Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background of the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women, its Geographical and Gender Focus

Background of the Institute

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India established the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women, located in Indore, in 1985 with the overall objective of empowering rural and tribal women living in Madhya Pradesh. In 2001, it was registered as an independent NGO and renamed as the *Barli*[*] Development Institute for Rural Women.

The programmes offered at the Institute are residential and entirely free of cost. Since its establishment, the Institute has trained more than 1,700 young women who have returned to more than 300 villages as agents for social change in their communities. They have been trained as community volunteers and have been empowered to help themselves and their families in terms of improvements in their health, education, and economic and social status.

In addition to this, the Institute has trained 116 couples in family life. This has contributed towards a decrease in family violence. The training of 500 family members has helped the graduates to be more effective as agents for social change. Training 216 members of 49 *Gram Panchayats* (village councils), including 43 women as office bearers, has assisted the communities in project areas by strengthening the local institutional support given to the graduates. The *Gram Panchayats* have utilized the graduates as their trained resources for environmental and poverty reduction programmes, immunization and literacy. In addition to other short-term workshops and training programmes for *Panchayats*, family members, couples, and self-help groups, the Institute also offers training to other NGOs and local government institutions.

[*] Barli is a common tribal female name in the area from where a vast majority of trainees of the Institute come from. The literal meaning is the central pillar of the tribal house that it supports. Conceptually we believe that women are the central pillars of society.

The Institute, with the help of UNICEF, has also conducted advanced training for 86 graduates to develop their capacity to carry out social and economic development initiatives at a grassroots level. A particular focus has been to improve attitudes towards female children, giving them equal opportunities in the collective activity of *Mahila Mandals*, a group of graduates committed to bringing social changes in their communities.

The majority of the trainees has been from the rural or tribal villages in the Jhabua, Dhar, Khargone and Dewas districts of the State of Madhya Pradesh in Central India. As of late, however, they have also come from other states, such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa.

After graduation, the training is carried to their families and, in turn, to their villages, where the Institute continues to support the Community Volunteers and Area Co-ordinators (now called Grassroots Trainers). All graduates receive the Institute' s monthly newsletter, Kokila, which disseminates information on a variety of subjects and serves to reinforce newly acquired skills, such as literacy. Institute staff regularly visit the villages promoting awareness and assisting the women to achieve their personal goals. International Literacy Day (September 8th), International Women' s Day (March 5th) and World Environment Day (June 5th) are often marked by programmes and celebrations organized by the graduates of the Institute in collaboration with grassroots Institutions like *Panchayats, Anganwadies* (Integrated Child Development Centres), schools, primary health centres, etc. These events attract large numbers of people to small villages from neighboring villages up to 100 kilometers away. Graduates of the Institute act as speakers, conveners, and organizers of conferences, meetings, fairs and discussions. These events serve to raise local awareness about important issues and create a sense of unity between the women whilst promoting them as positive leaders in their communities.

Gender focus

The Institute focuses on training women with the Bahá'í perspective of gender equality - where men and women are complimentary to each other and, like two

wings of a bird, they must fly together. It' s a worldwide reality that women have a relatively lower status than men.

Because of this the contribution of women to society as a whole is often overlooked. Women are the main influence on the next generation. The mother conceives and gives birth to the child. She is the first teacher, she gives physical attention to the child as well as spiritual education. She also ensures cultural and social upbringing for the child. She is the best supervisor. If she does not fulfill this role, then she is responsible for not only depriving the child of its development, but also of contributing towards the negative development of society. "Negative development" means the development of inhuman and anti-social behaviour, such as physical, social and economic exploitation of others. The role of the mother is so vital because she can guide and direct the child. The father also has these capabilities, but the mother, being closer to the child, is in a better position to contribute in the early developmental years since she instinctively knows more about how the child behaves. Hence, she can have a greater effect on the society, on the country, and on the world.

There have been significant improvements in the status of women in India during the past two decades. Gender gaps in education and health are narrowing and women are entering the labour force in large numbers, thus breaking the barriers that in the past have confined them to their homes, their reproductive functions and to self-employment. This progress is slow and unsteady.[1] No country in the world can claim to have fully achieved gender equality.

Two-thirds of the world' s 876 million illiterates are female. Of the world' s one billion poorest people, approximately 60 percent are women and girls. Women represent a growing proportion of people living with HIV/AIDS and, in countries with high HIV prevalence; young women and girls with little or no education are at much higher risk than men. More than one-quarter of all women have suffered

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[1] Zaoude, A., "The Hard Path to Gender Equality," *CHOICES, UNDP Magazine*, March 2002

from physical abuse in one form or another, and 80 percent of the victims of armed conflicts are women and children.[2]

On another front, there is the phenomenon of partiality in favour of market-driven growth that sees tradable goods and services taking precedence over social and human capital and unpaid work, which is mainly done by women. This bias excludes women' s economic and social contributions from the macro-economic framework. It assumes that women will continue to manage what can be termed as the ' care economy' , with or without support. Invisible and taken for granted, the majority of the world' s women continue to carry an unequal share of the burdens of poverty.

There are two approaches to achieving development that is truly gender-equal. One assumes that adjustments can be made to existing development policies and institutions by highlighting women' s concerns, such as bringing more women into the workforce and giving them greater representation in elected bodies. The other approach raises fundamental issues of equality, operates from the recognition that gender inequalities are embedded in institutional principles and processes that need to be transformed, not patched over.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is well positioned to mainstream gender-responsive policies and programmes throughout its six practice areas.[3] It draws on the wealth of experiences and knowledge from its network of national offices around the world to link theory with practice.[4] This Trust Fund focuses on four lines of service:[5]

- Strategies for poverty reduction, including ones that deal with macro economic issues and globalization;
- Statistics and indicators for tracking progress towards national targets, including a "gender-audit" of budgets;

[2] Ibid. p.1
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.

- Legal reforms and amelioration of institutional capacities to address women' s human rights, including land and property rights, legal protection and advocacy;
- Assessment of women' s vulnerability; measurement of the increasing feminization of poverty; the impact of the HIV/AIDS crisis, and ways of unleashing women' s creative responses, including their incorporation into peace building and conflict recovery efforts.[6]

Ultimately, "gender is a measure of sound governance because when development is not ' en-gendered' it can only be endangered."[7]

Gender focus from the Bahá'í perspective[8]

This Institute is inspired by the principles of the Bahá'í Faith. The Bahá'í Faith categorically upholds the principle of the equality of women and men in all areas of human endeavour. Its worldwide community is actively working for the emancipation of women, especially in those parts of the globe where the rights of women are traditionally and persistently denied. If families educate their daughters, both the family and the community will benefit. Baha' u' llah, the prophet founder of the Bahá'í Faith, has emphasized that mothers are the first educators of the next generation. In India a lot of pressure has always been put on female children to be prepared for a subservient role so that after marriage, they can serve their husband' s family as a good wife and daughter-in-law. Now the time has come for boys also to be prepared to become good husbands, good fathers and good sons-in-laws. This can help in addressing the gender issue in a positive way. In terms of violence against women, the problem cannot truly be resolved unless men are also taught to value women as equal partners. Men and women must work together to understand and eradicate violence against women. Their efforts must include educating both boys and girls on gender equality from the very

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] For more details on the Bahá' í perspective kindly refer toBahá' í International Community,*The Greatness which might be theirs: Reflections on the Agenda and Platform for Action for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women: Equality, Development and Peace,* New York: Bahá' í International Community, Office for the Advancement of Women, 1995

beginning. This is essential because both males and females are equally responsible for contributing towards positive changes in society. As it is rightly said, "The male and female are like the two wings of a bird and when both wings are reinforced with the same impulse the bird of humanity will be enabled to soar heaven-ward to the summit of progress." [9]

"There must be an equality of rights between men and women,"[10] for they are the two wings of the world of humanity. "If one wing remains incapable and defective, it will restrict the power of the other, and full flight will be impossible."[11]

Abdu' l-Bahá continues: "The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. Women and girls must be educated spiritually, emotionally and intellectually because a mother cannot pass on what she does not have. A child needs a nurturing environment and wise guidance in the first years of life in order to develop sound character and a well trained mind."[12]

Due to the importance of the role of women in society, women have been the primary focus of the Institute.

1.2. Problem Statement and Need

The rural communities in the area where the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women operates are considered to be among the most socially and economically deprived and backward in India. The tribal groups, making up a large proportion of the rural population in this area, have been particularly neglected, as is the case in India as a whole.[13] Rural Madhya Pradesh has one of the highest infant and child mortality rates of all the states of India. Women of this state have the least access to pre and postnatal care. It is a state with one of the highest rates of rural female illiteracy. It also has one of the largest numbers of people

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[9] Abdu' l-Baha, *Divine Philosophy,* as quoted in Ocean-Extensible Bahá' í Library, p.83
[10] Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace,* New Delhi: Bahá' í Publishing Trust, 1982, p.318
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid. p.168
[13] UNICEF, *Children and Women in India: A Situation Analysis, 1990,* UNICEF India Office, 1990

living below the poverty line, lacking access to transportation systems, communication facilities and other services.

The underlying causes perpetuating this cycle of poverty, illiteracy and disease can be attributed, among others, to attachment to those traditional attitudes and practices, which impede any attempt to initiate development activities. Women in particular have been repressed and exploited, hindering the development of their self-respect and self-confidence. This, in turn, keeps them from participating in and benefiting from development initiatives. Children are also deprived of healthcare services like lifesaving vaccines and oral rehydration therapy due to existing superstitions and traditional beliefs. Girls are not sent to school because of prejudiced attitudes towards the female sex.

Given these problems, and the fact that communities must take charge of their own development, any programme concerned with sustainable community development should not just focus on the immediate problems of the communities, but also on resolving the underlying causes as well, however difficult and long-term this may be. As well as teaching skills to women for income generation, educating them about immunization and the use of oral rehydration therapy, supporting literacy classes and encouraging parents to send their daughters to school, a programme must be designed to work with the beneficiaries towards the aim of promoting equality between men and women. This can be done by creating *awareness* of the necessity for unity, harmony and co-operation, preserving cultural identity, and instilling the conviction that children, particularly girls, must be educated.

To eliminate poverty and to facilitate meaningful societal transformation, a vast increase in the development of human capital must be given the highest priority. To realize this, it is necessary for attitudes towards the poor to change. To consider the materially poor the unfortunate victims of circumstances who need to be rescued by a steady flow of goods and services is not, as experience has shown, an adequate response to poverty. The masses of humanity, on whose participation the elimination of poverty depends, must become the main protagonists of programmes of social change.

A central challenge of all development undertakings, especially in rural areas, is to enable women to overcome the obstacles created by antiquated belief systems, the pressures of a labour intensive lifestyle, and ill-health and lack of resources. The key to such empowerment is education. Through education, people learn to develop their potential and to make meaningful contributions to their societies. In the case of women, education is of critical importance - being the first educators of their children, their education will affect the thoughts and behaviour of a new generation of people, both men and women. Given the foregoing factors, the author offers the programme of study used at the Institute as a field-tested model of development, which has proven effective in educating rural and tribal women.

Background of the trainees

In order to fully understand the work undertaken by the Institute, it is important to understand the background of the young women who attend the Institute as trainees. This section provides a brief overview of the way life is carried out in the villages in the Jhabua and Dhar districts of Madhya Pradesh, where a large number of the trainees come from. More details relating to this subject, including the way the Institute is dealing with them, how the training programme copes with and remedies these situations in practical ways are given in forthcoming chapters.

Regarding the family system, although tribal marriages are traditionally based on a mutual attraction between two young people (see Varma, 1978: 47-51 for a full description of the process and rituals that surround marriage), the growing influence of the Hindu tradition has meant that arranged marriages are becoming increasingly common, with parents having an expanding role in their children' s marriages. Tribals follow the practice of *bride value* in contrast / as opposed to practices of dowry in Hindu society at large.

The prevalence of alcohol in tribal culture is also an important factor in the household. Alcohol abuse has strong links with domestic violence. Alcohol is an integral part of the tribal lifestyle, playing an important role in rituals and religious practices, as well as providing a source of recreation. Because of this the

government is hesitant to interfere with what it regards as a cultural tradition (Spencer, Knowles and Costello, 1996). In addition to this, the number of crimes against women has risen dramatically in the past 20 years. Madhya Pradesh had the second highest number of crimes against women in 1995 (14.4%) while Maharashtra had 15.3% of the total.[14]

Despite numerous laws put in place to protect women, crimes are increasingly prevalent, as the legal procedures are too loose and incompatible with the social structure and the judicial procedure is inaccessible to the vast majority of women[15]. In 1996, there were 14,959 crimes against women reported in Madhya Pradesh, including 3,265 cases of rape and an astonishing 577 cases of dowry death[16]. The figures here are the cases that were reported, but it is well known that about 80% of crimes go undetected because the female victims have no access to legal help or information. If they make an effort to seek legal aid, they are discouraged from reporting crimes by other members of their community. Even if women manage to reach the police, corruption and sexism are barriers to the crime ever reaching the report stage.

Other impediments in the access to rights of women are the customary *unwritten* laws that predominate. These laws are all made and implemented by males because decision-making continues to be under their control. Authority lies with the village *'Patel'* (always a male) who inherits the position. This kind of gender-biased social structure makes women more vulnerable to social and economic abuse and prevents them from seeking justice. Almost 100% of cases relating to property, marriage, sexual abuse and family fights are processed through tribal *Panchayats* headed by a *Patel*. Polygamy and bigamy are also prevalent in these communities.

The Institute recognizes these issues but is also aware of its limitations. It would be unrealistic to imagine that each trainee would be able to convince her entire village that alcohol should be banned completely, or that training a group of

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[14] Kumari, R., "Message from the Director", *Violence Update,* Vol. 1. No. 4, June 1998, p.1
[15] Ahmad, J., "An Overview of Violence against Women in Madhya Pradesh", *Violence Update* Vol. 1, No. 4 June 1998, p.4
[16] Ibid. p.5

girls will stop the rise in rapes and abductions. However, at the Institute the trainees are able to gain a new perspective. They are made aware that many diseases can be prevented. They also learn that domestic and physical violence and economic, social, and gender discrimination are unjust and illegal and that legal action can be taken against these practices. This new knowledge gives them the power to try and encourage a small but significant change once they are back in their homes. In addition to this, educating girls so that they understand there are judicial channels for female victims means that more crimes will be reported, deterring would-be offenders in the future. More specifically, parts of the Institute' s curriculum teaches about the effects that alcohol and other intoxicants can have, and the family life skills courses encourage newly married couples to play an equal part in making the relationship work.

The staff at the Institute are aware of all the factors that influence their students' lives, because a number of them have first-hand experience, being tribal girls who have graduated from the Institute themselves. The Institute recognizes that it cannot change the social structures that exist in rural and tribal Indian communities overnight. What it is very successfully doing, however, is educating members of the communities who need guidance and encouragement to set up development processes not implemented by the government. These young women are trained in skills that they use and teach others to make hundreds of lives better in health, sanitation, diet, income and happiness. In this way the Institute is making changes where it counts. The results of the programme reveal that it is an effective and practical programme. This can be easily recognized through the stories of its graduates.

Policies on the empowerment of women

The Institute' s programmes are working within recent government and international policies that specifically focus on the empowerment of women. Deliberations at the fortieth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in 1996, resulted in the adoption of resolution 40/9. This resolution emphasized that the empowerment and autonomy of women, along with the

improvement of women' s social, economic and political status, are essential for the eradication of poverty. In 1997, the General Assembly, in its resolution 52/193, reaffirmed that *all governments* and the *United Nations system* should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into the planning and implementation of policies, strategies and programmes on poverty. [17]

With the impact of globalization, this now has a new urgency. The Economic and Social Council, by its decision 1998/298, decided to consider, at a high-level segment of its substantive session in 1999, the theme "the role of empowerment and work in poverty eradication: the *empowerment* and *advancement* of women". In its follow-up resolution, 2000/26, the Economic and Social Council reiterated the call for the international community to take consistent, coherent, coordinated and joint actions in support of national efforts to eradicate poverty, with particular attention paid to employment creation, and the empowerment and advancement of women. The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the UN General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century", was the document A/RES/S-23/3, in which governments were called on to strive to reduce the disproportionate presence of women living in poverty by implementing national poverty eradication programmes with a gender perspective focusing on the empowerment of women.[18]

As recognized by the General Assembly' s 23rd session, eradicating poverty through the empowerment of women is not possible without the universal recognition of the equality of women and men. Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women are "effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable."[19] Promoting gender equality starts with children. All children, whether boys or girls, urban or rural, must be given equal access to education. More than twenty years ago, in December 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

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[17] McGilligan, J. P., "Training and Resource Allocation as related to Women' s Poverty Alleviation", paper presented at Breakthrough Session on Poverty: NGO Consultation, 46th Session of Commission on Status of Women, New York, March 3, 2002
[18] Ibid.
[19] United Nations, *Millennium Declaration,* New York, 2000, A/RES/55/2

against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN' s General Assembly. This clearly stated that all appropriate measures should be taken to "eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure their equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on basis of equality of men and women the same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to education and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training."[20] Entered into force as an International treaty in September 1981, CEDAW has now been ratified by 166 countries. In particular, Article 10 has recently been re-emphasized and promoted in UNESCO' s ' Passport to Equality[21].Areas of the Convention, which have particular relevance to the goals of the Institute, are, that women should have:

> Equal “access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women. The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;”[22]

Even though the essential assertion of equal opportunities for women and men has been ratified by the Constitution of India, CEDAW and UNESCO, equality will not happen automatically. Equality will not be achieved until women think of themselves as equal to men. It will not be realized until women become empowered individuals with the help of society as a whole. Applicable and relevant national and state policies must be implemented to enable the empowerment of women.

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[20] United Nations, CEDAW, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,* November 1989, Article 10 (a)
[21] UNESCO, *Passport to Equality,* May 2001, pp.15-17
[22] Ibid. United Nations, CEDAW, Article 10 (e), Article 10 (f)

1.3. Period of Study (1994-1997)

The period of 1994 -1997 was chosen for this study as it refers to a complete project that the author designed, planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated. The author served in the capacity of director of the institute and conducted a baseline survey of the area and the target group before starting the project, while the project was ongoing and after the project was over. Furthermore, the author was implementing the training programme for women, and researching the work at all levels; at the campus, in the families, and among the communities. Financial support for the project was given jointly by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the Bahá'í Communities of Sweden and India. The hands-on experience of the author as a researcher and director of the project was the main reason for choosing this period.

1.4. What the Study is Designed to Demonstrate

The study is designed to demonstrate that by training women as human resources, they will develop themselves, as well as work as agents of social change to transfer their knowledge and skills to their families as well as other community members. This will allow them to initiate community development activities on their own. This two-phased process of development will demonstrate the effectiveness of the Institute's model of sustainable community development through training and empowering rural and tribal women.

