposes for joining the Mahila Mandals. Their purposes were altruistic in nature. These attitudes of the PLRPs were the result of the orientation from the NGOs during their initial contacts with the NGOs.

Fulfilment of Purposes

A) Fulfilment of Members' Purposes

These Mahila Mandals have fulfilled the members' objectives in a vast majority percentage of the instances. To a sizable percentage of these members, the extent of fulfilment was equal to their expectation. Also to a sizable percentage of the members but a little less than the above, the extent of fulfilment was more than their expectation. Only a small percentage had the realization of their purposes at levels less than they had expected. On the whole, in a vast majority percentage of the instances, these Mahila Mandals had been relevant to the members by fulfilling the individuals' needs according to their expectations.

B) Fulfilment of PLRPs' Purposes

Nearly all the PLRPs found that their purposes for joining the Mahila Mandals had been fulfilled. To a sizable percentage of the PLRPs, the extent of fulfilment was either more or equal to their expectations. Only a small percentage of the PLRPs felt that the extent of fulfilment was less than their expectation.
Since the purposes of the PLRPs were none other than the objectives of women's movement, it may be concluded that the groups were successful in realizing the objectives of women's development. A general conclusion would be that these Mahila Mandals were effective in achieving the groups' as well as the individual members' objectives. This became possible also because both the sets of objectives were complementary.

**Continuing Membership**

A) Reasons for Members Continuing Membership

The range of purposes the members originally had for joining the Mahila Mandals continued to remain the same over the years except one addition that is determination to continue. Of these the first five purposes have retained their priorities. But the purpose namely members' economic development has now moved to the first place from its original second place. The current purposes are members' economic development, self-help and small savings, to know several matters and to get exposure to the outside world, development of village, collective action and unity. But only the first four purposes have percentages of responses above the average.

There is a gaining of importance for the purpose women's development, their rights and security that has secured the sixth place followed by the purpose determination to continue which was not there among the original purposes. But both are below average in percentage. Therefore the awareness education and empowerment, and experiential learning had only a marginal influence over the change in the members' personal purposes from the one they had for joining the Mahila Mandal to the ones they had for continuing to be a member now in the same Mahila Mandal.

The underlying thoughts governing both the categories of groups' objectives, and of current purposes are that the development of women and of the village is to be promoted through the collective action of the Mahila Mandals using their own resources. Awareness, knowledge and development of skills among the members need to be acquired since these facilitate this process. But the members' primary objectives for continuing in the Mahila Mandals are
focussed on their economic development through self-help measures and experiential knowledge. The importance to development of village comes only after the members' own economic development.

**B) PLRP's Reasons for Continuing Membership**

The four current purposes of the PLRPs that are above the average percentage of responses are the following listed according to their order of priority: Development of village, women's development, their rights and security, personal development, collective action and unity. The ultimate objective namely the development of women and of village remains as the important current purposes of the PLRPs as in their original purposes. But among the current purposes, development of village has taken precedence over women's development, their rights and security. The differences between the original and the current purposes of the PLRPs for being a member in the Mahila Mandals are in the means of securing this development. While awareness and empowerment, self-help and small savings were earlier emphasized, among the current purposes these two purposes are reduced in importance, and collective action and unity has gained importance. This shows that mobilization of women and team building were the strategies required currently. There is also a greater shift by the PLRPs towards the considerations of their own benefits, personal development, status, and leadership position. Such considerations of personal growth and ambitions among the leaders may be legitimate so long as they do not take precedence over the objectives of the Mahila Mandals.

**PARTICIPATION AND SOLIDARITY**

**MEETINGS OF THE MAHILA MANDAL MEMBERS**

**Number of Meetings**

The majority of the Mahila Mandals had a minimum of one or more meetings a month. The characteristics of these Mahila Mandals were that they had several issues for discussion during the meetings particularly those that related to their small savings and credit programmes. Besides this, these Mahila Mandals functioned without interruption. The average number of meetings in a
month for the twenty-nine Mahila Mandals during the sustainment period was 1.2 meetings or one meeting every twenty-five days.