In a larger context, it will demonstrate that systematically developed programmes can help overcome obstacles that have traditionally hindered the development of women, which in turn have hindered the development of all. This is possible through a value-aided curriculum that empowers women with an opportunity to reflect on the nature of their relationships with others and with their social institutions. The women are also educated on age-old caste, tribal and class prejudices, with an emphasis on principles of oneness of humanity, equality of women and men, respect for diversity, and service to the community. At the same time, they are encouraged to identify positive elements in their culture, which needs to be preserved and strengthened.

The study will also demonstrate that human capital can be augmented through a holistic approach to education. Each trainee takes courses in literacy, leadership training, tailoring, agriculture, artisan crafts-work, human rights awareness, science and technology, environmental awareness, self-esteem and personality development, citizenship, nutrition and health, and income-generating skills. Interwoven into the curriculum is an emphasis on indigenous arts, music and dance.

The thrust is that, empowered with training in such areas, the women return to their home villages and become "pillars" of their families and communities. They will be agents for changing the social and physical environment. They can indeed help to create a new atmosphere of mutual respect and unity in their communities, helping to displace caste prejudices in tribal communities notorious for their high crime rate and alcohol abuse.

1.4.1. Empowerment of Tribal and Rural Women as Individuals

Ever since Independence, the formal curriculums have led to "top-down" approaches to development. They have focused on benefiting the elite class and so called "higher caste" of society who rule India with their direct access to knowledge, information, political and social power, intellectual power and economic resources. This has happened at the cost of rural and tribal people who are socially and economically disadvantaged, alienating them from access to any of the above-mentioned areas of power. Because of this discriminated status, rural and tribal people have always been exploited by the vested interests in society. They have been exploited physically, mentally, socially, economically and environmentally. Financial aids, doles and subsidies have increased the corruption in these communities as the vested interests among the rulers, administrators and traders have diverted funds to their own accounts. This has not only widened the gap between the rich and the poor in tribal communities in particular, but in many other parts of the country as well. Due to shortages of rural work, unemployment and a lack of opportunities, tribal youth migrate to urban areas in search of employment. They cannot adjust to the urban life and get frustrated as they have

no skills, no choice of work and are compelled to live without dignity. This kind of social injustice and inequality has resulted from the curriculums of formal education, which have neglected the human basis. When the youth return to their villages, they find themselves alienated and unable to readjust to working on the land. Learning from the experiences of tribal youth, the Institute has ensured that the women are empowered as human resources for their own communities. They are taught to be proud of their land and capable of developing their environment and infrastructure. In this way they become more socially flexible and able to adjust to any changes that occur in their lives.

Committed to a "bottom-up" approach, training at BVIRW aims at empowering rural and tribal women as individuals. Trainees become aware and experience transformation when their capacity is developed to realize the importance of their inherent potentials and spiritual qualities like unity, trustworthiness, love, generosity, honesty and service, and learn that one has to develop oneself. They develop their potential and understanding of various concepts, scientific and social development issues relating to education, gender equality, health and the environment. Throughout the training, the trainees acquire knowledge, information, skills and abilities that prepare them for serving their communities. The instructional methodology at the Institute is designed to be appropriate to the participants' life-ecology, tailored with an indigenous perspective, focused on agriculture and related rural technology. Likewise the training programmes adopt and are adapted to the best agricultural practices. All this has resulted in improvements in the trainees' economic positions. With regard to environmental training, soil, water and waste management knowledge is suited to their lifestyles, so that whilst being educated they can maintain their traditional livelihoods. The training also integrates them into the national mainstream.

1.4.2. Individuals as Agents of Social Change

The existing social and administrative system has been keeping women away from participating in and benefiting from development work. A community as a whole reflects the attitude and perceptions of its individual members. When

individuals act for the benefit of the entire community, not only does the community prosper, but the individuals benefits also. A lack of foresight by individuals within a community can prevent possibilities for improving their own lives and those with vested interests. Seeking power and personal gain further suppresses the opportunities for the community as a whole to develop. As with individuals lacking foresight and the awareness of the possibilities for improving their own lives, so do communities tend to suffer from a lack of vision as how to move forward. Political and other vested interest groups and the individuals within them vie for economic, political and social power and prestige. Realization of the benefits, which to the individual will accrue when a community as a whole prospers, is lost because of the lack of creative vision and foresight.

Individual trainees are empowered as community volunteers with the moral and material capabilities to be agents for social change, who facilitate the process of creative and collective vision. They, in turn are motivated to change the attitude of their societies - starting with their own families - by sharing and transferring their knowledge. Hence community members will start participating in and benefiting from development programmes.

1.4.3. A Programme of Sustainable Community Development

It is widely accepted that communities must take charge of their own development. As already mentioned, any programme concerned with sustainable community development should not just focus on the immediate problems of the communities but also on resolving the underlying causes. No community can take charge of its own development without having the knowledge, skills, moral capabilities and a spirit of service and unity. No community development can be sustainable without the equal participation of women, which is the central focus of the Institute's programme. Women are the most valuable form of human capital in society. According to Agenda 21 of the Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro, 1992[23], improvement in the status of women is essential to sustainable development,

[23] Keating, M., *The Earth Summit's Agenda for Change: A plain language version of Agenda 21 and the other Rio Agreements,* The Centre for Our Common Future, April 1993

because women's participation is key to ensuring reproductive health, planning of family size, pre-natal care, educational and job opportunities - all factors strongly affecting a sustainable and healthy ecosystem. Agenda 21 goes on to assert that good health depends upon social, economic and spiritual development.[24] It is in this context that the Institute' s training demonstrates aprogramme of sustainable community development. ' Sustainability' means that, once empowered, there is an instinctive and natural process for women to pass down their knowledge, skills and experience to future generations.

1.5. Chapter Scheme

The entire thesis is written in 9 chapters in all.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study. It includes details about the background of the Institute, the problem statement and need, the period of study and what the study is designed to demonstrate. It also includes information on the empowerment of tribal and rural women as individuals and on individuals acting as agents for social change.

Chapter 2 discusses the research design, methodology and sample of the study. It contains a section with information on the research design and methodology, which includes objectives of the study, empirical research and quantitative and qualitative methods. Another section talks about data collection that focuses on sources of data and tools and techniques of data collection. It also has a section about monitoring and evaluation of the baseline study and indicators of change, which gives information about indicators and measurement tools, reflection, action and consultation, baseline survey and plan timetable, modifications and finalizing of the surveys and challenges faced while carrying out the baseline survey. The last section in this chapter describes the processing and analysis of the data collected.

Chapter 3 is a review of literature related to the topic of the study. This chapter includes sections on the development of models of women' s empowerment, human resource development and capacity building models, development

[24] Ibid. p.11

approaches among tribal and rural communities and sustainable community development.

Chapter 4 talks about the relevance of the study. It has sections discussing the problem statement and need, the status of women in Madhya Pradesh, the status of women in rural and tribal communities, the need for the study in Madhya Pradesh, the need for the study of tribal women in Jhabua and Dhar districts and the role of women in sustainable community development.

Chapter 5 is a description of the philosophy and a profile of the Institute. The first section in this chapter discusses the philosophy of the Institute in relation to consultation, the administrative system, participation, environmental conservation, self-service, self-discipline, and self-reliance. The second section of the chapter is a profile of the Institute, which describes its origin and growth, facilities, accreditation, collaborations, organizational structure, its learning environment, and recognition the Institute has received for its programmes and achievements.

Chapter 6 is about the training of rural and tribal women as human resources. The first part of the chapter has sections based on the selection of communities and the selection of women trainees. Another section discusses the training courses provided by the Institute, going into detail about the community volunteers programme, the area co-ordinators programme, and various family support activities. This is followed by a section which specifically outlines the areas covered by the curriculum. The chapter then discusses training methodology, going into training tools and techniques, post-training community activities, and advanced staff training. The last section is about follow-up and supporting activities carried out by the Institute.

Chapter 7 describes the research findings. The first section is about the impact of the training programme and includes sections on the overall project outputs and village wise data, the analysis of health indicators, the analysis of literacy indicators, the analysis of vocational skills indicators, the analysis of attitude indicators and the training of area co-ordinators. The last two sections focus on the interpretation and qualitative analysis of the findings.

Chapter 8 is a summary and conclusion of the study. It also includes what the author personally has learned from conducting the studies and the future potentials of the study.

Chapter 9 is a list of recommendations and suggestions for improvements to developmental models. These include recommendations from other organizations as well the author' s personal suggestions. These recommendations and suggestions cover all the areas focused on in the study.

Chapter 2: Research Design, Methodology and Sample

Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to outline the research design and methodology used to achieve the objectives of this study. This chapter also includes various tools and techniques used for collection and analysis of data, as well as indicators for monitoring and evaluating the project outcome.

2.1. Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This research design has been developed by the author based on 19 years of first hand experience working with more than 1700 trainees at the Institute and in the villages. There have been many opportunities to interact with the trainees, stay in their homes and participate in many community activities. These activities have included awareness camps and village-based training programmers for families and *Panchayats*. Familiarity and involvement with their lives and their communities has helped a great deal in establishing a rapport with the respondents and in building trust with them. Understanding their living conditions, needs, psyche, language and culture helped in bridging the gap between the author, as a researcher, and the local communities.

The strength of this hands-on experience provided a basis for the research structure that was designed in accordance with the curriculum and the following objectives.

2.1.1. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the research is to study the results of training women as human resources who can in turn work as agents of social change to transfer their knowledge and skills to their families and other community members.

The secondary objective is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Institute' s model of sustainable community development through training and empowerment of rural and tribal women.

Specific, measurable objectives of the research are:

- To study the changes that occurred in the trainees as a result of the training on the individual, family, and community levels;
- To observe whether positive changes are made in the trainees' abilities to practically apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills in income generating activities, literacy, health and personality development to the social and economic development of their communities;
- To study the changes in the trainees' perceptions of themselves and others, as well as their attitudes towards various social and economic issues, particularly from a gender perspective;
- To see whether systematically developed programmes can help overcome obstacles that have traditionally hindered the development of women.

2.1.2. Empirical Research

This research was done by adopting an empirical method to cover a period of three years, i.e., 1994 -1997. Though it is very difficult to measure all human behaviour through quantitative analysis, an effort has been made to formulate questions and use a variety of indicators to study the profile, level of knowledge, attitudes and practices of the trainees. Therefore, an attempt has been made to analyze the comparative data and information relating to the trainees' profiles, knowledge, attitudes and practices before and immediately after training, as well as after they have been home for a minimum of 6 months.

2.1.3. Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

In order to measure any changes, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used:

Quantitative method

In order to measure the quantitative changes in the trainees' profiles, knowledge, attitudes, practices and perceptions, indicators relating to literacy, health, income generation, and social issues were used. To compare these changes, a baseline survey was conducted at the beginning and after the completion of the project by interviewing the same persons and families. More details are given in the forthcoming paragraph of the same chapter.

Qualitative method

A qualitative method was used to ascertain the *quality* of changes. This included the success stories of the graduates and responses of family members, as well as feedback from local officials and grassroots representatives of the communities who witnessed these changes over time.

2.2. Data Collection

2.2.1. Sources

There were two main sources of data collection; primary and secondary.

Primary sources

Primary sources were the individual trainees, their family members and people in their communities. Firstly, selection of the *Communities* in the area was done and then a selection of the *Individuals* and their households. Details are given in the forthcoming paragraphs of the same chapter.

A pilot field-study was conducted in the districts of Dhar, Jhabua, Shajapur, Dewas, Ujjain, Indore, and Khargone in Madhya Pradesh (see map), to select 20 communities for the project. Women from 41 communities in these districts have taken training at the Institute since 1985. Out of these 41 communities, 20 were selected to participate in the project by stratified sampling.

Five of these 20 were then selected for the final house-to-house baseline survey based on the following criteria (refer to Table 1.):

- The maximum number of graduates came from these communities;
- They were all largely homogenous communities, i.e., all tribals;
- They had similar demographic indicators;
- They were all socially and economically disadvantaged but were similar in their levels of development;
- They had similar levels of literacy;
- They had a similar status of health;
- They had similar infrastructure and opportunities for income generation;
- Each area had a similar cultural background.

A demographic profile of these five villages can be seen in Table1.

Table 1. Profile of the Selected Villages for the Baseline Survey - Extract from 1991 Census

		Gangpur	Kawda	Khamat	Ojhad	Sukhi Bavdi	Total
Total population		953	1431	1634	2235	516	6769
Sampled households	No.	137	218	253	334	76	1018
	%	14.4	15.2	15.5	14.9	14.7	15.0
Males	No.	464	723	813	1088	258	3345
	%	48.7	50.5	49.8	48.7	50.0	49.4
Females	No.	489	709	822	1147	258	3424
	%	51.3	49.5	50.3	51.3	50.0	50.6
Children 0-6 years	No.	182	301	373	547	163	1566
	%	19.1	21.0	22.8	24.5	31.6	23.1
Scheduled Tribe	No.	937	1382	1578	2230	516	6673
	%	98.3	96.6	96.6	99.8	100.0	98.6
Literate Males	No.	123	80	207	163	13	586
	%	12.9	5.6	12.7	7.3	2.5	8.7
Literate Females	No.	25	22	44	59	6	156
	%	2.6	1.5	2.7	2.6	1.2	2.3

Source of Information: Government of India Census 1991

Secondary sources

A Village Directory was formed by getting information from the Block Development Officer (BDO), schools, teachers and principals, the *Panchayat* members, the *Sarpanch*, the nurse, the *Anganwadi* workers, etc. Other secondary sources included:

- Census information and other related data collected from the government and community records;
- Admission register of the Institute;
- Statistical reports of Madhya Pradesh.

2.2.2. Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

The main tool used to collect data was the interview schedule, using surveys and admission assessment forms (Appendices I - VI) in addition to qualitative reporting methods. Interviews were supplemented by Area Co-ordinators' reports, sampling methods, and feedback from family and local community members.

Interviews and sampling

The sample trainees, their families and other households in the communities were interviewed with the help of three independent interview schedules (a copy of the interview schedule is given in the Appendices I, II and III). These interview schedules contained open-ended and structured questions relating to their socio-economic profile, their knowledge, attitudes and practices, and their perceptions of the issues relating to the objectives of the research.

Firstly, a baseline survey was conducted at the beginning of the project. Baseline data is best obtained through house-to-house surveys or census information. For example, for practical reasons it was understood that 10% of each village selected would be an acceptable cross-section to be surveyed. The villages were almost entirely homogenous, so simple random sampling was to be used. The baseline data was important because it provided a base or foundation that could be used to better understand what the situation was like before the programme began, and enabled the Institute to plan activities accordingly. It provided a basis for regular assessment of how the programme was working. At the end, the changes that had taken place as a direct result of the programme were able to be measured. Another survey was conducted after the completion of the project to compare the changes and find out the impact of the project. The same persons and households from the same villages were interviewed during the project at various levels.

All the original data was collected and first tabulated in 1996. After seeing the data gaps, verification was done and corrections were made accordingly - an account of this can be found in Section 2.3. of this Chapter.

2.3. Monitoring and Evaluation: Baseline Study and Indicators of Change

Monitoring and evaluation simply means finding out how effective the program is. It measures how closely the programme has come to realizing previously determined objectives.

It answers:

- What has to be accomplished? (objectives)
- What has been accomplished this far?
- What problems have arisen?
- What has been done well and what needs improvement?

It can help:

- to see where the programme has been
- to see where it is going and if it needs to change direction
- to plan better for the future
- to make the work more effective
- to share experiences
- to clearly identify strengths and weaknesses
- to compare the programme with similar ones
- to see if efforts are "cost effective"
- to manage the programmes more effectively

Monitoring is an ongoing process but evaluation can be done at any given stage as per the specific needs of each project under study.

One can choose one or more than one of the following types of evaluation.

- Continual - keep checking every day how the programme is doing
- Periodic - once a week, month, year
- Final - at the completion of a project

- Follow-up - after the work is over, and people are back in their communities, assess after some time.

Evaluation should not only measure whether the goals have been achieved. It should help to judge whether the goals were appropriate in the first place.

2.3.1. Reflection, Action and Consultation

For the implementation of the project objectives, it was necessary for the Institute to have an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation of the socio-economic status of the trainees, their households and communities. This monitoring and evaluation was based on the Bahá'í concept of administration and management, which consists of reflection, action and consultation.[25] Participants of this process included all trainees, staff, communities, families and everyone involved in management and decision-making.

Reflection, action and consultation is a complete cycle in itself. Reflection means giving attention to achievements in light of goals, reflecting on each action, using the lessons learned from failures for future plans in a learning atmosphere, which includes mutual trust, unity, humility, honesty, transparency and accountability.

Periodic consultations were held to reflect on feedback from the results and impacts of the training, keeping in mind the goals and objectives.

On the basis of the reflection there has been an effort to develop and improve the quality of the surveys and the training. It is important to mention that reflection and action were twin processes that took place simultaneously and helped to further expand, diversify and consolidate the Institute activities.

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[25] For more information about the Bahá'í perspective on reflection, action and consultation refer to: Bahá'í Academy, *Institutes 1: Centres of Learning and Valuable Instruments for training of the Human Resources*, Panchgani: Bahá'í Academy, 1996, p.22; Harper, Sharon M.P., *The Lab, the Temple and the Market*, Kumarian Press, 2000, pp.210-211; Bahá'í World Centre, Office of Social and Economic Development, *Seminar on Bahá'í Social and Economic Development*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, January 1999, pp.15-17

The Institute has always been committed to working in an environment where people systematically put into action clearly defined goals, and clearly understood plans with specific deadlines.

The staff of the Institute, graduates and the area coordinators did their best to carry out the actions with pure motives and rectitude of conduct, aiming at quality improvement with no fear of failure. They tried to follow the best course of action and they were always given room for mistakes and correcting after reflection and consultation. They were given love and positive encouragement.

The Institute believes and tries to practice the concept that consultation is imperative in all decision making because consultation brings about awareness and is a source of good and well-being.

Consultation is important to increase knowledge and capacities but this must be followed by action. The Institute had a management committee consisting of subject experts and experienced people who could guide and overall supervise the whole process of monitoring and evaluation of the project. This was not a controlling kind of body but an empowering and encouraging body with a positive attitude. Consultation was key to all of the decisions made by this body. Though they were monitoring carefully yet they were not reacting negatively and looking at every mistake as a flaw or a problem.

The purpose of any evaluation is to see what growth needs to take place, so that this can be fed back into programme planning. This results in a much better programme.

Evaluation is a process of gathering and analyzing information for the purpose of determining whether a programme is carrying out the activities it had planned, and the extent to which the programme is achieving the stated objective (through these activities). The evaluation is used as a tool to learn how the programme is most effective and what modifications should be made to improve services.

2.3.2. Indicators and Measurement Tools

Various indicators and measurement tools were specified to conduct the study. The concept of an indicator is defined in various ways. The terms “criteria”,

“benchmark”, and “indicator” are often used interchangeably, although they don’t necessarily mean the same thing. For the purpose of this study the term ‘indicator’ will be used to refer to a quantitative, qualitative or descriptive measure that, when periodically monitored, can show the quality, direction, pace and results of change. One can only evaluate indicators when they are well defined. For example, in the area of health, "Safe delivery" was defined mainly by 3 factors:

1. clean instrument used to cut umbilical cord,
2. clean place for delivery to take place, and
3. hand-washing of person assisting.