**Level of Attendance at Meetings**

The majority of the groups, according to the respondents, had attendance in meetings on an average between 75 and 100 percent. According to the data collected for the sustainment indicator namely attendance in meetings, the average attendance for the twenty-nine Mahila Mandals during the sustainment period was 73.3 percent. Two factors that had adversely affected higher attendance were diversity in the nature of employment of the members, and the absence of personal responsibility. These factors were seen in all the Mahila Mandals with poor attendance, though they formed a small percentage of the Mahila Mandals.

**Reasons for Absence**

In a majority of the instances, the reason for absence was that the members had gone on visit to other villages. All the reasons mentioned by the members for being absent were justifiable except in a very small percentage of the responses according to which these few members were not interested in attending the meetings.

**Reasons for Attending the Meetings**

The major consideration for attending the meetings was to hear what was being discussed. This received a sizable percentage of the responses. Only about one sixth of the respondents went to the meetings to participate in the discussions. This is a small percentage of the responses. This makes one to conclude that the process of decision-making had the involvement only of a few members who were dominant. The interaction had been confined to a smaller number of members and the group decision was without the active participation of the majority of the members. Others had conceded to such decisions and this was what is called a "bandwagon" effect according to the theory of social facilitation. The considerations such as avoiding punishment, compulsion and fear of office-bearers, though had a very low percentage of the responses, were only from the members in the category of groups with high level of attendance in
the meetings as against middle, low or poor level of attendance. The leaders had exercised here their coercive and legitimate powers to influence the members' attendance in the meetings.

**Speaking at the Meetings**

The members of the Mahila Mandals, who spoke either rarely or never, when put together, constitute a majority. The rest, a sizable percentage of the members spoke frequently and sometimes during the meetings. Wherever the PLRP s have encouraged the group members to speak in the meetings, there is an increase in the number of persons speaking in the meetings, which is statistically significant according to a chi-square test. The following are the results of correlation analyses. The higher the education of the members, the higher has been the frequencies of speaking in the meetings. But as the members advanced in age, they tended to talk rarely. New members talked rarely. But senior members almost equally spoke either frequently or never.

**Leader Behaviours Influencing Attendance in Meetings**

**A) Behaviours Identified by the Members**

According to the results of the t statistic, personal responsibility has a significant influence over the attendance score. Only when this disposition of the members is present, the leader behaviour of punishing has statistically significant influence over the attendance score. Personal responsibility is what, according to a sizable percentage of the member-respondents, influences them the most to attend the meetings. This finding is also corroborated by the analysis of the ratios of the members' responses. That is, the leader behaviour of punishing the absentees along with the members' sense of responsibility has resulted in the high level of attendance in the group meetings as against the middle and low levels of attendance.

**B) Behaviours Identified by the PLRP s**

According to the results of the analysis of the PLRP s' response scores, the significant leader behaviour that influences the high attendance in the meetings as against middle and low attendance is the action taken on the members who absent themselves frequently from the meetings. The action taken
consists of imposing fine, suspension or cancellation of membership. Also, encouraging the members to talk and facilitating discussions by the PLRPs during the meetings have helped better attendance.

Putting together the responses of the members and the PLRPs, the significant leader behaviour that ensures high level of attendance in the meetings is punishment for absence like imposition of fine or suspension or removal from membership for consistently being absent. The sense of responsibility the members had in attending the meetings was also responsible in determining the level of attendance. Also the leaders in all the three categories of groups with low, middle, and high attendance have given adequate importance to inform the members of the meetings and to advise them to attend the meetings.

The first-degree follow-up behaviours are asking for reasons, issuing warnings, and taking simple remedial measures. These have higher percentage of responses both in the member as well as in the PLRP interviews compared with the percentages of the second-degree follow-up behaviour, that is taking punitive action. It, therefore, appears that among the groups that had some follow-up, majority of the groups did not use the second-degree follow-up. In ten out of eleven PLRPs who resorted to this second degree were from Dalit groups. They consist of a sizable percentage of the Dalit groups in this study.

PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTION FEES

Percentage of Total Payment

A vast majority of the Mahila Mandals received 75-100 percent of the subscription payments.