The respondents were asked, "*who* assisted with the delivery" and whether or not she/he was experienced or trained. One of the reasons for asking if children are dying under one month of age, is that this infant death rate would indicate whether delivery practices are safe. If a significant number of infants under one month die, it usually means that something is wrong with the delivery practices.

Likewise, with assessing diarrhea disease - the definition of diarrhea was "more than 2 loose motions within a 24 hour period in the past 2 weeks in children under 5." The question asked was not only "if Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) was given", but also "whether any home-made solutions were administered."

The Institute obtained the following data from its records:

- Number of trainees and Area Co-ordinators.
- Number of communities involved.
- Number of couples trained.
- Number of *Mahila Mandals* established.
- Number of trainees implementing income generation activities and actual income earned.
- Number of trainees continuing their education.

The following interrelated data were obtained:

- Educational and/or literacy indicators: Number of children in school by age group and gender; functional literacy of girls and women; percentage of girls completing 10th standard; number of school dropouts.
- Health indicators: Infant and child mortality rates and causes; maternal mortality and morbidity rates and their immunization rates; number of latrines; nutritional status (growth monitoring); incidence of diarrhea and dehydration and treatment by ORS.
- Knowledge indicators: numeracy indicators such as knowledge of money, weights and measurements; understanding of basic hygiene and sanitation; recognition of common diseases; and knowledge of government loans and schemes.
- Attitude indicators: Attitude indicators refer to changes in attitudes towards social and economic issues from a gender perspective. These include gender equality, need and importance of female education, the acquisition of income generating skills by women and their benefit to women, removal of caste prejudice and unity in the community.
- Practice indicators: Practice indicators include pre and postnatal care practices, immunization, treatment of common diseases, income generated from vocational skills and participation in *Mahila Mandals*.

To measure the changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices in the trainees, their families and their communities, the project used several types of indicators and measurement tools:

- The trainees', their families' , and the communities' changes in attitude towards the trainees.
  Indicator: Responses to questions.
- Trainees acquiring income-generating skills.
  Indicator: Number of women gaining income from skills learned.

Actual income gained / real profit gained over expenses.

Method of measurement: Survey.

- Establishment of *Mahila Mandals*.

  Indicator: Actual number of women regularly attending meetings.

  Method of measurement: Reports from Co-ordinators supplemented by feedback from the area.

- Improvement in health awareness of trainees and their families.

  Indicators: number of women and children immunized, infant mortality and morbidity rate, pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity.

  Method of measurement: Survey, Institute records.

- Improvement in the general nutritional status of women.

  Indicators: Improvements in the weight of each breast-feeding mother and in her knowledge, attitude and practices related to nutrition.

  Method of measurement: Weight taken and knowledge, attitude and practices relating to nutrition evaluated during house-to-house baseline survey.

- Improvements in immunization practices.

  Indicator: Increase in the number of immunizations among pregnant women and children.

  Method of measurement: Data collected compared against the schedule recommended for India is set out in detail in Appendix VII.

- Actual number of women trained as community workers and as Area Co-ordinators.

  Source of Information: Admission register of the Institute records.

- Actual number of communities from which women have been trained as community workers and as co-ordinators.

  Sources of Information: Institute' s records, Government and community records.

2.3.2.1. Carrying Out the Baseline Survey

The baseline survey was carried out by:

1. Collecting the following information from villagers, schools, and government functionaries:

Census information - Information from the 1991 census was collected about each of the five sample villages (refer to Table 1.). This provided a basic profile for each village for the baseline survey.

Government reports- Other than Census reports, many government reports[26] were used in this study.

Village survey - A village survey was devised to gather information on village facilities in terms of utilities, education and health, caste breakdown, the occupation and income of households, government schemes, the general level of education in the village, and levels of alcohol abuse. This information was used to compare village wise data such as number of pregnant women, immunization programmes and their affects, the number of pregnant women getting immunized, number of males and females enrolled in school. This information also indicated how all these indicators changed over the three years of the project.

House-to-house baseline survey - A different village survey form was devised. This form was not used to collect easily obtainable general development information on each house. The data and information gathered was specifically related to health, education, income and income generation, etc. The questions were phrased in such a way so as not to be culturally insensitive. They were

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[26] Government of India, Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, *Convention on the Rights of the Child: India – First Periodic Report 2001,* 2001
Government of India, Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, *Annual Report 1999-2000*, 2000
Government of India, Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, *Platform for Action 5 after Beijing: An Assessment,* 2000
Directorate of Public Relations, Madhya Pradesh, *Madhya Pradesh: Where People are Solutions,* 2001
Government of India, Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, *National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001,* 2001
Women and Child Development Department of Madhya Pradesh, *The Madhya Pradesh Policy for Women - Implementation and Achievements,* 2003
Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, *Selected Educational Statistics 1999-2000,* 2000

worded in a simple way so that village people could understand them. For example relating time periods to festivals, the monsoon, the market days, etc.).

The forms prepared in English were translated into Hindi and field-tested. Modifications and revisions were made as needed.

Every effort was made to interview as many past graduates' households as possible.

2. Collecting information from individual trainees:

Feedback (field-testing of the baseline data collection tools) - Firstly, the Dharamrai, Temria, Kawda, Walpur and Ojhad villages of the Dhar and Jhabua districts were visited specifically to test the data collection forms, which assessed *trainees.* It was clear that the survey forms were only a very rough "draft" and that the field experience would show where and how modifications should be made. Another major objective was to do as much data collection as possible. We had meetings with the respondents and assessments were made. During this field visit, meetings were also held with trainees and their families in each village to assess the knowledge of trainees and Area Co-ordinators in relation to the study indicators.

2.3.2.2. Modification and Finalizing of Surveys

Based on the feedback from the preliminary field visit, the questionnaires were modified and refined. Special emphasis was placed on two phases: questions must be designed that assess knowledge, attitudes and practices *prior* to training, and at least 6 months *after* training in the field. The questionnaires were designed in a "KAP" format – that is, with sections corresponding to changes in (K) Knowledge (A) Attitudes, and (P) Practice. Tools were then developed to assess the KAP differences of these phases.

Modification of the trainee questionnaires (KAP format--Pre-post test) was done in order to find out whether what was being taught at the Institute is being reflected in graduates' behaviour, and why or why not?

An *Admission assessment form* was designed to collect information on the trainees' level of education, their income generation skills, and their health practices. More specifically, the form was designed to obtain data on the economic status of the family, how they treated common diseases and what the prevalent mother and child-care practices were. This admission form was filled out before the trainees started the training.

Area Co-ordinators pre/post test - A different form was designed for the women who were selected to take the Area Co-ordinator' s course. This questionnaire was intended to provide information on what the women perceived their role and responsibilities to be *before* and *after* the training. This gave direct data with regard to the effectiveness of the training programme. The form was much more qualitative in nature than the Admission Assessment Form and asked many open-ended questions to get the trainees' personal opinions and perceptions. For example, the form asked questions like: " What are some things you can do in order to get people in your community to listen to you and to work together?" or " How will you organize a *Mahila Mandal* in your village?" Direct questions were included in the survey to test their knowledge on issues such as how to get a bank loan or how they can improve the health status of their communities. In addition, there is a section on the form for newly qualified Area Coordinators to evaluate the course and give their perceptions of what they thought the course would entail before they began the training. It also asks for opinions on which areas of the course they felt were the most or least useful. This feedback has been essential for the internal assessment of the Institute' s training courses. This internal assessment fulfilled the project objective to measure whether or not the programme was effective in training women to be agents for social change.

2.3.3. Challenges of the Baseline Survey

While conducting the baseline survey, the following challenges were faced:

- Most of the villages had no source of communications, telephones, postal or courier services. Due to the lack of such facilities it was not be possible to

ensure that the people could be contacted to fix the meetings or take appointments, etc.

- There were no railway tracks in these areas. Bus services were also not frequent. All of the 20 villages under the project are located around 200 kilometers away from the Institute. It was not just the distance but the quality of roads that made the villages difficult to access. The travelling time was further increased by unscheduled, requested stops in addition to the several scheduled stops. For instance, in order to reach Dahi, in Dhar district, which is only 195 kilometers, it would take 8-10 hours by bus.
- Travelling to these areas is considered very unsafe even for men but especially for women. This is mainly because this area is notorious for passengers being robbed and killed with bows and arrows. In order to avoid such crimes, just after sunset, there is an arrangement at both departure and arrival points to make a convoy of a visible number of vehicles and lead by a police vehicle in order to ensure the safety of the passengers and their baggage. Sometimes delays of 2-3 hours would be caused by travelling in these police escorted convoys.
- Having reached the villages, there was no surety that is would be possible to do the job. Most of the people in these villages go out for work during the day and return home in the evening. By the time they arrived home, it would be getting dark. There would be hardly any electric power supply, even if people had electric connections. The only light available was a little kerosene lamp, making it very difficult to read and fill out the forms. Filling one survey form, after establishing a rapport with the respondents, required almost two hours. In another way, however, this was a blessing in disguise, as these challenges gave an opportunity to actually live with the local people, thus making it easy to observe and learn a lot.
- Due to hilly topography of these areas, the only way to go from one house to another one was by walking. Most houses were 4-5 kilometers apart. Familiarity with the area saved lot of hassle and eliminated any feeling of fear.

Normally, it was possible to get accompaniment from the graduates of the Institute or their family members.

- Being committed to house-to-house baseline surveys and to collecting data from the same people, it was experienced that tribals, being temporarily migrant labourers, were not always available. As a result, it was difficult to gather data from the same people at regular intervals. For instance, in the first survey of a house, one son and his family were in the village but at the end of the project he had migrated or had started living in a different place from where he was previously interviewed. Sometimes more than four trips were made to interview one family.
- Similarly, it was a big challenge to keep track of the changing addresses of the trainees who were getting married and moving to different communities.
- Each piece of information was first prepared in English and then translated into Hindi and then all the data and information was translated again into English in order to make entries into the computer. Maintaining accuracy throughout this process was a big challenge.

2.4. Data Processing and Analysis

A computerized database programme, specially designed for this study, was set-up for data entry, processing and tabulation. Some of the records maintained were:

- The number of women trained as Community Volunteers, Area Co-ordinators and in couples. All their files were maintained according to each community, district, etc.
- The number of *Mahila Mandals* established by graduates
- Census information and other related data that was collected from the government and community records, updated and maintained.

The results and findings are reported and analysed in Chapter 7 of this study.

Chapter 3: Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter is intended to provide an overview of the current literature related to the empowerment of rural and tribal women in India in general, and Madhya Pradesh in particular. This literature will include theoretical and practical projects, which will be used to help chart the course of this study.

Following the adoption of the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, a large number of books, research papers, studies and policy documents dealing with different aspects of women in India have been published. All of these publications can be broadly categorized as follows:

- Development models of women' s empowerment
- Community development models for rural and tribal areas
- Human resource development and capacity building models
- Sustainable community development models

3.1. Development Models of Women' s Empowerment

Gender focus

Universally, women are discriminated against in both developed and developing societies. They are paid less for their work, much of which is undervalued. Men are often preferred for influential positions. Women' s access to education and employment is less than that of men. In developing countries such as India, discrimination also involves reduced access to health care, food, property rights and credit. All of this is happening in spite of the fact that women often work harder than men, and contribute to economic activity and social welfare by rearing and educating children, and by doing all the household management and food

preparation. Essentially, women supply many of the support systems on which society as a whole depends.[27]

Alan Fowler, in his chapter entitled The Role of Gender in NGDOs[28], asks: "Why should gender be at the forefront of Non-Governmental Development Organizations' concerns?" First, social justice as a moral imperative calls for direct attention to women, who systematically lose out to men in terms of access to society' s resources and power over decisions. Further, as producers, women are usually responsible for providing the subsistence foodstuffs and incomes which determine family survival. Consequently, their efforts, abilities and incentives are vital factors in determining the profile and scale of poverty.

An additional reason, states Fowler, is that investments in women have a greater tendency to translate into increased household well being than into consumption. Socially, women are central in maintaining cohesion, stability and local organizational capacity, which are important conditions for ensuring the sustainability of benefits that result from development interventions.

Non-formal education

One such intervention is non-formal education. The formal education system currently available to tribal communities in India is inadequate and ineffective, resulting in a high dropout rate.[29] This fact has neither empowered nor emancipated this disadvantaged group. In fact, it has de-capacitated and uprooted them from their socio-economic and cultural environment causing a "miniature brain drain" in rural areas. Therefore there is an urgent need to reform prevailing educational ideals and develop institutions and practices that teach from an indigenous or tribal perspective. It is in this area, by formulating and implementing an active non-formal educational curriculum for life, that NGOs can intervene.

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[27] Rao, T.V., *Human Resources Development*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996, p.231
[28] Edwards, M. and Fowler, A., eds., *NGO Management*, London: Earthscan Publications, 2002, pp.406-412
[29] McGilligan, J.P. and McGilligan, J., *Appropriate Curriculum for Tribal Youth,* unpublished theme paper, January 2002

In her research, Listen to our Lives, Vindu Balani reflects on the limits and potential of non-formal education as an agent of personal and social change. She highlights that the formal education system in India serves a privileged minority and that rural and tribal women fall through the gap.[30] Balani also states that those who have done studies, such as Bernard and Gayfer, 1983; Srinivasan, 1994; and Trivedi, 1992[31], report that it is women from low castes and tribes that tend NOT to participate in non-formal education. From this it is clear that this huge section of India' s population are barely being educated at all. Balani continues: "non formal education systems have failed to address the needs of women…on the other hand... non-formal education has become an important means to mobilize poor women to access resources and confront their lack of rights and status." [32]

Balani' s study does much to highlight the lives of tribal women in Madhya Pradesh, especially of their experiences with the education system. Situating non-formal education within this context, Balani concludes that in spite of its potential there are still economic barriers and endemic corruption in the education system that prevent tribal women from sending their children to school. Girls have the burden of taking responsibility for the household chores. This responsibility is doubled when they must take on the chores of their school-going brothers. Their educations are further impeded by the need to earn money to pay for their schooling.[33]

Although Balani focuses on the lives of tribal women in Madhya Pradesh extremely well in the context of non-formal education opportunities, and emphasizes the rich potential for non-formal systems to empower women socially, politically and economically, the scope of her thesis is not to offer *solutions* to these problems.

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[30] Balani, V., *Listen to Our Lives: Life Histories of Five Women from the Bhilala Tribe in Rural Madhya Pradesh, India,* published Ph.D. Thesis, University of Minnesota, November 2000
[31] Ibid. p.5
[32] Ibid. pp.5-6
[33] Ibid. p.209

Equal rights

It is logical that the education of women will also strengthen women's earning capacity, their care-taking capacity, and their control over household resources. Women's resource control and care-taking capacity comprise one of the conditions for adequate nutrition, along with household food security, access to health services, and a healthy environment. Moreover, education raises the awareness of the means to overcome these problems and generates effective political demand.

As women obviously play such a huge part in the development of their own households and environments, their lack of equality and voice is especially disturbing. It is in this context that the National Commission for Women published its reports on Tribal Women and Employment (1998) and Development of Female Education among Tribal Communities (1994). The summary and recommendations of both publications state that it is in the *household* that inequalities and disparities begin (1998: 99, 1994: 87), which creates continued cycles of discrimination and female vulnerability.

Concerned with women's share and voice in community leadership, Susheela Kaushik's book *Panchayati Raj in Action: Challenges to Women's Role*[34] states that since 1993, 33% of seats in local governments (in India) have been reserved for women as well as for scheduled castes and tribes. This, she hopes, will create genuine decentralization of responsibilities to *Gram Panchayats* in general and increase women's participation in decision-making processes in particular.[35] (Kaushik's book is primarily a study of the challenges to these promises. While the decentralization question faces its own challenges, those of women entering local politics are even more significant.

One of the biggest challenges that Kaushik illustrates is that men believe that women have no aptitude for politics and that they make decisions irrationally and arbitrarily.[36] This gross misrepresentation of women by men is a huge barrier to equal rights. Political awareness raising workshops run by NGOs and local

[34] Kaushik, S., *Panchayati Raj in Action: Challenges to Women's Role*, New Delhi: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1995
[35] Ibid. p.v
[36] Ibid. p.6

governments in some states of India had a very enthusiastic response from women. The women themselves felt that their illiteracy was no barrier to political awareness or even to standing as candidates. Kaushik found that women were able to articulate their own challenges and their knowledge of corruption within the political sphere.[37] These women were perfectly *aware* of the implications of politics on their own lives.

In accordance with Kaushik' s book, the present author, in her paper Gender Inequality: A Challenge to the Success of Panchayati Raj[38], discusses the topic further. She demonstrates that, despite men and women' s equal knowledge about political issues, womenfolk are considered to be less capable and, in fact, mere puppets for their own male family members' exploitation of the *Panchayats* and *Sarpanches*. McGilligan states that bureaucrats normally perceive women as lacking in information and understanding and as being relatively less capable of management of human resources and funds.

All the above mentioned problems are founded on one fundamental barrier i.e., discrimination against women and their devaluation on the basis of gender. A change in attitude towards women as equal members of human society is the essential condition for bringing about sustainable development.

In their 2001 report, Women in India: How Free? How Equal?[39] Menon-Sen and Kumar state that the issue of women' s rights today is a central tenet of political and development discourse in India.[40] Even so, they continue, there is no denying that there are huge gaps between Constitutional guarantees and the daily realities of women' s lives. For example, low self-image inhibits a woman from making changes in her life and the tendency in India for young marriages means that, in reality, women lose control over their own bodies and actions from an early

[37] Ibid. pp.84-85
[38] McGilligan, J.P., *Gender inequality: a challenge to success of panchayati raj*, unpublished paper presented to the state academy of administration Bhopal, M.P. June 13, 1996
[39] Menon-Sen, K. and Shiva Kumar, A.K., *Women in India: How Free? How Equal?*, Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in India, 2001
[40] Ibid. p.79

age. In Madhya Pradesh, for example, 79% of women get married before the age of 18. [41]

As far as women' s autonomy goes, Menon-Sen and Kumar highlight that, in Madhya Pradesh, only 19% of women do NOT need permission to go to the market. Even worse, only 17% can visit relatives without their family' s or husband' s permission. Only 37% of women are involved in decisions involving their own health care, which is 7% LESS than those involved in decision making about buying jewellery.[42] In addition, Madhya Pradesh has the second lowest percentage of women (after Rajasthan) who have access to money in the household, at only 49%. The implications of this, they state, are serious.

While Menon-Sen and Kumar' s report is extremely enlightening in terms of statistical data about the practical inequalities in women' s lives in general, it offers few particular statistics on the lives of rural and tribal women. What it *does* give is data on the rural female work participation rates, e.g., 328 per 1000 women in Madhya Pradesh, the national average being 222. The report also states, interestingly, that in 1991, 44.9% of the total women workers worked as agricultural labourers, 34.2% as cultivators, and 1.6% in livestock and forestry, which together totals an astonishing 80.7% of women workers in some form of recognized rural employment.