Percentage of On-date Payment

A vast majority of the respondents paid the subscription 76-100 percent of the times on the date fixed for payment.

Reasons for Delay

The major reason for the small percentage of the respondents that did not pay the subscription on the fixed date was that they did not have any earning. This reason has a vast majority percentage of the responses.
Reasons for Payment

A majority of the respondents paid the subscription for the reason of paying for the expenses of the Mahila Mandals.

In the category of Mahila Mandals with scores above the average of subscription payment scores, the primary considerations of the members in paying the subscription fees are related to the sense of belonging to the group, commitment, and responsibility of the members towards the growth of the group. In contrast, in the category of groups with below the average score of subscription payment, the considerations of members were those applicable to the purpose for which the subscription money was put into use, that was to meet the expenses of the group. Besides, fears of criticism and punishment also had their influence on the minds of these members. All these considerations that have been mentioned in this paragraph had ratios above the average of response ratios.

Leader Behaviours that Influenced the Payment of Subscription

A) Behaviours Identified by the Members

The most effective leader behaviours, according to the member respondents, that ensured high level of payment of subscription as against middle and low levels of payment are the following: Explaining the purpose of payment, following up the defaulters and taking punitive actions whenever necessary. These leader behaviours have received scores that are above the average of ratios of member responses. This is so only in those Mahila Mandals with high level of payment of subscriptions. The members of such Mahila Mandals also have an average level of personal responsibility in making the payments.

B) Behaviours Identified by the PLRPs

Among the leader behaviours identified by the PLRPs, the significant leader behaviours according to t statistic are reminding members and monitoring payment. The following leader behaviours with scores above the average scores of responses have influenced the members towards high payment of subscription as against middle and low level of payment. The behaviours are reminding
payment, explaining purpose, the follow up behaviour of monitoring payment and imposition of fine or removal from membership.

Putting together the responses of the members and the PLRPs, it could be concluded that the leader behaviours of reminding the members to pay their subscriptions and explaining to them the purpose of subscription influenced the members towards making prompt payments of subscriptions. Besides, the PLRPs had adequate follow-up on those who were not regular in payment. They monitored the payment by questioning the defaulters for the reasons. This mostly had the desired result with the defaulters remitting the subscription money. In extreme instances of consistent default, the PLRPs had to resort to punitive actions like imposing fine or canceling the membership. The sense of personal responsibility of the members facilitated this payment.

PARTICIPATION IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MAHILA MANDALS

Respondents' Level of Participation in the Activities of the Mahila Mandals

In terms of number and intensity, the participation of a majority of the members in the activities of the Mahila Mandals is high as against average and low. This high level of participation, besides contributing to the sustainment of these Mahila Mandals, remains a characteristic of such surviving Mahila Mandals.

Reasons for Participation

For their participation in the activities, a majority of the respondents had the reason of helping the Mahila Mandals achieve their objectives. All the reasons such as achieving groups' objectives, conformity with others, learning, demonstration of unity and solidarity, duty or obligation and being an example to others are all reasons of high order. They all connote the high level of members' involvement in their groups and their sense of responsibility. The last reason, that is compulsion from leader or members is the only reason of low order. This reason had very small percentage of responses.

The members of those Mahila Mandals that had below average participation score had group-centered reasons such as achieving groups'
objectives, for participating in the Mahila Mandals' activities. In contrast, the members in those groups with above average participation score had some of the reasons self-centered ones like conforming with others, usefulness of savings to oneself, learning etc. All these reasons had scores above the average of response ratios.

**Reasons for non-Participation**

A vast majority percentage of the responses on the reasons for absence relate together to domestic, health, and employment contingencies that are justifiable reasons for absence.

**Leader Behaviours that Influenced Participation in the Group Activities**

**A) Behaviours Identified by the Members**

According to the member-respondents, the significant leader behaviours that influenced them to participate in the activities of the Mahila Mandals are the following: Informing the members of the activity and requesting their participation, guiding and advising them in the savings programme, and follow-up on the absentees. These leader behaviours lead the participation score of the Mahila Mandals above the average of participation scores. Besides these leader behaviours, the members’ sense of personal responsibility also contributed to the participation. These leader behaviours and the disposition of the members with personal responsibility had scores above the average of ratios of responses.