Economic independence

Economic independence and training is a precursor to any guarantees of equality. A 1974 study reveals inadequacies in the roles of women across-the-board in the economy, politics, and constitutional rights. After the release of Towards Equality[43], by the Committee on the Status of Women, steps were taken in India to remove barriers and allow for the full participation of women in the above-mentioned areas. Among those steps were a series of reports commissioned on the status of Indian women by various governmental

[41] Ibid. p.62
[42] Ibid. p.64

departments. When the informal and unorganized work sectors were examined, the exclusion of women from basic rights was much worse.

While education is an important determinant of women's position in society, there are other factors that are at play as well. Menon-Sen, 2001 has written about the notion of women's 'agency', and its relationship to women's well being.[44] The notion refers to the freedom women have to engage in work outside the home, to earn an independent income, to have ownership rights, and, of course, to receive education. Wherever these freedoms and rights prevail, the well being of women is positively affected.

3.2. Human Resource Development and Capacity Building Models

All over the world, Governments and aid organizations run *single issue projects* focused on such problems as selective female feticide, safe delivery practices, H.I.V./AIDS, family planning, women's micro-credit/self help groups, gender inequality, and domestic violence.[45] A more comprehensive strategy for addressing the plight of women, is the 'empowerment' of women through building their capacity to be valuable human resources.

T.V. Rao, in his book Human Resources Development Experiences, Interventions, Strategies [46], describes Human Resources Development (HRD) as the "process of enabling people to make things happen." Such "enabling" experiences are also empowering. The Gender and Development Dictionary (reference) defines "empowerment" as the "process of generating and building capabilities to exercise control over one's own life." To make things happen, then, is clearly to exercise control.

Essentially, Rao describes, HRD involves two processes: The creation of competencies in people; and the creation of conditions that allow the people to

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[43] Committee on the Status of Women in India, *Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India,* New Delhi: Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, December, 1974
[44] Ibid. Menon-Sen and Shiva Kumar
[45] Ibid. McGilligan, J.P., *Training and Resource Allocation*
[46] Ibid. Rao

apply these competencies for their own and others' benefit.[47] In the HRD model, the individual is active and involved, thus, empowered to make changes and to determine what those changes will be for themselves and others.

The challenge of all development programmes is to create a holistic approach which engages the beneficiaries at all levels, beginning with awareness, capacity building, acquiring competency, increasing confidence and assertiveness, and acting to bring out their natural capabilities, i.e., making investments in human capital.

The Indian experience of Rao's book revolves around a Women's Development Project in Rajasthan (WDP), which offers a model of successful human resource development specifically for women. It focuses on educating and training rural, poor, illiterate women and involves communities in the selection process. Conceptually, development is understood as internalized growth, which works by generating experiences that could alter perceptions of self-image, creating a climate of questioning, reflecting, sharing and seeking through listening and talking. In other words, *the empowerment model of development* has been used. Such a model begins with faith and confidence in one's self and in collective efforts with others.

However, most of the other training initiatives reviewed by Rao are in the advanced levels of skill development, which move beyond basic training programmes. Rao's approach is centred mostly on the international and national levels of using HRD models to alleviate poverty, utilizing experiences of developed and developing nations, supported by illustrative case-studies. Although Rao documents programmes for rural development, he does so with largely economic variables that are not aimed at developing social variables. Though he has linked economic development with the HRD approach in an integrated manner, the Indian case study presented does not conclude with a systematic curriculum, which could show that women are acquiring skills that can be sustained.

Mehrotra and Jolly's book Development with a human face[48], presents retrospective studies of ten developing countries* that have managed to exceed

[47] Ibid. p.25

the scope and pace of social achievement of the majority of other developing countries. The purpose of their book is to probe the reasons for these successes in development and to draw conclusions as to how they can be repeated and sustained.

A good part of success has been the result of human development advancing hand-in-hand with economic growth, which demonstrates that with clear effort and focused action, development of human resources is not only possible but can also help to facilitate economic growth.

Without some form of training of women, human advancement and capacity building cannot be achieved. Lilo Herrmann' s report,Vocational Opportunities for women and their employment in the Indo-German Tool Room, Indore, and in industries in the catchment area of Indore[49] advocates "empowerment of women in the labour market" by identifying and strengthening training and re-training. As well as vocational education in non-traditional areas to expand women's employment opportunities, Herrmann promotes the necessity of vocational training in sectors with growth potential. This should include training aimed at building their capacity within the micro credit and micro finance programmes to enhance women's capabilities, status, bargaining power and promote their empowerment. To this end, she reviews a national plan to promote women's training in a three-tiered system: basic skills, advanced skills, and industrial training with high employment potential. The programmes she investigates are mostly trade-oriented: Basic skills involve training in secretarial skills and advanced courses train in electronics.

Herrmann reviews training institutes for women in Indore (including BVIRW) and the types of programmes they offer women. All have been started since 1975 when a nation-wide report[50] spearheaded reforms for women's participation in

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[48] Mehrotra, S. and Jolly, R. (eds.), *Development with a human face: Experiences in social achievement and economic growth,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997

[*] The ten countries are: Botswana, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Kerala (India), Sri Lanka, The Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Barbados, Costa Rica, Cuba.

[49] Herrmann, L., *Vocational Training Opportunities for Women and their Employment in the Indo-German Tool Room, Indore,* Indore: IGTR, 1993, p.28

[50] Ibid. Committee on the Status of Women in India

economic and social life. Of the 101 ITIs in Madhya Pradesh, only 11 are dedicated to women and, of these, *all* are in the traditional "women's trades" of cutting and tailoring, hand weaving, embroidery, dressmaking and stenography. Herrmann's report indicates a lack of choice in occupational training for women and a general lack of enrolment and graduation of such programmes. She was unable to find Institutes engaged in long-term vocational training of women in non-traditional trades. Few of the ITIs Herrmann reviews focus on rural women.

3.3. Development Approaches Among Tribal and Rural Communities

The dearth of literature on development models specifically for rural and tribal communities speaks for itself. Most comes from international and government agencies and NGOs - UNICEF, UNIFEM, Department of Women and Child Development, Council for Social Development. Much of this literature documents attempts by the Indian government to integrate their development programmes with specific programmes aimed at helping the rural poor.

Government programmes

The Council for Social Development' s journalSocial Change dedicated its September 1991 issue to Studies in Rural India. Khan and Thomas' article Administrative support to socio-economic programmes in rural areas[51] focuses on appropriate public administrative responses to rural development. "In rural development" they say, "it is not merely a question of providing services but of *reaching* services to the targeted, akin almost to selling of ideas."[52] Khan and Thomas review various government funded and supported programmes for rural development. This includes the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP), which "ensures shares from all sectoral programmes and provides integrated promotional services in tribal areas. It pools resources from state plan outlay, for operational purposes."[53] It also

[51] Khan M.Z. and Thomas, M.E., "Administrative support to socio-economic programmes in rural areas," *Social Change,* Vol. 21 No. 3, September 1991, pp.3-15
[52] Ibid. p.6
[53] Ibid. p.8

includes the Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP).[54] Two additional targeted capacity building programmes they review are the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) and Training of Rural Youth for Self-employment (TRYSEM).[55] They highlight inadequacies in targeted programmes in terms of administration of funds, which lack systematic follow-ups, counseling guidance, and problem solving.[56]

Santhanam and Singh give a detailed assessment of the TRYSEM scheme.[57] Young rural labourers and farmers were trained in professional trades, such as carpentry, for a period of six-months. There was a feeling that the training was inadequate and that rural financial institutions do not provide for individuals who want to set up their own businesses, despite this being the main motivation for joining the scheme. It is clear that the training did not go far enough to be sustainable and that the financial infrastructure in rural areas is not supportive to rural peoples.

Mahipal' s article Role of voluntary organizations in rural development[58] stresses the role of NGOs in rural development because of their "distinct qualities" such as dedication, innovation, local knowledge, rapport with beneficiaries, and motivation. The Department for Rural Development, during the government' s 7th 5-year plan in 1986 set up the Council for Advancement of People' s Action and Rural Technology (CAPART). The primary objective of CAPART was to encourage, promote and assist voluntary action by injecting new technological inputs in this field.[59] Despite these efforts, Mahipal reports that, because of the lack of organizational and administrative support, rural NGOs are suffering from a brain drain, as most trained staff prefer to work in urban areas. This leaves a strong male figurehead, who makes decisions very undemocratically and tends to select staff on the basis of caste rather than ability.[60]

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[54] Ibid. p.9
[55] Ibid. p.10
[56] Ibid. p.9
[57] Santhanam, M.L. and Singh, V., "TRYSEM: An assessment," *Social Change*, Vol. 21 No. 3 September 1991, pp.31-35
[58] Ibid. p.24-30
[59] Ibid. p.25
[60] Ibid. p.29

Two further articles in this volume consider communication and decentralization in rural areas. These are two ways in which women can become more involved in their own development and decision-making (refer to section 3.1).[61] However, neither article even mentions women specifically as beneficiaries of increased communication or decentralization. Better communication with and participation of people at the planning, implementation and feedback stages of a programme is essential, but again the voice of women is ignored.

Concepts of rural development

Concepts of rural development have become more comprehensive since the 1970's. The World Bank defines it as a "strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people… the rural poor."[62] As conceived by the World Bank, rural development should include a mix of activities, both direct and indirect, to improve health and education, housing, communication as well as the more obvious raising of agricultural output and creating employment.

Such rural specific income generation programmes are termed "integrated rural development" (IRDP) and include the following:[63]

- Relevance to environment
- Ecological setting should use a balanced approach;
- Use appropriate technologies to the land itself (types of crops, water management, soil enrichment, and irrigation);
- Institutional infrastructure must be there to connect knowledge, resources and their application;
- Self-reliance is needed for local initiative and participation.

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[61] Ambekar, J.B., "Communication and rural development," *Social Change*, Vol. 21 No. 3 September 1991, pp.36-41; Awasthi, I.C., "Decentralisation perspectives and rural development," *Social Change*, Vol. 21, No. 3 September 1991, pp.47-50

[62] Sinha, U.P. and Rashid Abdur, *Socio-Economic Dimensions of Integrated Development in India*, New Delhi: Wisdom Publications, 1991, pp.1-2

[63] Ibid. p.3

A number of governmental programmes were brought under the IRDP. For example, the Small Farmer Development Agency, Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers programme. Its goal was to transform the countryside in a relatively short time by generating income and providing employment while utilizing local resources.

Extensive evaluation of IRDP, such as that conducted by Sinha and Rashid in Socio-Economic Dimensions of Integrated Development in India[64] indicates that "In most cases the beneficiaries of the programme did not benefit much in terms of increase in income and employment of assets."[65] Doubts were thus raised about the model of targeting groups as a focus of development programmes.

3.4. Sustainable Community Development

What is sustainable development?

The phrase "sustainable development" was coined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (the "Bruntland Commission") in 1987. The Commission defined "sustainable development" as material improvement to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.[66] This definition emphasizes an important aspect of our ethical relationship to the unborn, yet it remains too vague to be truly useful as a guide for human activity because we cannot agree on the meaning of "needs". We can't really know what the "needs" of future generations will be, and we can't even agree on what we ourselves *need* vs. what we merely *want*. The 'basic needs' strategy brought to the development arena a new perspective. The distinctive element of this approach was the satisfaction of logical basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing, etc., rather than pure economic growth. The emergent structure manifests itself in women's movements, ecological

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid pp.183-184
[66] World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), *Our common future,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p.43

movements, and indigenous movements, thus providing a pluralistic theory of development. However, *pluralistic* does not necessarily mean *holistic*.

Sustainable human development is defined and understood in documents from the Earth Summit at Rio de Janiero Brazil in 1992 - Agenda 21. Problems identified in Agenda 21 are poverty, hunger, ill health, illiteracy, and a deteriorating ecosystem. Agenda 21 asserts that improvement in the status of women is *essential* to sustainable development because women's participation is the key to ensuring reproductive health, planning of family size, pre-natal care, educational and job opportunities - all factors strongly affecting a sustainable and healthy ecosystem.

Sustainable development is in contrast to growth understood as GNP (gross national product) since the latter measures only product, without concern for exceeding our capacity to regenerate. G*rowth* means quantitative increase in physical size, whereas *development* means qualitative change, realization of potentialities, transition to a fuller or better state.

The Planning Commission in India, in its first Five Year Plan, described community development projects as ' the method through which the Five Year Plan seeks to initiate a process of transformation of the social and economic life of the village. The major emphasis in the whole effort was laid on the non-tangible and non-material aspects of community life."[67]

Stressing this aspect, Jawaharlal Nehru, quoted in Gracious Thomas' book, People' s Participation in Community Development stressed: "Community Development Projects are of vital importance not so much for the material achievements that they would bring about but much more so because they seem to build up the community and the individual and to make the latter the builder of his own village centres and of India in the larger sense." [68]

Thomas says that community development approach in India partially succeeded in fostering economic growth and building the infrastructure of facilities, but was unsuccessful in mobilizing local resources and bringing about increased

participation in the process. Development overlooked the truly deprived and further widened the disparity between the "haves" and "have-nots."[69] The most interesting of Thomas' conclusions is that rural peoples have an innate capacity to plan, implement and evaluate their own development projects. All that is needed, often, is some guidance as to how this should be done.[70]

Appropriate curricula for the training of rural and tribal women for sustainable community development

Developing rural economies and communities means evolving educational strategies that include curricula focussed on a rural lifestyle. As already stated in section 3.1., formal education curricula have failed to provide tribal groups with the appropriate education for their lifestyles and livelihoods. Consequently, educated tribal youths find themselves equipped to find jobs in urban areas, yet unable to sustain livelihoods in their own villages. The agricultural way of life is suffering, leaving those uneducated behind to carry on with little or no skills or training in sound agricultural practices, resulting in environmental degradation and a degeneration of their economic positions.

In an attempt to streamline students into one educational system, formal education curriculums have failed to recognize the importance of teaching effective and relevant skills to youths according to their lifestyles, so that they may be educated but still able to maintain their traditional livelihoods. An appropriate curriculum according to His Excellency, Ex-President of India, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, is the one that will interweave "the developmental path with the ideals of our heritage and civilization and blend them with science."[71]

Developing the capacity for defining technological need as well as technological innovation and adaptation is vital. This requires that mechanisms be

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[67] Thomas, G. (Dr.), *People's Participation in Community Development*, New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1992, preface
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid. p.3
[70] Ibid. p.164
[71] President K.R. Narayanan, "Message from the President", *Colloquium on Science, Religion and Development,* New Delhi, 2000

created that promote a dynamic process of learning about technology. Constructively blending traditional technological practices with modern scientific techniques, while simultaneously taking account of environmental, cultural and human variables, are central aspects of an appropriate curriculum.

An appropriate curriculum should be a source of knowledge and inspiration, of values, insights, and energy. The areas of focus offered as a starting point for understanding are how technical knowledge and spiritual values can substantively interact so as to foster effective patterns of community development. Sustainability is not possible without spirituality.

Holistic approach to development

In a previous paper, the author and James McGilligan[72] state that development is almost invariably defined as a process in which dependency is supplanted with self-reliance, people are given "voices", learn how to "help themselves", and equality of opportunity is part of a "common cause to create a better life." At its core, development must involve an awakening of individuals and communities so that they become "agents of their own change."

In her book, Social and Economic Development: A Bahá'í Approach, Holly Hanson Vick notes the Bahá'í Development definition[73]: "It is a systematic application of the principles of the Faith in order to upraise the quality of human life." The distinguishing feature of the Bahá'í approach is its integration of social, administrative and spiritual principles outlined over a century ago by Baha'u'llah (1817-1892), the Prophet Founder of the Faith. According to these teachings the ultimate goal of development is the ordering of human affairs so as to bring into being a world unified in all the essential aspects of life.

The Bahá'í development principles, as outlined by Vick, include the following:

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[72] Ibid. McGilligan, J.P. and McGilligan, J., *Appropriate Curriculum*

[73] Hanson Vick, H., *Social and Economic Development - A Bahá' í Approach*, George Ronald, 1989,

- Unity of material and spiritual processes; unity makes community organizations work;[74]
- Education is a source of progress for a nation;
- The importance of family unit which involves honour and honesty, service to others;
- Nobility of man; the notion that all people are created to work for the betterment of the world is the starting point of Bahá'í activity in social and economic development;[75]
- People have to change from the inside, to develop the spiritual characteristics that express human potential;
- The importance of women and equality of the sexes[76], the impact of maternal education on infant mortality, for example, has been demonstrated in research all over the world.

The Bahá'í Community, in its publication Valuing Spirituality in Development states that development must be an *organic process* where the people most affected are directly engaged in determining their own future. It is a process of action, reflection, and adjustment that aims to bring about consistent patterns of change, one in which local communities gradually improve their ability to define, analyse, and meet their own needs. A balance must be struck between using proven, well-conceived training approaches or technical solutions developed elsewhere and allowing local initiatives to unfold in an evolutionary manner. Of course, local activity must be informed by certain universal principles. This organic process is one in which "the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material."[77]

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p.10
[74] Ibid. p.40
[75] Ibid. p.61
[76] Ibid. pp.36-37
[77] Bahá' í International Community,*Valuing Spirituality In Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development,* New Delhi: Bahá' í Publishing Trust, 1999, p.1

Meaningful development requires that the seemingly antithetical processes of individual progress and social advancement, of globalization and decentralization, and of promoting universal standards and fostering cultural diversity, be harmonized. In our increasingly interdependent world, development efforts must be guided by vision of the type of world community we wish to create and be animated by a set of universal values. Just institutions, from the local to the planetary level, and systems of governance in which people can assume responsibility for the institutions and processes that affect their lives, are also essential.

Many of the above reviewed models are based on whichever studies, research or theories are fashionable at the time. The Bahá'í model, however, includes building material and spiritual capabilities, which have been tested for years and developed into systematic curriculums that include:

- Educating girls and women;
- Facilitating their involvement in economic activities, income-earning and access to credit;
- Involving them in policy-making and decision-making; and
- Encouraging socio-cultural change by exploring gender issues and equal rights legislation.

The following viewpoints played the major role in developing this holistic curriculum:

- Curriculum must be grown organically based on the understanding that has developed from hands-on application;
- Theoretical and practical knowledge and experience go hand in hand;
- Learning processes lead to action, research and training;
- Curriculum must be relevant, meaningful to the trainees lives;
- Curriculum must empower students to enable them to make their own decisions in developing a common vision based on their own needs;

- It must prepare the trainees to identify their own goals, their own roles and responsibilities in utilizing their own resources. This will lead to sustainable development. They can become entrepreneurs, have their own environment and area specific work on community resource development and make appropriate technological choices accordingly;
- Curriculum must foster creativity in learning;
- Learning must be participatory, interesting, and joyful rather than a burden.
- A holistic programme of training does not encourage women to move to cities and engage in industrial/commercial sector employment. The Bahá'í approach is to work with improving the traditional lifestyle of the women in their home settings.[78] It balances traditional practices and attitudes with beneficial modern advances in a way that fosters harmony in the family and community.

Ruth Jones' thesis An Ethnographic Study of the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women.[79] examines the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women. Since anthropologists are human and their main method of investigation is participant observation, however, they have tools at their disposal that other 'scientists' do not. Jones likens the Institute and its development approach to that of a family. According to the Bahá'í perspective, she states, families should in one sense strive to be self-sufficient, and this is what the Institute aims to do: to make the trainees self-sufficient enough to pass on their knowledge to others in their communities. Also like a family, at the Institute "they aim to avoid conflicting values and objectives. This is achieved through consultation, prayer and recognition that where different views are initially held it is sensible to give greatest consideration to those with the most experience of the particular task or subject".[80]

In this study Jones examines the ' intention' and ' method' . According to her, the intention of the Institute is the upliftment of women and their communities. This constitutes one Bahá'í principle and does not require that everyone become

[78] Jones, R.S., *An Ethnographic Study of the Bahá' í Vocational Institute for Rural Women*, unpublished Master's Dissertation, 1996
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid. p.35

Bahá'í. Bahá'ís seek a transformation in people's negative and harmful attitudes, rather than a nominal conversion in terms of religious name. Additionally, Bahá'ís are cautioned to teach through their actions as opposed to mere words. For example, the Institute welcomes staff from diverse backgrounds rather than lecturing about social prejudice. Jones concludes: For Bahá'ís the method of development is as important as the goal. Indeed, the method is a goal.

There is a need to define and measure progress in terms of such concepts as human capital, social capital, culture, social integration and community well being. The annual Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the Human Development Index (HDI), has been instrumental in broadening the range and scope of development indicators that are considered within the UN system and used by governments around the world. The World Bank itself has been at the forefront of developing the concept of social capital and of seeking ways to measure it. Moreover, NGOs, foundations and community groups have initiated various indicator projects that seek to measure, and thus value, human and community-centred development. These projects often involve the community in the conception and development of indicators.

As important as such efforts are, they are only preliminary steps in the process of charting a new direction for the human family. Not only do these efforts need to be greatly expanded, but new approaches to conceptualizing and measuring both the tangible aspects of development need to be explored and developed. The development of spiritually based indicators is now required.

In spite of spectacular developments in many fields, the twentieth century has been described as the century of anxiety and extremes. Development not anchored on spiritual, ethical and humane bases has resulted in distortions and disruptions in society. Decline in and absence of values and spiritual ethos has led to widespread problems as manifested in the alarming phenomena of consumerism, ecological crises, human rights violations, emergence of religious fundamentalism and bigotry, degradation of the status of women, and a host of other serious issues. In order to tackle all of these issues development must combine the values of heritage and civilization with science.

Some groups or communities have greater needs or are more disadvantaged than others. Thus they may need greater attention than others. To give unequally, but fairly is a just practice. Promoting the equality of women and men is not just an aim that will benefit women. The denial of equality to women establishes harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the home into the workplace, to political life and ultimately to international relations.

In short, fragmented activities do not bring about development. There needs to be a major restructuring of the world's educational, social, agricultural, industrial, economic, legal and political systems. This restructuring, which must be ordered by an ongoing and intensive dialogue between the two systems of knowledge available to humankind – science and religion – will facilitate the emergence of peace and justice throughout the world.

Once a community learns how to stand for itself and assert its basic human rights, a "widening circle" of rights relating to its well-being can be pursued. Remembering at all times that the interests of the individual and of society are inseparable, this process of empowering individuals and communities by securing basic freedoms ties in directly with development goals.

Chapter 4: Relevance of Study

4.1. Problem Statement and Needs

This study has been chosen to respond to the existing need of a systematically conducted research that can make a significant contribution by presenting a well tested model for the Government, Non-governmental organizations, researchers and academicians for dealing with vast and complex problems of rural and tribal women in particular and reaching the unreached in general. If one looks at the plight of rural and tribal women, one can see that they continue to struggle against poverty and its negative ramifications, such as high female and infant mortality rates, malnutrition, illiteracy and gender inequality. Researchers and social scientists in India as well as abroad have produced many studies around various issues relating to women. Details regarding their area of studies and approaches have been included in chapter 3. Studies in this area of research, dealing with this particular target group do not exist. This study is an effort to present a hands on, well-tested bottom-up model of sustainable community development through training of tribal women as human resources.

4.2. Status of Women in India

According to census information, in 1991 there were 403 million women in India. Today, out of India' s total population of almost one billion, close to 481 million are women. By the year 2016, projections suggest that the population of women in India will rise to 615 million. India' s female population is larger than the combined total populations of Canada, USA and the Russian Federation.[81] There can be no overall profile of an Indian woman because of the many differences of background, class, geography and work life. Additionally, there are many examples of well-known independent Indian women in every field of public life who belie the overall condition and life of the majority. Attempts at creating profiles of Indian women seldom focus on rural and tribal women.[82]

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[81] Ibid. Menon-Sen, K. and Shiva Kumar, A.K., p.11
[82] Jain, D., *Indian Women*, New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Education and

Of over 300 million poor in South Asia, women constitute 70 percent of the multitude bearing this burden.[83] In India, the poverty rate among women has been growing by 50 percent over the past two decades. The causes of women's poverty in India largely emerge from the inadequacies of traditional social structures, caste and class hierarchies, ethnic and religious discriminations and a heavily gender-biased distribution system.[84] Significant gender disparities exist in education causing large numbers of children to be unable to attend school. As well, poor women in India are burdened with a lack of literacy. At the same time, high rates of communicable disease and high maternal and infant mortality rates undermine poor people' s potential to rise above poverty. The major sources of ill health are infectious and parasitic diseases, respiratory illness and prenatal causes. HIV infection rates are increasing rapidly.

It is a pity that we are living in a world divided, mainly on the basis of poverty,

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Broadcasting, 1975

[83] Kainth, G.S., "Poverty rate among women growing: Poverty and development - The case of rural India", *Times of India,* November 25, 1997

[84] "Cheating the poor", *Free Press*, September 28, 2000

The food distributed through the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), meant for the abysmally poor. These two findings of the mid-term review committee of the Ninth Five - Year Plan will not shock the poor (who are suffering the ill-effects of this cheating racket) or the officials who are hand in glove with the large number of cheats operating as middle-men, ration shop owners and sundry local merchants who find a ready market to dispose of the stolen food grains. About 36% of wheat, 31% of rice and 23% of sugar meant for distribution through ration shops do not reach the targeted consumers. In absolute terms, the scam involves the enormous amount of about 3000 crore rupees (approximately U.S. $6 million). Compare it with the total food subsidy of 9200 crore rupees (approximately U.S. $19 million) to realise the enormousness of the fraud that is being committed on the central exchequer with the abetment of government officials.

"Over 90% people live below poverty line!", *Free Press*, June 30, 1996

More than 90 percent people of Bhikangaon Nagar Panchayat (Bhikangaon Village Council) are living below poverty line - the statistics look bizarre but true. Normally, in India 40 to 50 percent people are living below the poverty line but the number of people in Bhikangaon living below the poverty line far exceeds the national average. The survey report of the town showed that there were 1,142 families in the town living below the poverty line until June 1995.

"Poverty-driven suicides on the rise," *Garha Chronicle*, May 6, 1997

The fact that every six minutes a person commits suicide in the country has raised a question regarding the reason behind the drastic step. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), as many as 89,195 persons committed suicide during 1994 - an increase of 5,000 from the previous year. During the first four months of this year, more than 300 suicides were reported in the national capital alone.

Ibid. *Times of India,* November 25, 1997

Of over 300 million poor in South Asia, women constitute 70 percent of the multitude bearing the brunt of hunger and disease.

into grades of 'first world,' 'second world' and 'third world'[85]. The alleviation of poverty amongst women has been a challenging issue and a major concern at various international and national levels all over the world for at least the last two decades. This subject has drawn the attention of NGOs, governments and the United Nations. It was very clearly recognized, at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, that the policies and strategies to deal with the poverty of women have to be seen through women's eyes, independently as well as in connection with poverty in general. The Beijing Platform for Action identified the poverty of women as one of the critical areas of concern. This led to the adoption of Resolution 40/9 in 1996, 52/193 in 1997, a report on 118 National Plans of Action, in April 2000, by the U.N. Division for the Advancement of Women, and ultimately led to Resolution 2000/26.[86]

Women in the work force

The global labour force is becoming increasingly composed of female workers. Women in India constitute a significant part of the country's work force. Amongst rural female workers, the majority are employed in agriculture, as labourers and cultivators. In the urban areas, women are primarily employed in the unorganized sectors such as household industries, petty trades and services, buildings and construction, etc. As of March 31, 1999, women constituted about 17.2% of the *organized* sector (both public and private) employment in India. The distribution of female employees across industries reveals that community, social and personnel service sectors employed 55.6% of female workers followed by manufacturing (21.4%), agriculture and allied occupations (9.8%) and finance, insurance, real estate and business (4.9%).[87]

However, the number of women who actually work outside the home is very low. Only 32.8% of women in Madhya Pradesh worked outside the home in

[85] Ibid. McGilligan, J.P., *Training and Resource Allocation*
[86] UN Division for the Advancement of Women, *Empowerment of Women Throughout the Life Cycle as a Transformative Strategy for Poverty Eradication*, report of the Expert Group Meeting held in New Delhi, November 26–29, 2001
[87] Government of India, Ministry of Finance, *Economic Survey of India 2001-2002,* 2002

1997.[88] Most women carry out unpaid work in the house, and are therefore classified as unpaid workers, despite their working hours often exceeding men's. A major finding of the Time-use Surveys across the globe has been that women carry a disproportionately greater burden of work than men. This is because women are responsible for a greater share of non-SNA (System of National Accounts) work in the care economy (i.e., home based work, which is difficult to measure). A Time-use Survey conducted in 1998-99 by the Central Statistical Organization, and covering 18,600 men and women all over the country, reveals the following facts about women's *invisible* work[89]:

- Women sleep on the average 2 hours less than men each day.
- Women spend ten times more time on household work than men. This is true even in families where women work full time.
- Men have over two hours a day for leisure, while women have only five minutes.
- Men spend less than one hour per week on cooking, while women spent 15 hours per week.
- The work participation rates among tribals are higher than those among Scheduled Castes and the general population.

Women enter the labour market already overburdened with work.[90] This dual work burden is neither recognized in the data nor adequately considered in socio-economic policy making. A macro- level Time Use Survey was conducted in six major States, viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Orissa and Tamil Nadu from July 1998 to June 1999 by the Central Statistical Organization. According to the survey, on average, females spent 34.6 hours per week in the production of 'own-account' services - which qualify for inclusion in the satellite accounts - as compared to 3.6 hours spent by a male.

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[88] Ibid. Menon-Sen and Shiva Kumar, p.53
[89] Ibid.
[90] National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, *Report on Gender Diagnosis and Budgeting in India,* December, 2001

Women who do work outside the home are paid on average 30% less than men. The majority of those who participate in home based work were found to be earning just 50% of the official poverty level income in India[91]. If women have the opportunity to work outside the home, they face the prospect of low wages, insecure jobs in a male dominated society and even, at times, sexual harassment.

The increase of women in the workforce in India can be explained as follows. First, more women now have to work to ensure family survival in the face of declining real wages and the increased monetary cost of subsistence resulting from cutbacks in both public services and subsidies for staple foods. Second, the number of female-headed households in which women are required to meet the monetary cost of household survival from their own labour, have increased. Third, the demand for female workers as 'cheap' and 'docile' labour has grown in particular sectors of the economy.

Despite the increase in the number of women joining the workforce, there has been a decline in the proportion of jobs that have security of employment, or rights against unfair dismissal, pensions, health insurance and maternity. Women in many economic sectors in India rarely enjoy the wide spectrum of social and economic rights specified in national and international legislation, e.g., the right to favourable conditions of work, the right to equal pay for equal work, the right to social protection or the right to form and join trade unions.

Limited or no access to education

In 1951, India' s female literacy rate, for the entire population over 5 years of age, was barely 9%. At the time of the 1991 Census, only 39% of Indian women could read and write. And, according to the Human Development Report in 2001, female literacy rates have risen to 44.5%.[92] In the past 50 years, therefore, the literacy of women has increased fivefold. Table 1 shows the male/female disparity in enrolments in school, despite the increase in female enrolments, since 1951.

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[91] Ibid. pp.55-56
[92] UNDP, *Human Development Report 2001*, 2001, p.212

Table 1. Sex-Wise Enrolment By Stages/Classes Since 1951-Second Level (In Millions) in India

Year	Primary			Middle / Upper Primary			High/High Sec/Inter/Pre-Degree		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	13.8	5.4	19.2	2.6	0.5	3.1	1.3	0.2	1.5
1955-60	17.1	7.5	24.6	3.8	1.0	4.8	2.2	0.4	2.6
1960-61	23.6	11.4	35.0	5.1	1.6	6.7	2.7	0.7	3.4
1965-70	32.2	18.3	50.5	7.7	2.8	10.5	4.4	1.3	5.7
1970-71	35.7	21.3	57.0	9.4	3.9	13.3	5.7	1.9	7.6
1975-76	40.6	25.0	65.6	11.0	5.0	16.0	6.5	2.4	8.9
1980-81	45.3	28.5	73.8	13.9	6.8	20.7	7.6	3.4	11.0
1985-86	52.2	35.2	87.4	17.7	9.6	27.3	11.5	5.0	16.5
1990-91	57.0	40.4	97.4	21.5	12.5	34.0	12.8	6.3	19.1
1991-92	58.6	42.3	100.9	22.0	13.6	35.6	13.5	6.9	20.4
1992-93	57.9	41.7	99.6	21.2	12.9	34.1	13.6	6.9	20.5
1993-94	55.1	41.9	97.0	20.6	13.5	34.1	13.2	7.5	20.7
1994-95*	61.3	40.8	102.1	24.5	15.8	40.3	16.0	8.4	24.4
1995-96*	62.4	47.4	109.8	25.0	16.0	41.0	16.1	8.8	24.9
1996-97*	62.5	47.9	110.4	24.7	16.3	41.0	17.2	9.8	27.0
1997-98*	61.2	47.5	108.7	23.7	15.8	39.5	17.1	10.2	27.3
1998-99*	62.7	48.2	110.9	24.0	16.3	40.3	17.3	10.5	27.8
1999-2000*	64.1	49.5	113.6	25.1	16.9	42.0	17.2	10.9	28.1

*Provisional Source: Selected Educational Statistics 1999-2000, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India

Despite this progress, close to 245 million Indian women lack the basic ability to read and write. Female literacy levels vary dramatically between States. The National Sample Survey data for 1997 are sobering. Only Kerala and Mizoram

have even approached universal female literacy. In Orissa, Rajasthan and Bihar, less than 40% of adult women know how to read and write.[93]

Studies have revealed that barriers to girls' participation in education range from social norms to family economics on the demand side, and from classroom practices to lack of infrastructure on the supply side.[94] Because the cost of sending a child to school is so great, it is often the case that more boys are educated than girls. ' Girls grow up to get married, thus what use is an education?' is an argument often espoused by parents whose daughters plead for an education. Girls are educated for marriage, to appeal to perspective in-laws, and a formal education is not considered important enough to forfeit an extra worker in the home or field[95]. Figure 1 shows the state-wise school attendance rates for girls between the ages of 6 and 14.

A study, summarized in Figure 2, has proven the importance of education for women by demonstrating a link between an uneducated mother and infant mortality. It is shown that "a few years of schooling for the mother has been found to reduce the infant mortality rate by almost 40%".[96]

Both national and state efforts have been launched to remove the barriers to girls' education and accelerate their access to schooling. Responsive management structures, decentralized decision-making and community support have helped catalyse an enabling environment for girls' education, especially in the states and districts with low female literacy rates. Lok Jumbish in Rajasthan and the nation-wide District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) have led this transformation.

To supplement the efforts of the Department of Education, the Department for Women and Child Development (DWCD) is leading the Girls' Primary Education Programme (GPEP) in two states with the lowest female literacy rates, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Here efforts are focused on increasing girls' access to

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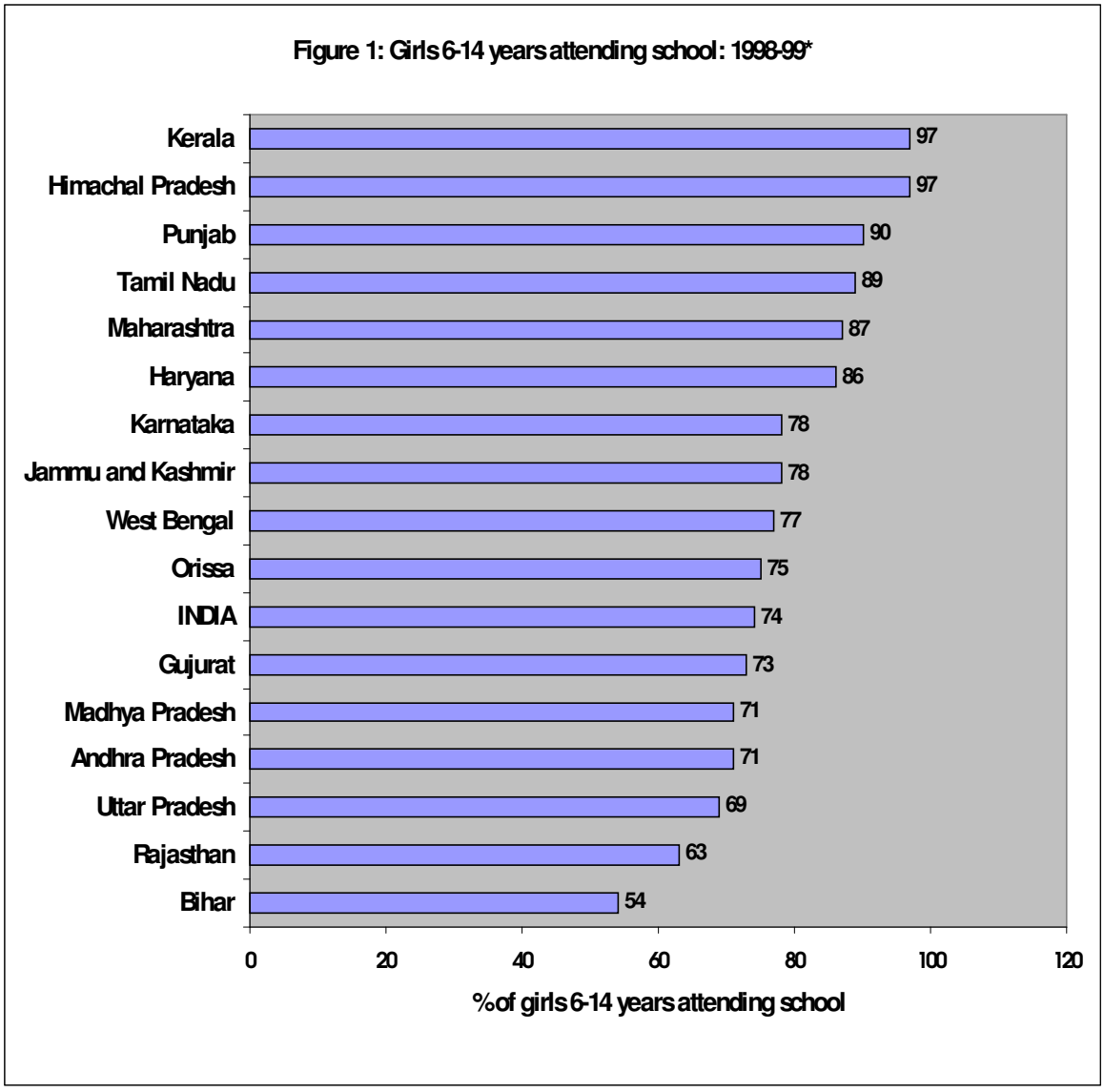
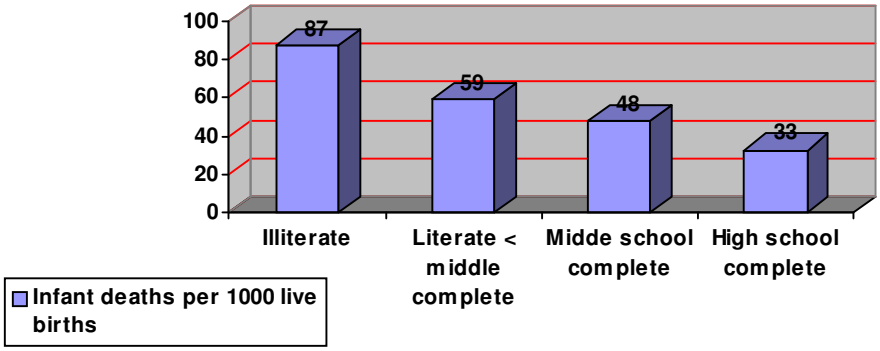
[93] Ibid. Menon-Sen and Shiva Kumar p.53
[94] Ibid. Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Women and Child Development, *Platform for Action,* p.19
[95] Ibid. Balani, V., pp.178-181
[96] Ibid. Menon-Sen and Shiva Kumar. pp.26-27

education in partnership with local non-government organizations and community groups.