The other leader behaviours namely encouraging and motivating, explaining purpose, personal involvement, compulsion and members' reciprocity have scores above the average of ratios of responses in the Mahila Mandals with participation score below the average of participation scores. These behaviours had created in the minds of the members of these Mahila Mandals the need to achieve groups' objectives with their participation, the dominant reason of these members for participation in the activities. But these leader behaviours did not make the participation scores of these Mahila Mandals move to the average level or above.
B) Behaviour Identified by the PLRPs

All the leader behaviours identified by the PLRPs, except two behaviours, have response scores above the average and have led to participation score above the average scores of member participation in the Mahila Mandals' activities. The significant leader behaviours are explaining the purpose of the activity, requesting personally to attend, attending to the needs of the members, insisting on team approach, questioning when absent, and involving oneself personally. The two behaviours that are exceptions namely motivating and encouraging, imposing fine are the only two leader behaviours with scores above the average response score in those Mahila Mandals with participation score below the average of participation scores.

These influencing behaviours of the leaders are spread over the three phases of an activity of the Mahila Mandal - before, during, and after. The influencing behaviours are dominant before the activity having a vast majority percentage of the responses. During the course of the activity its extent covers only a small percentage of the responses. The percentage is very small after the activity. Since the participation of the members in the activities of the Mahila Mandals was high, there has been very little need for punitive action.

Putting together the responses of the members and the PLRPs, the commonly identified significant leader behaviours are informing the members of the activity and requesting their participation, and following up the participation by questioning the absentees.

RESPONDENTS' SENSE OF SOLIDARITY

Level of Respondents' Interaction in the Mahila Mandals
The respondents had casual interaction with a vast majority of the fellow members. The percentage of members with whom the respondents had close relationship was small. This might be due to the limited opportunity the members had to interact closely among themselves. The members did not interact at all only with a very small percentage of members. Almost in all the instances the reasons for avoiding interaction were due to reasons extraneous to the Mahila
Mandals. It may be concluded that for the sustainment of the Mahila Mandals the members should interact at least casually with most of the members and reduce the incidences of avoiding interaction.

Subgroups

There was no subgroup in the Mahila Mandals evidently at least for a long duration like a year.

Respondents' Reaction to Assumed Dropouts

A majority of the respondents was inclined to react rationally to the hypothetical situation of a member leaving the group. They would ask for the reasons for leaving and advise the members to stay back in the group. As a disincentive, some of them might put conditions on the repayment of the money paid by the members to the Mahila Mandals. The advice consisted of the gains that would accrue to the member for continuing the membership and the losses the member would incur for leaving the Mahila Mandal. These women must have learnt this manner of rationally looking at a problem from their group experience. It is seen from the different types of reactions within the same Mahila Mandals the nature of their different reactions were mostly individual based rather than group based. But the situations in the groups possibly had a role in determining the nature of individuals' reactions. On the emotional side, only a small percentage of respondents said that they would feel sad about it.

Avoiding Members due to Conflicts

The instances of members avoiding fellow members due to intra group conflicts are of very small percentage. Members have resisted being swayed by differences of opinion. This is a result of social learning taking place in the Mahila Mandals. It is concluded from the several remarks of the respondents during the interviews that the members on the whole and the PLRPs in particular were conscious of the need for such a healthy atmosphere in the Mahila Mandals for its sustainment.

Helping Fellow Members

Only a small percentage of the respondents helped others in need. The help in a vast majority of the instances was in the form of lending personal
money to others in need. Among the recipients of this help, a small percentage was within the category of closely interacted with. Only a very small percentage was within the category of casually interacted with. This situation does not in any way connote that the members were not inclined to help fellow members. There is likelihood that others were willing to help fellow members but they did not have any means to do that. The respondents took the word ‘help’ to mean lending or deferring money to others in need.