*Source:Menon-Sen, K. and Shiva Kumar, A.K., *Women in India: How Free? How Equal?*, report commissioned by the Office of the Resident Coordinator in India, p.45

Figure 2. Infant Mortality by Levels of Mother' s Education[97]



The importance of non-formal education in bridging the access gap has been highlighted in the Platform for Action and recommended as a strategy to assist girls and women in achieving educational goals. In India multiple kinds of non-formal education programmes have been started to cater to different groups. For working children, including girls who have household responsibilities, the Non-Formal Education scheme has been specially devised. For adults who need functional literacy, there is the Total Literacy Campaign, which has been conducted in all states.

It is crucial to identify specific constraints and needs of women throughout the life cycle. Education and health investment at the early phase of women's lives can result in high dividends of empowerment. As this can contribute to breaking the cycle of the inter-generational transfer of poverty. Adolescent girls, in particular, are often the first to drop out of school and miss out on education. Training could enable them to have better lives.

Maternal and child health

The health care system in India is biased towards the urban elite, which has resulted in neglecting the needs of the rural and urban poor. For example, about 12% of children (up to 4 years of age) in rural areas and about 29% in urban areas are estimated to have access to health care. In 1951, an Indian woman could

[97] Ibid. p.27

expect to live no longer than 32 years. The average female life expectancy today is still relatively low at a little over 63 years[98] (see Table 2 for a summary of female life expectancy 1993- 1997, i.e., the study period). This abnormal low average is mainly because female mortality rates are generally higher than those of males. However, it is ingrained in the social structure in which the girls grow up. "Micro-level studies have shown that baby girls are more likely to die in families where there is an older male sibling" thus demonstrating the preference of boys over girls[99]. Sex determination tests, enabling parents to abort female fetuses, along with a prolonged history of female infanticide has resulted in the population of women being only 92.3% that of men in India as a whole[100].

The statistics on *maternal* mortality are also terrifying. Approximately 300 Indian women die every day of pregnancy-related causes or during childbirth. This is roughly equivalent to one death every five minutes. More than 40% of these deaths are in Uttar Pradesh, where there is a maternal death every minute. According to UNICEF:

"In India, as in many developing countries, maternal mortality accounts for the largest or near largest proportion of deaths among women in their prime years…It is estimated that, out of half a million maternal deaths in the world each year, about 20 percent are in India--the highest number in any one country."[101]

The main reasons for high maternal mortality rates are malnutrition, anaemia, pregnancy at high risk ages (below 19 and above 35), low economic status, multiple births, short time periods between births, disease, inadequate and inaccessible health care, lack of literacy, and unsafe abortion (National Commission for Women, 1996; UNICEF, 1990, 1995, 1996). Underlying these immediate causes is a long chain of invisible causes - overwork, lack of control over fertility and lack of access to basic amenities like clean water and sanitation.[102]

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[98] Ibid. p.20
[99] Ibid. pp.21-26
[100] Ibid. p.13
[101] Ibid. UNICEF, *Children and Women in India,* p.14-15
[102] Ibid. Menon-Sen and Shiva Kumar p.34

Table 2. Female Life Expectancy at Birth (1992-96 & 1993-97) in India			
Rank (1993-1997)	India/States	Life expectancy at birth	
		1992-96	1993-97
1	Madhya Pradesh	54.7	55.2
2	Uttar Pradesh	56.4	56.9
3	Orissa	56.6	57
4	Assam	56.6	57.1
5	Bihar	58.2	58.4
6	Rajasthan	59.6	60.1
	INDIA	**61.4**	**61.8**
7	Gujarat	62.5	62.9
8	Andhra Pradesh	63	63.5
9	West Bengal	63.1	63.6
10	Haryana	64.3	64.6
11	Karnataka	64.5	64.9
12	Tamil Nadu	64.8	65.1
13	Himachal Pradesh	65	65.2
14	Maharashtra	66.2	66.6
15	Punjab	68.6	68.8
16	Kerala	75.8	75.9

Source: Annual Report 2001-02 of Department for Women and Child Development, Department of Human Resources, Government of India

Reproductive rates in India are estimated at 400 to 500 out of 100,000, a rate about 50 times higher than the more industrialized countries.[103] On average, Indian women have 6 to 7 pregnancies, resulting in 5 to 6 live births of which 4 to 5 survive.[104] Therefore, the majority of women' s reproductive years are spent in lactation and pregnancy. The nutritional needs of women during these years are higher than they are at other life stages, but malnutrition and low caloric intake is a consistent fact of poor women' s lives. Additionally, a lack of choice forces poor

[103] Ibid. UNICEF, *Children and Women in India,* p.14
[104] Ibid. p.11

women to continue active hard work through this reproductive period, increasing nutritional depletion, anaemia and stress.

Early marriage and, consequently, early childbirth, both realities for many Indian women, increase the number of women at risk during pregnancy and childbirth. More than half of the marriages (54.4%) that take place in India each year involve women under the age of 18.[105] In Madhya Pradesh, 73.3% of girls get married before the age of 18, which is a sharp contrast to Kerala, where only 19.3% of girls get married before age 18.[106]Average age of marriage of rural girls in Madhya Pradesh is 14.3 years.[107] Early marriage strains on a woman naturally affect not only her well-being but also that of her unborn child, creating conditions of low birth weight, miscarriages, stillbirths, and intrauterine deaths. For example, in India, 30 to 40 percent of babies are underweight (2.5 kilograms or less) as a result of the mother' s low weight[108]. Although the rates of infant mortality have decreased over the years, the figures continue to be unacceptably high. The infant mortality rate for India at the beginning of the 20th century was 220 per 1,000 births. At the time of independence in 1947, the rate was 160, and in 1988 the rate was 94[109]. According to UNICEF, the 2.5 million infant deaths (0-12 months), 1.5 million deaths of children between 1 and 5 years, the 300,000 to 700,000 stillbirths, and about 125,000 maternal deaths each year are "largely avoidable" and "add up to an unconscionable level".[110]

Empowerment of women

According to the 2001 Human Development Report, there is no data on the gender empowerment measure (GEM).[111] Even though the empowerment of women has been acknowledged in policies and programmes at the national and international levels as a critical factor in breaking the cycle of poverty it has not been sufficiently

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[105] UNFPA, *Programme Review and Strategy Development, India,* undated, Annexe 1, Table 3, p. 97
[106] Ibid.
[107] International Institute of Population Sciences, *National Family Welfare Survey, 1998-99*, Mumbai: October 2000, p.43
[108] UNICEF, *A Programme of Cooperation for Children and Women in India: Master Plan of Operations 2003-2007*, 2003, p.25
[109] Ibid. UNICEF, *Children and Women in India,* p.22-23
[110] Ibid. p.33

taken into account and translated into action because of an unjust, unfair and corrupt distribution system.

It was agreed upon by the above-mentioned expert group meeting in Delhi that empowerment draws and builds on positive aspects of a variety of knowledge systems, including indigenous knowledge systems. A large majority of peoples in the world understand themselves not only as material beings but also as spiritual beings, and are as much concerned with social and moral well being as with material progress. Hence, empowerment programmes aimed at a process of transformation throughout the life cycles of women should draw on resources of both reason and faith in the process of individual and societal transformation. This kind of process needs to facilitate more access to holistic training in entrepreneurship development, credit, technical services and marketing based on social and spiritual values.

The impact of empowerment can be seen in a progression consisting of changed individuals, changed groups/communities, new organizations for the poor, women-friendly institutions in the support system and new social movements e.g., The Self-employed Women' s Association (SEWA and the CHIPKO Movement).

4.3. Status of Women in Madhya Pradesh

The State of Madhya Pradesh (M.P.) is the largest state in India in terms of area. Data from the 2001 census revealed that it has a population of 60,385,118 making it the sixth most populous state in the country.[112] Life expectancy for women in MP is 57 years, 6 years below the national average.[113] The sex ratio is a worrying 117 males for every 100 females and the child-woman ratio is 614 children per 100 women, which averages out at least 6 children per woman over the age of 15.[114] Only 44% of couples in the state use any form of contraception.

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[111] Ibid. UNDP, *Human Development Report,* p.216
[112] Madhya Pradesh Voluntary Health Association, *Comparative Statistics – India, M.P. & Chattisgarh: Census of India 2001, Provisional Population Totals*, 2001
[113] Ibid. Menon-Sen and Shiva Kumar. p.22
[114] *Madhya Pradesh Demography*, http://education.vsnl.com/shyam/mpdemog.html

Figure 2 reveals that 79% of women in the state marry before the age of 18, compared to the National Average of 65%.[115]

To summarize the statistics, in Madhya Pradesh there are:

- 920 women per 1000 men[116];
- The male literacy rate among tribals is 26% and the tribal female literacy rate is about 9%[117], the *Bhil* and *Bhilala* literacy rate for females is 1.12%[118]
- High rates of female and infant mortality;
- A low number of girls going to school;
- A high percentage of child marriages;
- A high percentage of violence against women;
- A low fulfillment of posts on reserved seats for women in jobs;
- A low number of women in professional jobs;
- A low success rate for women's programmes run by the Government.

In 1988, 94% of the female work force in Madhya Pradesh was in the unorganized or informal job sector (low or unpaid and unskilled)[119]. Girls in the state are not sent to school, therefore 92.2% of tribal girls are illiterate, according to a report from the National Women's Commission in 1994. In rural villages, out of every 1000 girls, 53 girls drop out at the primary level, 15 girls pass primary school, one girl attains secondary school education and one passes 12th class.[120]

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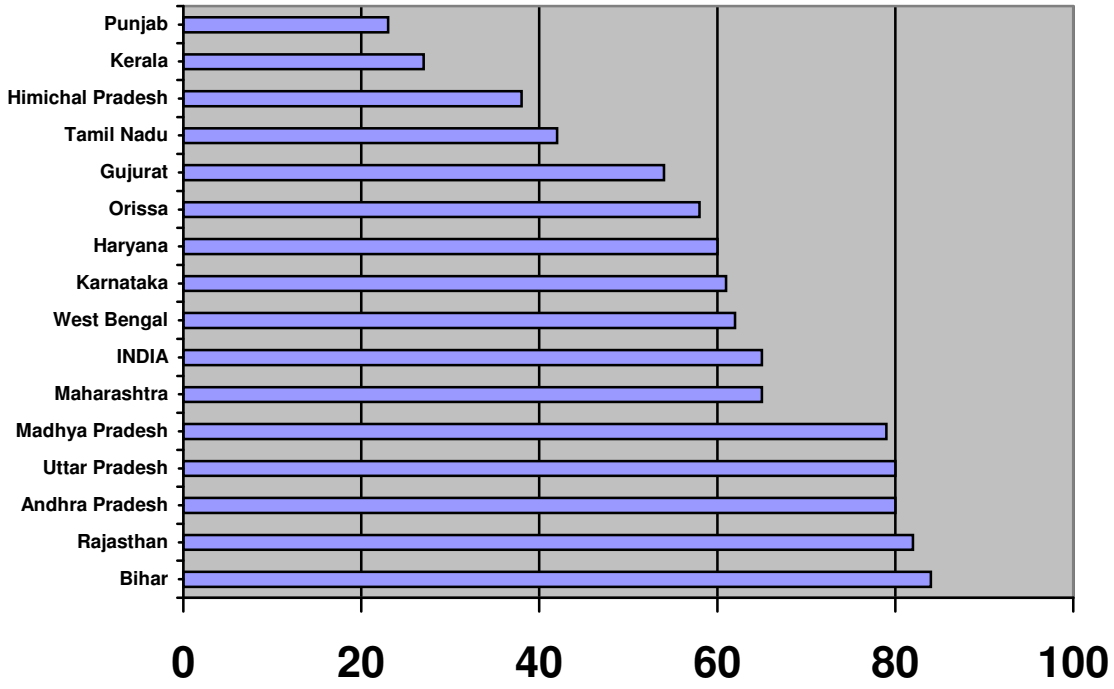
[115] Ibid. Menon-Sen and Shiva Kumar. p.62
[116] Ibid. M.P. Voluntary Health Association, p.7
[117] National Commission for Women, *Report on Development of Female Education among Tribal Communities New Delhi,* November 1994, p.51
[118] Ibid. p.54
[119] Ibid. Herrmann, L., p.10
[120] Ibid. National Commission for Women, *Report on Development,* Annexure 6

Figure 2. % of Women Married Under the Age of 18



Women and health in Madhya Pradesh

According to the Madhya Pradesh Voluntary Health Association, out of every one lakh women, 800 die giving birth, 100 die while pregnant, of which 28 die of poisoning, 23 from anemia and jaundice, and 22 from excess bleeding during delivery.[121] Table 3 shows that Madhya Pradesh has one of the lowest percentages of births attended by a health professional. This statistic has not changed since 1992.

According to UNICEF, Bhopal, M. P. has the highest rate of infant mortality out of all the states of India.[122] Out of 1000 children, 108 die before the age of one and a third of the children are underweight and thus susceptible to various diseases. According to UNICEF, in Madhya Pradesh, every year 100 lakh girls die before the age of one and 8.5 lakh die before the age of 5.[123] Unsanitary and unsafe conditions at birth and resultant infections are factors that increase the risk

[121] Raj Bhujbal, *An Overview of Development Process in Madhya Pradesh,* Madhya Pradesh Voluntary Health Association, 1996
[122] For more information, kindly refer to the British Library, Bhopal

Table 3. Births Attended by a Health Professional (%)			
	1992 - 93	1998 - 99	Change
INDIA	**34**	**43**	**8**
Andhra Pradesh	49	65	16
Himachal Pradesh	26	40	15
Punjab	48	63	14
Rajasthan	22	36	14
Delhi	53	67	14
Orissa	21	34	13
Tamil Nadu	71	84	13
Haryana	30	42	12
Jammu and Kashmir	31	43	12
West Bengal	33	44	11
Gujurat	43	54	11
Karnataka	51	59	8
Maharashtra	53	59	6
Kerela	90	95	5
Uttar Pradesh	17	22	5
Bihar	19	24	5
Goa	88	91	3
Madhya Pradesh	30	30	0

Source:Menon-Sen, K. and Shiva Kumar, A.K., *Women in India: How Free? How Equal?,* report commissioned by the Office of the Resident Coordinator in India, p.37

of infant mortality. A lack of efficient and accessible health care or birth attendants during this time makes it difficult to deal with complications that may have been averted with the right attention. Sometimes clean instruments make the difference between life and death for a mother and her newborn baby. The number of births attended at home by family members or local midwives far exceeds the number attended at a health centre or at home by trained professionals or nurses. In Madhya Pradesh, the percentage of the former was 86.2% in 1987 (UNICEF, 1990).

[123] Ibid.

Discrimination against women' s personal rights

In this state, every year, many child marriages take place. In January 1999 the National Women' s Commission publishedNational Women. According to this report, in Madhya Pradesh, 15.4% of girls are married between 10 and 14 years of age. Knowledgeable people think that this problem is due to orthodox behaviour, illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. This author relates a personal story:

"One day I went with my husband to a village, Nirinjanpur, close to Indore, to buy wheat for the Institute. When we reached there we saw a small new baby frock sitting on a cot, I eagerly asked ‘Auntie, is there a new born baby?’ Auntie went to a neighbouring room and returned with a boy of 5 or 6, he was only wearing a *baniyan* (vest), with his nose running, and sucking his thumb. She then told me the dress was for his bride. I asked why she was marrying this small boy even though her family was in a better condition. She told me that, in Khati, caste marriages are arranged at a younger age because society today is not good and problems with rape are increasing so security is provided for the girl if they marry at a younger age."

4.4. Status of Women in Rural and Tribal Communities

Rural people are often referred to as “backward classes”, but within such groups there are degrees of “backwardness” or deprivation. The definition of what constitutes a ' tribe' has remained unclear since the term was first used to provide special privileges to Scheduled Tribes in the Indian Constitution, codified in 1947. The Government' s role in the economic and political development of the tribal communities has been recognized since Independence, and schemes are often set up for this purpose. Two such examples are the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), which uses funding from the World Bank to promote immunisations, health awareness and education for women and children, and the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). Even where the infrastructure is developed, (for example health centres, biogas plants, schools and regular

immunisations), it is the widespread ignorance of and reluctance to use these facilities that restricts the development of the rural areas.

According to Singh and Rajyalakshmi in 1993, a tribal woman is often seen as being better off than her non-tribal counterparts. There is no child marriage, no stigma on widowhood, she enjoys the right to decide about her marriage, and, instead of dowry there is a bride price, all which indicate the higher social status of tribal women compared to scheduled caste women. In addition, they continue, a tribal woman can divorce and remarry easily and earn money outside the home and is, therefore, to a great extent economically independent[124].