**Leader Behaviours that Influenced Solidarity among the Members**

**A) Behaviours Identified by the Members**

The significant leader behaviour influencing the solidarity among the members was the friendly disposition of the members accompanied with the appropriate advice from the PLRPs. This was found to be so among the Mahila Mandals that had scores above the average of solidarity scores. This combination of member disposition and leader behaviour has scores above the average of ratios of responses. Ultimately this has led to greater member continuity in the Mahila Mandals and to increasing the number of committed members in them.

**B) Behaviours Identified by the PLRPs**

According to the PLRPs, the significant leader behaviours that promoted solidarity among the members were advising, ensuring members show mutual respect, setting personal example and showing commitment. These behaviours have scores above the average of response scores. These are found to be so in the Mahila Mandals that had scores in solidarity above the average of scores in solidarity.

Putting together the responses of the members and the PLRPs, the significant leader behaviour promoting solidarity is advising members on the need to show a sense of togetherness. Personal responsibility among the members predisposes them to follow what the leaders advise them on this matter.
C) Behaviours Identified by the PLRPs to Prevent/Resolve Conflicts

According to the majority of the PLRP response scores the PLRPs have done more to resolve conflicts than to prevent their occurrences. The leader behaviours that have significantly contributed to a high level of solidarity in the Mahila Mandals are the following: Mediating and intervening, reminding the members of the status, honour, and objectives of the Mahila Mandals. These behaviours had contributed above the average level to the sustainment indicators of member continuity and the number of committed members. These two leader behaviours have significant t statistic and scores above the average of response scores in those Mahila Mandals that have solidarity scores above the average of solidarity scores. Since the PLRPs have used the objectives of the Mahila Mandals to prevent or to resolve conflicts there arises a need for having clarity over the objectives. A uniform understanding of these objectives by all the members assumes importance in this context.

The PLRPs in the category of Mahila Mandals with scores above the average of solidarity scores have taken high level of initiative to prevent and resolve conflicts. This is seen from the scores above the average of response scores nearly in all the leader behaviours identified by the PLRPs. Whereas in the set of groups with scores below the average of solidity scores, the PLRPs did not take much personal initiatives but allowed the conflicts to get solved by themselves or by the group or used softer behaviours like advising and being accommodative. Their style of leadership functioning in dealing with conflicts may be described as laissez-faire style of leadership.

LEADERSHIP ROLES AND GROUP SUSTAINMENT

Leader Behaviours that Influenced Participation in General

The leader behaviours that have significantly influenced the participation of the members in general leading to scores above the average in sustainment scores are the following: Motivating and encouraging, being kind and friendly, and not getting angry, but being patient. These three leader behaviours have significant t statistic when statistically analyzed along with member disposition of
cooperation, loyalty and trust in their leaders. This member disposition also has significant t statistic. These leader behaviours and the disposition of the members also get scores above the average of ratios of responses in those Mahila Mandals with sustainment scores above the average of sustainment scores. The other behaviours explaining Mahila Mandals' objectives, showing personal example and commitment with scores above the average of ratios of responses have also secondarily influenced the participation. It is necessary first to develop this member disposition of cooperation, loyalty and trust among the members. That would make these leader behaviours more effective in influencing the general participation of the members in the Mahila Mandals and thereby lead to their sustainment.

**Leader Behaviour that Influenced Solidarity in General**

The significant leader behaviour that has promoted solidarity among the members leading to scores above the average of sustainment scores is advising and guiding the members. Among the three categories of leader behaviours namely leader roles, supportive behaviours and personal conduct, those behaviours under the category of leader roles have contributed to fostering of solidarity. The behaviours are advising and guiding the members, cooperation between the members and the leaders, emphasizing team and unity, solving the problems of the members. These behaviours together have contributed to fostering of solidarity and thus leading to scores above the average of sustainment scores. Compared with the behaviours of leader roles, those of the supportive behaviours and of personal conduct have had lesser influence on the totals of the sustainment indicators.

**Leadership Roles**

1. The presidents and the ex-presidents are the dominant leadership role players. The presidents played all the roles and the ex-presidents almost all the roles at levels above the average of total leadership role-play ratios. Only these two played significantly the role of setting goals and objectives of the Mahila Mandals.
2. The role of promoting participation was the priority role for all the categories of members namely the presidents, the office-bearers, the ex-presidents, and the ordinary members. Each of these categories played this role at levels above their category average of ratios. Their involvement in it was also significant except for the ordinary members who played this role below the average of total leadership role-play ratios.

3. Only the members have often done monitoring and evaluating the progress and the activities of the Mahila Mandals. Though the presidents also contributed to it at levels above the average of total ratios, it was not their priority role. This means that the presidents played this role at levels below their category average of ratios.

4. Similarly, only the ordinary members have been inclined towards playing the supportive role being one of their priority roles. But they played it below the average of total ratios. The presidents and the ex-presidents were other major contributors playing this role above the average of total ratios. But it was not their priority role among their respective categories of roles.

5. Though the presidents showed respect and consideration in their dealings with the fellow members, they played only an average role in promoting directly the self-respect and dignity of others. That is, they played the supportive role just at the average of total ratios. This might have been due to the role conflict the presidents faced. There were times when they needed to be firm and strict to enforce observance of rules and to take follow-up actions in cases of default. This must have contributed to their inability to play directly the supportive role though they might not have been disrespectful towards the members.

6. The presidents, despite holding the topmost position in the Mahila Mandals did not comparatively have much to do with resolving conflicts. It was not their priority role played at levels below the category average of ratios. Their intervention in this has been just at the average of total ratios. During the PLRP interviews the president-respondents remarked that they did not interfere with the conflicts within the Mahila Mandals immediately. They left
them to the other members to solve them initially. Only when these disputes got protracted, the presidents intervened to put an end to them.

7. With the ordinary members acting on all the roles at levels below the average of total ratios, these Mahila Mandals could be considered to be leader (office-bearers) centred groups.

**Indicators of Sustainment**

- The number of ordinary members that joins the set of role players determines the differences in the ratio of leadership players. The office-bearers constitute the regular set of leadership role players. In a vast percentage of the Mahila Mandals, all the office-bearers in the group played the different leadership roles.

- The number of role players from the ordinary members ranges between one to six persons. This range does not bear any relationship to the number of members in the group. Therefore the relationship between the ratio of ordinary members playing leadership roles and the number of members is in inverse proportion.

- The average percentage of the ordinary members participating in role acting is 11.0 percent for the twenty-eight Mahila Mandals. This average percentage is maintained when the number of members in a group is twenty-five.

- The ratios of the number of leadership role players and the scores of the eight sustainment indicators have direct relationship provided no other factors influence, or no extraordinary happenings within the group take place overtaking the influence exerted by the leadership role actors.

- Highly dynamic and proactive PLRPs exert more positive influence on the sustainment indicators raising it above the average of total sustainment scores. This is so even if the ratios of the leadership role-play are below the average of total ratios. Therefore, it can be concluded that the quality of PLRPs’ leadership and not the number of individuals is the most important factor that contributes to the output in the sustainment indicators.
• The PLRPs are more effective in their leadership role-play when they primarily restrict their roles to the setting of goals and objectives, promotion of participation, decision-making, and team building. This is found so in the Mahila Mandals with sustainment scores at levels above the average score of sustainment. The PLRPs have been ineffective when they had spread the leadership role playing among many or all of the roles. This is found so in the Mahila Mandals with sustainment scores below the average of total sustainment scores.

• Consistent collective actions either repeated or continued over a period of time, with or without specific issues to be tackled, tend to create committed members. Among a sizable percentage of Mahila Mandals that had the scores of committed members above the average level, all had consistent collective action in their groups. The minimum extent of the duration of such collective activity required to create a result may depend upon the intensity or the urgency of the collective activity and the level of involvement or the morale of the members.

• In the Mahila Mandals with sustainment scores below the average of sustainment indicator total scores, the most common sustainment indicators with scores below the average of the respective indicator's score are subscription payment, participation in group activities, member continuity and committed members.

Factors of Sustainment

• The core groups consisting of office-bearers with or without the other ordinary members are the most important factor of sustainment of the Mahila Mandals. The core group factor has scored 'much' as against 'average' and 'a little' as reasons for the groups' sustainment in a vast majority of the Mahila Mandals.