However, a tribal woman does not have property rights except in a few matrilineal populations. She is paid less for her work than her male counterpart and there are several unspoken social norms that discriminate against tribal women, reinforcing their low status.[125]

The status of any social group is determined by its levels of health-nutrition, literacy-education and employment-income.[126] Research on the health of tribal women is scarce and inadequate, yet the few studies done indicate that their health is considerably worse than the national averages. For example, tribal women have higher fertility and maternal mortality rates, higher malnutrition levels, and higher levels of anaemia than the national averages. Infant mortality rates amongst tribal communities are also higher than those of the national average (Basu,1993; National Commission for Women, 1996; Singh & Rajyalakshmi, 1993).

Health and nutrition

Basu has prepared a review of the health status of tribal women. He states that the health and nutrition problems of the tribal population in India are as varied as the populations themselves[127]. Basu reports that the calorie intake and diet of *all*

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[124] Singh, Amar Kumar and Rajyalakshmi, C., "Status of Tribal Women in India," *Social Change*, Vol. 23, No. 4, December, 1993, p.7
[125] Ibid. p.7
[126] Ibid. p.8
[127] Basu, S.K., "Health status of tribal women in India," *Social Change*, Vol.23, No.2 & 3, 1993, p.30

tribal populations in India are inadequate, and that they particularly lack proteins, calcium, iron and vital vitamins. This has a significant detrimental affect on childbearing women and young children especially. In addition, Basu rightly states that life expectancy is a good indicator of the health of girls and women. Among tribal groups in Madhya Pradesh, for example, the average life expectancy for tribal women is 42 years[128], which is 15 years *lower* than the state average for women and 21 years *lower* than the national average.[129]

Health care in rural areas is generally very poor, with diseases such as malaria, polio, various skin problems, and diarrhoea prevalent in most communities. Poor diets, a result of poverty and changing agriculture, a lack of sanitation and under-stocked health facilities and dispensaries all contribute to the poor health of rural and tribal peoples. State health care in rural areas is, when available, neglected and under used by the communities it serves to help. It is also an issue that, when nurses and doctors do visit villages, they do not necessarily perform the job that they have been employed to do. Some of these poor practices include, for example, leaving medicine in the clinic, not dispensing it with advice, and making little effort to monitor the families in the village as they are meant to.[130] The corruption and subsequent cost of modern health treatment has perpetuated the use of indigenous medical practices.

Tribal communities often have a deep-rooted faith in ancestral religious beliefs that focus on the relationship between the human and spiritual world, often known as *animism*. This religious belief system denotes that after death the soul becomes a spiritual force and thus ancestor worship along with a belief in spirit possession and witchcraft through *Badwas* (local healers) prevail among many tribal communities. These traditional beliefs have been fused over the years with many Hindu traditions and often harmoniously co-exist. In times of illness, spiritual forces are often thought to be the cause, thus reducing the communities use of the modern health system. Another factor is that family-planning programmes bring back memories of past propagation of sterilization as the only method of birth

[128] Ibid. p.30
[129] Ibid. Menon-Sen and Shiva. p.22

control in rural communities. It is no wonder then that the majority of tribal women are wary of going to, or taking their families to the doctor.

Employment and income

A very large majority of tribals (almost 90%) are engaged in agriculture. Other economic activities include food gathering (including hunting and fishing), pastoral work, handicrafts, trade and commerce, and industrial labour. Less than 10% of tribal women are involved in activities other than agriculture. This category includes livestock, forestry, mining, quarrying, manufacturing, processing, servicing and household repairs as well as non-household industries, trade/commerce and services. Tribals are rarely engaged in only one occupation. [131]

Increased government control of forests has disturbed the tribal economy. This has adversely affected tribals' lives, particularly those of women. Minor forest produce forms a major source of income in many tribal communities, especially those having less than five acres of land. Women and children are, almost exclusively, involved in the collection, storage, processing and marketing of minor forest produce.[132] The appointing of agents from outside for collecting forest produce has not only affected the tribal livelihood, but has also made the work of women more difficult. Collection of fuelwood has become more difficult since the wood is less accessible and therefore more time-consuming. The result has been less income combined with less fuelwood available for themselves and a decrease in nutrition. It also leaves women with hardly any time for earning wages. A recent publication, Women, Energy and Development,[133] notes how the "monetary value of the unpaid work of women in collecting biofuels at the minimum wage is equivalent to Rs. 101 billion or around 2% of India' s GDP." These activities consume "8.44 billion person days", that is equivalent to 34 million full time jobs.

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[130] Ibid. Balani, V., pp.163-164
[131] Ibid. Singh and Rajyalakshmi, p.13
[132] Roy Burman, B.K., "Challenges of development & Tribal Women in India" *Tribal Women and Development*, Singh, J.P.(ed), Jaipur Publishers, 1988, pp.11-27
[133] Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources, *Women, Energy and Development*, 2001, p.11

The changing economy

Urban legal systems were expanded to cover the newly populated areas, allowing moneylenders and traders to set up business, often leaving the tribal people no choice but to lose their economic independence. The existence of an exchange economy, where services are traded in place of money, is no longer sustainable with the growth of the weekly *Haat* in tribal life. Cottage industries are now the only hope for the women of these villages. A cottage industry is "an industry where the creation of products and services is home-based, rather than factory-based. While products and services created by cottage industry are often unique and distinctive given the fact that they are usually not mass-produced, producers in this sector often face numerous disadvantages when trying to compete with much larger factory-based companies".[134] The rural and tribal women from these areas are restricted by mobility, social pressures and a lack of education and self-confidence.

4.5. Need for Study in Madhya Pradesh

The tribal population of India in 1991 numbered around 68 million people, with the highest number of tribal communities living in Madhya Pradesh - around 24% of the national tribal population[135]. In this state, there are around 48 tribes and sub-tribes. These communities have the highest proportion of socially and economically marginalized people, with 52.6% living below the poverty line, compared to a national average of 33.4%. The state is recognized for its poor infrastructure and high illiteracy and infant mortality rates. Over 60% of its citizens are living below the poverty line.

With the population increasing at the second highest rate of all Indian states, Madhya Pradesh' s natural resources are being depleted beyond the state' s ability to regenerate them and it already ranks the lowest in terms of the Human Development Index[136] in all India. The entire region is marked by chronic poverty

[134] http://www.investwords.com/1163/cottage_industry.html
[135] Ibid. Balani, V., pp.95-97
[136] The Human Development Index is a summary of human development which measures the overall achievements in three basic dimensions of human development: Longevity, knowledge and

and malnutrition due, in part, to poor crop yields, dependence upon agriculture, large-scale deforestation, frequent droughts, a shortage of drinking water and poor soil.

With an absence of capital to provide a buffer in difficult times or for investing in seeds, fertilizer and other necessities, many agricultural workers and their families are forced to borrow money for investments and food. Sadly, a situation has arisen where non-tribal people have not only taken control over the most productive land, but have functioned as middlemen in marketing and loans. They frequently take advantage of the poorer tribal people by introducing very high interest rates and by siphoning off profits from crop sales. Low literacy levels make deception easier (e.g. in the transfer of land). Added to this situation is the fact that yields, in relation to investments, are very low, so it is virtually impossible for farmers to earn enough from crop sales to pay back their loans.

In rural areas with high concentrations of tribal peoples, the economy is primarily a subsistence level economy, with immediate needs for food and water being people' s major concerns. Many tribal people are also nomadic or semi-nomadic which creates further problems for sustained improvement of human resources. Migration of the men to work as labourers also causes social and economic disruptions. Unfortunately, such a short-term focus for survival is not conducive to long-term planning or sustainable development, with the needs of today valued far greater than the needs of an uncertain future. Environmental improvement is not a high priority.

Environmental health risks, such as the presence of human and animal excreta and a lack of safe drinking water are products of poverty, lack of education and poor infrastructure. Millions in India suffer from an unsafe environment causing anaemia, parasitic worm infections, malnutrition and a high infant mortality rate.

The poor environmental health in many of the villages is exacerbated by a lack of awareness in the tribal and rural communities about the nature and causes of environmental problems and their, often simple, solutions. Poor environmental

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a decent standard of living. It is measured by life-expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted income per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP) in US dollars. Ibid. UNDP, *Human Development*

health in itself also leaves communities vulnerable to economic change and periods of drought/flood and disease. Whilst drought is a natural disaster, the way that water sources have been mismanaged by the government and affluent local landowners has placed a significant strain on the rural and agricultural communities. Water has become a scarce resource, forcing women (and their families) to restrict their farming activities to just a few months of the year, if at all, necessitating their migration to other areas in search of employment. During years of drought the conditions can be so bad that workers are often forced into anti-social activities, such as robbery, in order to survive. Because of this, tribal areas have garnered a reputation for being violent.

Deforestation has had almost the same affect, diminishing the land available for cattle to graze and the possibilities to gather firewood, essential for tribal villages. Thus women are forced to labour on construction sites, or sell what they can gather (firewood, or cow dung cakes for fuel) in order to feed themselves and their families. They often work long hours for little money. Although the government has started reforestation programmes to aid the situation, these are slow and may have corrupt landowners or wardens in-charge, diminishing the affect that the programmes have.

4.6. Need for the Study of Tribal Women in Jhabua and Dhar Districts

Jhabua district is a prime example of the designation “backward area” as it is one of the poorest in developmental achievement and potential in Madhya Pradesh. It forms the core of a belt of resource-scarce land in the west of the state. Jhabua has the highest tribal concentration in Madhya Pradesh - 83.5% - compared to a national average of 7.8%. The primary tribal peoples are *Bhils* who were originally forest people. As such they were famous archers. A sub-group of *Bhils* is the *Bhilallas*, who were offspring of ruling chiefs of the area and their *Bhil* wives. This latter group regard themselves more highly. *Bhils* are settled farmers and hard workers, but their yields are too low to give them year round sustenance. However, they have had long and continuous interaction with advanced

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Report, pp.144-146

communities since many of the *Bhil* people are migrant labourers and must leave their villages 3-8 months per year to work as manual labourers in cities.

In addition to this economic hardship, the tradition of making their own liquor and drinking has further inhibited their development. "Drinking and free use of arrows is also partially responsible for a high crime rate in the area," says Joshi.[137] In order to marry, a *Bhil* youth must save up 2000-3000 rupees for a bride price payable to the girl's family. Daughters are therefore considered assets. Then, when married, *Bhils* move into their own house on their own land. This creates a settlement pattern of widely scattered villages.

The physical appearance of the land is a series of denuded, brown, rolling hills with many loose pebbles. Its slopes are heavily eroded and most of its forests are gone. Within a short span of only 60-70 years the "large-scale devastation of forest-cover has resulted in a virtual total loss of soil layer leading to desert like situation."[138] There is little flat land and that which is relatively flat is known as "rath land" or rugged terrain. Although there are two major rivers in the region, the Narmada in the South and the Mahi in the North, only the Narmada is perennial, but it has no practical significance for the area since it converts into dry bed during the summer.[139]

Development projects have been intensified in this area since the late 1970's and yet the situation is more fragile and grave today than ever. Joshi asks the question, "Why?" Why, in spite of an increased input of money, training and resources, does this area remain among the most backward in all of India?[140] The most striking feature of this district is the depletion of its natural resources and the increase of its population. There is a "disequilibrium between the available manpower and resources" notes Joshi.[141] As a short answer to the question, there is no balance between growth and consumption of natural resources. There is a surplus of human resources while simultaneously a deficit of good soil, crop yields,

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[137] Joshi, Y.G., *Development in Overexploited Tribal Regions*, Inter-India Publications, 1990, p.68
[138] Ibid. p.50
[139] Ibid. p.57
[140] Ibid. p.25
[141] Ibid. p.18

water, and forests. Population growth was 415% between 1911-1981, twice the average for the state. During the decade of 1981-1991, population growth increased 42.16%. Joshi refers to the chronic scarcity of the resources of the region, which makes poverty endemic.

Literacy rates for Madhya Pradesh in general are low (only 27.9%) for both men and women. Among the tribal people literacy is only 10.7%, but among women it drops to about 1.6%. That figure had risen to 6.83% by 1991, but in Jhabua district, there is only 6% literacy and you can hardly find a girl out of 1000 with 10^{th} pass. Low literacy, however, cannot be ascribed to lack of educational facilities. These are distributed throughout the region in roughly the same density as for other areas of the state. So, what is *not* functioning? Rather than ascribe the lack of progress to people's recalcitrance to change or resistance for new ideas, Joshi attributes the continued backwardness of the region to the inability of the populace to absorb and integrate the developmental measures invested to date. "Efforts have not been able to generate a self mechanism of development in the region."[142] On the basis of my observations, during the last 20 years, the tribal communities have made practically no significant progress. One of the reasons is that no effective sustainable development and vocational programmes have been implemented to improve the social and economic status of this area.

To most of the remote villages of Jhabua, Dhar and Khargone, there is no transport service. Every week people meet in the weekly *Haat* and share all the news with each other. These villages have no arrangement for sending letters so it is almost impossible to send or receive news from outside the villages. Though Madhya Pradesh has announced that all villages have electricity connections, where there are electricity connections, there is often no power supply for several days. Only those villages that are adjacent to the road have means of communication like T.V., radio, telephones, etc. Data collected from 1,335 (trainees from the Institute) from more than 200 villages, it was found that only 20 villages have these facilities.

4.7. The Role of Women in Sustainable Community Development

The reconstruction of India is only possible if women achieve equal status in development. Then, and only then, will we have peace. It is important to treat the symptoms of the disease, but it is more important to dig out the root causes and remove them from society. This requires a conscious effort to empower women with equal rights of education, training and opportunities for being decision-makers at all levels, in form and in spirit. Changing the attitudes of all those men and women who deny this spiritual and social justice to women is a necessity.

The underlying causes perpetuating the cycle of poverty, illiteracy and disease can be attributed primarily to the attachment to those traditional attitudes and practices which block or impede any attempt to initiate development activities. Women in particular have been repressed and exploited, hindering the development of self-respect and self-confidence and, in turn, keeping them from participating in and benefiting from development work. Children are deprived of lifesaving vaccines and oral rehydration therapy because of prevailing superstitions and traditional beliefs. Girls are not sent to school because of the negative attitude towards females.

The Institute desires to bring about positive changes, starting with those who are the backbone of the communities and who will pass knowledge on to the future generations - the women. Furthermore, women are those who face more abundant and urgent problems, suffering overall oppression within society, on physical, social and mental levels. For example, they are often the driving force behind land cultivation, yet the amount of land that actually lies in the hands of women is extremely disproportionate and they are unable to make decisions about what happens to the earth as well as to themselves.

To eliminate poverty and to positively develop, to rise and to keep rising from the bondage that has forever been imposed, women must be given knowledge and skills, and become part of their own development process. The input of women in the field of action and at levels of designing and administering programmes is crucial. It is the strong opinion of the Institute that women not only

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[142] Ibid. p.229

need equal rights, education, and opportunities, but equal participation as members of society in all areas. Through its years of working with tribal and rural women, the Institute is sure that, once empowered, these women are more effective in social change and community development than men.

Chapter 5: Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women Philosophy and Profile

This chapter deals with the guiding principles emanating from Bahá'í philosophy that form the basis of vision, concepts, curriculum, administrative and working pattern and behaviour of the staff and the management. It also outlines the profile of the organization, reflecting how a conscious effort has always been made to apply these principles in action. The chapter also discusses how, having internalized these principles, the trainees were able to have transforming effects in their communities.

5.1. Philosophy of the Institute

As already stated in Chapter 1, the Bahá'í Vocational Institute is inspired by the Bahá'í philosophy. Its concepts, methodology and administration are run according to the Bahá'í teachings. Finding ways to serve mankind is a part of daily life and one important aspect of this belief is that social and economic development should begin at the local level of society.[143] "Progress in the development field will largely depend on natural stirrings at the grassroots, and it should receive its driving force from those sources rather than from an imposition of plans and programmes from the top. Locally initiated activities preserve human honour; they are effective and they develop people' s skills. When development begins at the local level, it can be a process that transforms society".[144] However, stimulation is sometimes needed from the top.

Hanson Vick states that "The Bahá'í Faith is a functioning, world-embracing, economic, administrative and spiritual system that directs our aspirations to serve mankind into effective action."[145]

In order to achieve development in society it is essential that women be recognized as equal partners. In reality women have been neglected all over the

[143] Ibid. Hanson Vick, H., p.61
[144] Ibid. p.66
[145] Ibid. p.98

world. This was very clearly reflected in the theme of the Fourth World Women's Conference held in Beijing in 1995, which was 'Equality, Development and Peace'. According to Bahá'í philosophy, neither peace nor development can be achieved without giving equal status to women.[146] Equality of man and woman is one of the fundamental principles of the Bahá'í Faith and its importance has been emphasized in many writings.

"The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life and, ultimately, to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge."[147]

The Bahá'í Faith unequivocally maintains the principle of equal rights, opportunities and privileges for men and women and it insists on compulsory education. Regarding the importance of education of women, it states:

"The only remedy is education, opportunity for equality means equal qualification and let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible...."[148]

Baha' u' llah did not leave this pronouncement of equality of the sexes as an ideal or pious hope but wove it, as a basic factor, into the fabric of his social order. He also supported it by laws requiring the same standard of education for women and men, and the equality of rights in society. Without the qualities, talents and skills of both men and women, full economic and social development of the planet becomes impossible.

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[146] For more details see Lee, K., *Prelude to the Lesser Peace*, New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993, Ch. 9 "Women: The Missing Factor in Establishing Peace"
[147] Ibid. Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of World Peace*, p.12.
[148] Ibid. Abdu' l-Baha*Promulgation of Universal Peace,* pp.76-77

He has promulgated, "the cause of universal education, which has already enlisted in its service an army of dedicated people from every faith and nation, deserves the utmost support that the governments of the world can lend it… No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded to all it citizens. Lack of resources limits the ability of many nations to fulfill this necessity, imposing a certain ordering of priorities. The decision making agencies involved would do well to consider giving first priority to the education of women and girls, since it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout the society."[149]

Taking into account the need of society to change its attitude towards women in order for equality to be achieved, the Bahá'í writings have cautioned humanity by clearly stating:

"Prejudice is indisputably the principle reason for the decline and fall of people and the perpetuation of ignorance…the assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible; woman' s aspiration towards advancement will be checked by it, and she will gradually become hopeless. On the contrary we must declare that her capacity is equal, even greater than man' s. This will inspire her with hope and ambition, and her susceptibilities for advancement will continually increase. She must not be told and taught that she is weaker and inferior in capacity and qualification. If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance by the statement, ' You are most capable and, if you endeavour, you will attain to the highest degree.' "[150]

To contribute to their societies, women require not only knowledge, experience and skills but also the inculcation of universal human values to develop a variety of capacities. Rural and tribal women were identified as a focus of the programmes of the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women because they are the most neglected of the neglected women in the country. The importance of this focus is

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[149] Hornby, H. (comp), *Lights of Guidance*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983, p.616
[150] Ibid.

explained in detail in chapter 4. An effort is made at the Institute to learn how to apply the above-mentioned principles of gender equality in the classes, administration and through disseminating information to the rural communities.