• This sustainment factor core group has received just majority of the total response score while all the other factors received either small or very small percentages of the responses. The core groups tend to lose their importance in sustaining the group, if the sustainment of a group is shared by other
causative factors. In a vast majority percentage of such instances the core group gets either a lower rank in the same ‘much’ scale or pushed to the next lower scale ‘average’.

- A core group consisting of office-bearers and ordinary members is the most stable factor when compared with the other sustainment factors like savings programme, single dominant leaders or core groups only with office-bearers. When the latter set of factors get affected adversely, the Mahila Mandals would run the risk of getting dissipated.

- In a sizable percentage of the instances, the core group worked for the sustainment of their Mahila Mandals with the motivation of having one Mahila Mandal for women’s development. The objectives of the Mahila Mandals and those of the core group for sustaining the Mahila Mandals coincided only in a lesser percentage of the cases. Some incident that takes place in the Mahila Mandals may even determine the motivation of the core groups in ways that are totally dissimilar to the groups’ objective or to the motive of just having a Mahila Mandal. Therefore the stated objectives of the Mahila Mandals may not always motivate the core group in promoting the sustainment of their Mahila Mandals.

- The federations of Mahila Mandals had no influence whatsoever on the sustainment of the Mahila Mandals. Other factors that were external to the Mahila Mandals such as the supports from NGO or the local health or voluntary worker though had an influence over the sustainment, were dispensable according to the members.

- The members who show commitment to their Mahila Mandals and the members of the core groups are the same in a majority of the instances.

**SUGGESTIONS**

1. The initial contact persons play a major role in the sustainment of the Mahila Mandals with all of them elected to hold different offices. Therefore, it is essential that the promoters of the Mahila Mandals should pay adequate attention to select a person as a contact person at least with a minimum of
leadership qualities. Also very important is the commitment and dedication of
the person towards the causes of women development. This is the most
underlying quality required of the principal leader.

2. The initial purposes of the Mahila Mandals should be those that are
meaningful in the lives of the target group. The purposes should be within the
competence of the members to achieve the results when these purposes are
translated into action. For, initial successes build up the confidence of the
members to go forward. On the other hand initial failures are bound to
dampen and discourage the spirit of the members. The NGOs and the
animators have the responsibility of identifying and proposing the correct
initial purposes. Disappointment over the accomplishment of the Mahila
Mandals had been one of the causes of members leaving the groups. This is
one of the major reasons with a sizable percentage of the instances.

3. Group activities that are potentially controversial like prevention of sale of
liquor need a lot of orientation and motivation on the part of the members
before beginning them. Members would require conviction, determination,
and perseverance before they plunge into action. Appropriate leadership
intervention might be required at crisis situations faced by the members in the
course of such activities. Otherwise the section of the members who are not
prepared to face the difficult situations might leave the group. This is one of
the major reasons for dropout with a sizable percentage of the instances.

4. There is need for stronger awareness education in the early part of the
primary growth period. This helps in the creation of effective groups. Member
dropouts characterize the lack of awareness education.

5. In a majority of the instances no specific criteria had been used to decide on
the time and the manner of NGO withdrawal. The NGOs and the Mahila
Mandals together establishing specific criteria and a time frame for the
withdrawal of NGO support would be helpful to the members of the Mahila
Mandals to be prepared for it. The NGOs would be able to identify the
deficiencies in the group as against the established yardstick and take
appropriate remedial measures. In this manner, the Mahila Mandals would
also have a part in the withdrawal process. Otherwise it might be a one-way exercise involving only the NGO.

6. All Mahila Mandals could become part of federation so that no group functions in isolation. The Mahila Mandals when federated would get more visibility for their work. Federations help in exchange of information, and cross-fertilization of ideas and actions. The information exchange helps the Mahila Mandals in learning strategies and acquiring skills.

7. The extent of members' correct knowledge of the objectives of the Mahila Mandals is of small percentage as found in this study. There is a need for the Mahila Mandal members to deliberate among themselves and arrive at definite goals and objectives of their group. All the members should be made aware of the exact goals and objectives of their groups. Such common understanding of the goals and objectives is necessary in view of the fact that the leaders make use of the goals and objectives of their Mahila Mandals to motivate the members towards greater participation and in resolving conflicts.

8. All the Mahila Mandals should collect periodic subscription fees from the members even at least a nominal amount. Paying a subscription is a two-way acknowledgement of one's membership on the part of the member paying it and of the group receiving it. The members need to be oriented that the primary consideration in paying the subscription is affirming one's membership. This consideration had a very small percentage of the total responses. But it had average of response ratios in the Mahila Mandals with scores above the average of subscription payment scores. This act of payment should be directed to cultivate among the members a sense of belonging to the Mahila Mandals.

9. Collective action help in the emergence of members committed to the objectives and ideals of the Mahila Mandals. A Mahila Mandal may look for opportunities in which collective action could possibly be promoted.

10. **Areas of Training**

   - An early training that is required particularly for the office-bearers even at the beginning of the primary growth period is on the resolution of conflicts
and promotion of solidarity. The inadequacy of this skill among the leaders has resulted in the majority of the Mahila Mandals losing members on account of conflicts caused by factors both internal and external.

• One of the roles of leadership is turning a crisis or a problematic situation into an opportunity for the advancement of the Mahila Mandals. This requires imagination and a conscious effort on the part of leaders. Appropriate trainings will equip them with adequate skills to play this role.

• The members of the Mahila Mandals require an orientation on leadership role playing because the involvement of the members in this is of small percentage at present. Many are not aware of this requirement and its usefulness to the effectiveness of the group. The role of monitoring and evaluating the progress of the group currently is one of the priority roles played by the members. But the total involvement in this role is below the average in the Mahila Mandals. This role should also be a topic of training.

• Mahila Mandals are groups that provide social education to the members. The emphasis, therefore, has to be on the process that is taking place. What is required is management of the process. It becomes the responsibility of the PLRP to manage this process. She needs to be trained to observe and manage the dynamics taking place in the group.

11. Suggestions for Future Study

• There is a need for studying the process of decision-making in Mahila Mandals. Since only a considerable percentage of the members speak either often or sometimes during discussions, does decision-making reflect the views only of this minority? How does a leader ensure the participation of members when decisions are influenced apparently only by a minority of members?

• The member respondents while identifying leader behaviours that influence their participation and solidarity spoke about their own personal responsibility and other dispositions like loyalty influencing them towards
participation and solidarity. These had significant influence leading to scores above the average scores in participation, solidarity and sustainment. What are the factors that cultivate and foster such personal dispositions among the members of Mahila Mandals?

• Another is the study of the pattern of interaction among the members of Mahila Mandals. A vast majority of the members were casually interacted with as against closely or never. What is the contribution of Mahila Mandals for emotional growth and fulfilment of emotional needs of members?

• Are there any subgroups in the Mahila Mandals? If yes, what are their objectives and reasons for existence? If no, what are the factors, responsible for the absence of subgroups? What is the extent of unity of purpose created by awareness education and by the objectives of Mahila Mandals in the minds of members and its impact on the existence of subgroups?

• The presidents have played the supportive role just at the level of average of total ratios. This role was not their priority role meaning that they played this below their category average ratio. Does playing supportive role cause any role conflict with other roles such as ensuring participation and enforcing observance of rules and regulations? If yes, then does this conflict inhibit them from playing this role much above the average of total ratios?

• There could be a study of the dynamics of core-group members responsible for sustainment of Mahila Mandals. What kinds of members constitute a core-group? What is the motivation found among these members to sustain Mahila Mandals? How do they exercise their influencing process among members? What is the relationship between core-group members and committed members? What are the forces that are at work in making a member part of a core-group?
• In the absence of a larger core-group, what is the extent to which the sustainment of a Mahila Mandal is at stake when programmes such as savings or a set of individual office-bearers are the only factors of that group's sustainment?
• What are the factors that foster and sustain commitment or motivation of Mahila Mandal leaders?
• Do the management practices of Dalit Mahila Mandal leaders reflect their past cultural and social experiences?
• Do the values, attitudes, levels of maturity and any other personality characteristic of the members of Mahila Mandals determine what kind and nature of leader behaviours become significantly important in influencing the members?