One of the challenges for any organization is to apply its own philosophy in its day to day working. The application of Bahá'í principles in a development institution, like the one under study, requires a unique combination of various capacities, which include the following:[151]

- To effect and manage change, and to respond creatively to challenges that lie before it;
- To maintain a clear perception of social reality and of the forces operating in it;
- To properly assess the resources of the community;
- To consult freely and harmoniously as a body and with one's constituency;
- To realize that every decision has both a material and spiritual dimension;
- To arrive at decisions in a manner that preserves and promotes institutional unity;
- To win the confidence, respect and genuine support of those affected by these decisions;
- To effectively use the energies and diverse talents of the members of the community it serves;
- To integrate the diversity of initiatives of individuals and groups into one forward movement that benefits all;
- To uphold standards of fairness and equity;
- To practice transparency and accountability;
- To implement decisions with an openness and flexibility that avoid all traces of dictatorial behaviour;
- To draw on both intellectual and moral resources.

[151] India International Centre, *Statement of Findings: Colloquium on Science, Religion & Development*, New Delhi: Sinai Enterprises, 2000, pp.8-9

5.1.1. Administrative System

Since there is no priestly class in the Bahá'í Faith, the affairs of the Bahá'í world are administered by democratically elected Institutions. These Institutions have a very unique administrative system. The Bahá'í administrative system is a tool for humanity to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. It has an inherent capacity to create order and well being in society. It puts spiritual principles into action in the material world and gives people a means to make decisions and work together successfully.[152]

One of the characteristics of the Bahá'í administrative system is teamwork.[153] Some of the salient features of an effective team are unity of vision, thought and action; whole-hearted, committed consultation; interaction; and working together as a united and cohesive group constituted by loyal, reliable and responsible individuals.[154] The team members consult on every important matter and are able to make mutually supported decisions.

Having a clear vision of its goals, the Bahá'í Vocational Institute administration runs in a democratic way involving elements of delegation and decentralization, team work, creativity, innovation, cooperation, balance in systematic and rational planning followed by consistent and determined implementation, organic growth of individuals and the Institution simultaneously. The actions and interactions of the Institute are guided by Bahá'í principles. It is administered by an autonomous Board of Directors that seeks inputs from the staff and trainees, as well as the parents, to systematically develop ever-advancing written policies regarding the programmes. The Board of Directors also serves to lay down and modify the procedures in the form of rules and regulations that guide the thinking and action of the Institute for efficient functioning of the Institution and well being of the staff.

This Board also facilitates the availability, monitoring and evaluation of the funds. They help and guide to make sure that the best use is made of available financial and human resources for achieving the goals.

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[152] Ibid. Hanson Vick, H., p.86
[153] For details about teamwork refer to Mohajer, N. and Mohajer, S., *Dynamics of Team-Building in Bahá'í Institutions*, Foundation for Advancement of Science, 1998
[154] Ibid. Hanson Vick, H.

The Bahá'í concept of development promotes certain tools to be used by individuals and communities, as well as institutions, to manage their affairs. These tools can be integrated into any area of social and economic development. Some of the important tools used at the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women are given below.

5.1.2. Consultation

In order to ensure transparency, justice and fairness in its administration, people working at Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural women make decisions by using consultation in all matters at all levels. Institute administration grows along with its programmes in three simultaneous processes - consultation, action and reflection.

All actions are the result of consultation and are followed by reflection. A wide latitude for taking initiative and action is given to the people working as well as those who are being trained, allowing reasonable margin for making mistakes. The Institute does not react automatically to every mistake, but distinguishes between those mistakes that can be self corrected with the passage of time and do not particularly harm the actors involved or others, and those that require intervention from the Institute/ top management.

Consultation from a Bahá'í Perspective means "when two or more people share thoughts or feelings together according to specific guidelines in an atmosphere of love and harmony in order to accomplish at least one of the following three:

- Understand or find out the truth about something
- Arrive at a joint decision about something
- Solve a problem together"[155]

[155] New Era Development Institute, *Developing My True Self- Book 3: Learning to Serve and Grow Together*, Panchgani: VGA, 2001, p.67

It is necessary for everybody to "settle all things, both great and small, by consultation."[156] Abdu'l-Baha states that no important step should be taken in personal affairs without prior consultation. He further guides that people should concern themselves with one another' s projects and plans, grieve over one another and let none in the whole country go in need, befriend one another until one and all become as a single body.[157]

Consultation is not an easy skill to learn nor is it an easy skill to maintain, especially when one is used to making decisions alone. It requires the detachment from all egotism, "the cultivation of frankness and freedom of thought as well as courtesy, openness of mind, and wholehearted acquiescence in a majority decision."[158]

All those involved in decision-making "…must learn to forget personalities and to overcome the desire- so natural in people- to take sides and fight about it. They must also learn to really make use of the great principle of consultation."[159]

"Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding."[160]

Consultation is one of the most potent instruments conducive to the tranquility and felicity of the people.[161] It is a new tool that shapes and develops people through social interaction. Consultation ensures society' s progress and well being and should be used in all circumstances. Guidelines for practicing consultation include:[162]

(i) frank and open discussion allowing and encouraging questions;

(ii) being straightforward and avoiding lobbying;

(iii) listening carefully to what others are saying as well as being as clear as possible in making one' s own contribution to the discussion;

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[156] Abdu'l-Baha, Ocean Extensible Bahá'í Library, www.Bahá'í-education.org
[157] Ibid.
[158] Universal House of Justice quoted in Ibid. Hanson Vick, H., p.129
[159] Universal House of Justice, Research Department, *Spiritual Assemblies and Consultation*, New Delhi: Bahá' í Publishing Trust, 1978, p.130
[160] Ibid. p.105
[161] Ibid. pp.49-58
[162] Huddleston, J., *Standing Up for Humanity*, New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1999, pp.242-245

(iv) detachment;
(v) patience, humility and refraining from feeling hurt by others;
(vi) courtesy, respect and trust;
(vii) universal participation;
(viii) an orderly and scientific procedure

Key steps with regard to the requirement for orderly discussion are:[163]
(i) Clearly define the matters to be consulted about;
(ii) Ascertain all the facts of the matter;
(iii) Identify the spiritual and administrative principles that relate to the issue;
(iv) Consult together;
(v) Make a clear statement of the provisional conclusion;
(vi) Make a decision by consensus;
(vii) Record the decision in the minutes;
(viii) Decide how the decision will be carried out.

Consultation is a perfect tool for empowerment of people because:

- It incorporates several views, which is more democratic
- It frees people from unjust relationships allowing rich and poor, black and white, dominant and deprived members of society to transcend their restricted view of each other and work together. All the things that give people power over others in an unjust society, such as wealth, education, ethnicity or social class are irrelevant in consultation;
- It brings unity, recreating the interdependence that should characterize human society. People are interdependent, generous, co-operative cells of one organic body, making progress by their reliance on each other.

“Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth.

For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation." [164]

Social and economic development requires consultation to restore hope and self-confidence in people who do not recognize their own potential. Economic oppression is only one barrier to action, which we can begin to transcend with the tool of consultation. Subtle attitudes of racism and sexism also oppress the human spirit. Consultation can help us to become aware of these attitudes and uproot them. True consultation overcomes injustice by eliminating power relationships in decision-making.

"…consultation may be fully carried out among the friends, inasmuch as it is and will always be a cause of awareness and of awakening and a source of good and well-being."[165]

The Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women tries to practice the principles of consultation at all levels and in all of its activities, such as the planner, the training programme, the administration, etc. For further information about how the Institute practices consultation see chapter 2, section 2.3.1.

5.1.3. Participatory Learning

In recent years much has been said about using the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) method in the field of community development during project planning and implementation. It has been widely recognized that the participatory approach leads towards sustainability. For the Institute, it's not only project planning and implementation where a participatory approach is applied. The Institute tries to follow this method in the form of equal participation because, as stated in the Bahá'í writings, this is an instrument for the establishment of unity.

"...The things humanity shares in common are numerous and manifest. This equal participation in the physical, intellectual and spiritual problems of human existence is a valid basis for the unification of mankind."[166]

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[163] Ibid. p.245
[164] Ibid. Universal House of Justice, Research Department, *Spiritual Assemblies,* p.105

The Institute's training methodology is also very participatory in nature. Normally, most of the trainees are those who never attended any academic schools before joining the Institute training programme. There are also some school dropouts who come from the same areas and know the local language as well as Hindi. These school dropouts help the trainers by peer tutoring those who are new to the education system of the Institute. In this process, all the participants learn by helping each other. More details about the training methodology are given in chapter 6, section 6.5.

As part of the training, the trainees also share management responsibilities within the Institute. Some of the responsibilities they take on include managing the kitchen storeroom and stock register, they have the key and they make all the decisions of what to eat. Taking on these tasks improves their management skills, increases their confidence and sense of responsibility and gives them the opportunity to make a contribution to the Institute that they can be proud of. Everybody at the Institute is learning equally in one way or another. The trainees also maintain the library, cutting and tailoring and batik storeroom.

5.1.4. Environmental Conservation as a Spiritual Responsibility

The state of the world's environment and how to achieve sustainable development has become one of the biggest issues facing humanity in the new millennium.[167] The connectivity of poor management of the world's resources and degraded living conditions for present and future generations has become evident. Governments and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) worldwide have attempted to address such issues.

Women have been the caretakers of the Earth forever. Since humans have been eating, women have been feeding; nurturing both their communities and the land, which is their most basic resource. With time, thought and practice, women

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[165] Ibid. Abdu'l-Baha, Ocean Extensible Bahá'í Library
[166] Ibid. Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace,* p.229

[167] McGilligan, J.P., Podger, D., and Razavi, R., *Education of Tribal Women in Madhya Pradesh, India: The Key to Improving Environmental Health,* unpublished research article, January 2001

have seen the cycles of the Earth change around them, aware of their own impact, and learning the balance between use and regeneration. Women's marginalization has come hand in hand with ecological destruction throughout history and in contemporary society. This is partly because the current models of science and development have a parochial bias, which exploits nature for selfish, materialistic gains.[168]

"Indian women have been in the forefront of ecological struggles to conserve forests, land and water. They have challenged the western concept of Nature as an object of exploitation and have protected her as *Prakriti*, the living force that supports life. They have challenged the western concept of economics as production for profits and capital accumulation with their own concept of economics as production of sustenance and needs satisfaction. A science that does not respect Nature's need and a development that does not respect people's needs inevitably threaten survival."[169]

A Bahá'í compilation publication, Conservation of the Earth's Resources, was prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice in 1989 for the purpose of assisting in responding to the call for an increase in Bahá'í activities aimed at supporting endeavours to protect the environment. The compilation explains the Bahá'í concept of nature and enhances understanding of both man's relationship with nature and his responsibility to preserve the world's ecological balance. Similarly, Bahá'ís are called to assist endeavours that conserve the environment in ways that blend with the rhythm of the community life.[170]

The Institute has been effective in promoting improved environmental practices in tribal areas in Madhya Pradesh. Environmental education is integrated holistically into the Institute's programme of the overall development of women. For example, the programme provides not only technical skills, but also a sense of

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[168] O'Neill, E. and Rockefeller, A., *Hands on and Home Grown*, unpublished essay Friends World College, New York, February 2000

[169] Shiva, V., *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development in India*, New Delhi: Kali For Women Press, 1995, p.xvii. quoted in Ibid. O'Neill, E. and Rockefeller, A.

[170] Universal House of Justice, *A Wider Horizon, Selected Letters 1983-1992*, Palabra Publications, 1992, p.64

personal worth, giving the women confidence to implement initiatives of their own. It also promotes the concept that managing the environment is a service to the community and a spiritual responsibility through its training as well as practices in rainwater harvesting, recycling, waste management, community and domestic solar cooking, solar lanterns, solar water heating and manufacturing and transferring solar technology.

5.1.5. Other Values Practised at the Institute

Along with values taught in the class, some of the visible values practiced at the Institute are the following:

Self-service

The Institute has been quite successful in creating a work culture. In the introductory session it is explained to the trainees that the Institute is going to be their home during the period of their training hence they have to look after it like their own home. Each trainee does her own work and, through work groups, helps in everyday tasks, so that no person feels over-burdened and the work can be done more easily and faster. Self-service is done with a spirit of service and self help. Trainees operate as self-help groups and clean and maintain the Institute with the help of each other as if it is their own home. Some of the examples of self-service are:

- Most of the trainees work in the garden from 7am-9am. They sow, maintain and harvest the crop and bring the vegetables, lentils, fruits and spices to the kitchen for cooking and storage.
- Solar cooking on Sundays and cleaning the Institute every day
- 8 to 10 trainees in a group work to clean the institute from 7 to 9 a.m. This includes sweeping and mopping the whole dormitory complex, taking the materials for composting, cleaning the office, classrooms, toilets, bathroom and filling the drinking water. Each group performs these tasks for one week. On

Sundays they do not work in the fields so all groups clean the whole premises of the institute.

- Trainees take turns serving and cleaning up after meals
- All of the food items are weighed for the day by one of the trainees and handed over to the cooks.

Every trainee washes her own dishes after every meal. Similarly each one is responsible for making her own bed. All of the bedrolls are numbered. The trainees remember the number or write it in their notebooks.

Self-discipline

Someone who is self-disciplined does not need supervision, has the ability to control his or herself and behaviour, is self-motivated, follows a well-defined set of rules, does things in a regular and routine manner, is punctual, plans and utilizes his or her time effectively, is orderly, neat and tidy. In this institute, there is no bell that rings and no nagging person to push the trainees whole day to follow the timetable. There are wall clocks that are very well used.

The staff of the Institute are the role models of Self-discipline. The trainers are punctual. The staff who provide services, such as repair and maintenance of machines and tools, electricity, water, and healthcare work with punctuality to make sure that trainees do not suffer because of any delay on their side. Similarly all the raw materials for practical work, training materials and food items are supplied before they run out.

Self-reliance

The Institute is quite self-reliant in terms of growing food for the consumption of all its residents. All the ingredients for the Institute' s meals, with the exception of wheat, rice, salt, sugar and tea leaves, etc., are grown in the garden. Fresh vegetables are harvested just before cooking. In addition to vegetables such cauliflower, beetroot, spinach, *brinjals*, lady finger, pumpkins, all sorts of gourds, cabbage, sweet potato, carrot, peas, fenugreek, dill, coriander and tomato, other

crops grown on a larger scale for storage and use throughout the year are potatoes, many varieties of lentils and beans, maize and grams, onion and garlic and other spices including turmeric, coriander and chilies. A variety of salads, about 40 types of herbs to use for home remedies like gooseberry, drumsticks, mint, basil, *neem*, aloe vera, curry leaves, henna, and fruits like bananas, pomegranate, lime, guava, mango, lemons, *jamun*, mulberry, banana, papaya, almond, and tamarind are also homegrown.

The Institute is also self-sufficient in raising flower and tree nurseries. The gardens are raised with composting from kitchen and farm waste as fertilizers and recycled water for crop hydration.

Many varieties of seeds are also preserved for next season. All the surplus of vegetables and fruits are processed into jam, chutneys, and pickles. This saves money, time and energy that would otherwise be spent on buying all of these products every days. It also ensures that the trainees get a balanced diet.

Another way in which the Institute is self-sufficient is the generation and storage of solar energy for cooking 100% of the food for 300 days in the year, saving roughly 1200 Kilos of wood or 12 cylinders of cooking gas per month.

Using its handicrafts, textiles and cutting and tailoring units, the Institute is able to print and embroider its own curtains, linens and furnishings. It is also able to produce doormats, dining mats, kitchen dusters, napkins, oven gloves, aprons, shopping bags and file folders. Many of these products are made from recycled materials, such as fabric scraps and rice bags. They are used by all of the trainees, staff, volunteers and guests at the Institute. Some items are also sold to visitors and in exhibitions and marketing outlets in order to generate a small income for the institute.

Drawing on the individual skills of each staff member, volunteer and trainee, the Institute is able to prepare its own training materials, run audio-visual equipment and repair and maintain facilities, equipment and machines without relying on external resources. The Institute tries to facilitate a strong spirit of service so that everyone is willing to provide support in whatever way possible when the need arises.

5.2. Profile of the Institute

While formulating and implementing its programmes, the Bahá'í Vocational Institute is committed to work within the following conceptual framework, which is derived from Bahá'í philosophy:

- The achievement of full equality between men and women is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. The denial of such equality perpetuates an injustice against one half of the world's population.
- Essential to the pursuit of equality is the alleviation of global poverty, a condition that places a disproportionate burden on women. Since equality clearly requires equal opportunities for every human being to develop his or her potentials – physical, intellectual and spiritual – the impediments imposed by poverty on the lives of women must be removed. Social and economic progress and the advancement of women are intertwined.
- To eliminate poverty and to facilitate meaningful societal transformation, the development of human resources, on a scale never witnessed before, must be given the highest priority. For this to occur, it will be necessary for attitudes towards the poor to change. To consider the materially poor to be the unfortunate victims of circumstances who need to be rescued by a steady flow of goods and services is not, as experience has shown, an adequate response to poverty. The masses of humanity, on whose participation the elimination of poverty depends, must be the main protagonists of the programme of social change.
- A central challenge of all development undertakings, especially in rural areas, is to enable women to overcome obstacles created by antiquated belief systems, the pressures of a labour intensive lifestyle, ill health and a lack of resources. The key to such empowerment is education. Through education, people learn to develop their potentials and to make meaningful contribution to their societies. In the case of women, education is of critical importance, for they are the first educators of their children and their attitudes and intellectual

attainments affect the thoughts and behavior of the next generation, both men and women.

- Knowledge, which frees people from oppression and enables them to become the promoters of love and affection and to have with capacity to uphold justice, can transform the world. Educational programmes that endeavor to educate women must focus on the material and spiritual, fostering in them the qualities and attitudes that will help them become builders of unity, strong pillars of the institution of the family, and influential members of their communities. These programmes must, at the same time, develop concrete skills in them in order to create confidence and provide access to material resources. When these various elements are balanced in an educational programme for rural women, it is astounding how rapidly the women are transformed and become effective agents of social change.

5.2.1. Origin & Growth of the Institute

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India established the Institute in 1985. The genesis of this Institute started two years earlier when the Bahá' í community of India decided to take part in a worldwide effort by Bahá' ís to create projects that would transform society through the systematic application of spiritual principles.

The Institute began simply with training events, lasting for 2-3 days at a time, to demonstrate income-generating skills, such as candle, chalk and soap making, etc. to rural women. They also included introductions to subjects like the importance of education for women, unity, prayer and equality of women and men. Although the Institute did not function on a regular basis in the beginning, the response from the participants to these initial activities was quite positive.

In the early days funding was exclusively provided by the Bahá'ís and courses were taught by volunteers and later by part-time staff. However, as the need for such courses was increasingly felt, it became evident that the Institute would require permanent sources of funding and a full-time coordinator to develop and run its programs. With the commencement of a project funded by Department of

Science and Technology of the Government of India on June 1, 1985, the author was invited to serve as coordinator for establishing and running the Institute and still continues to be the director. The first training course started on 19th June 1985. During the first year a total of eleven courses averaging 10 days in duration had been successfully completed. Through these initial courses, a total of 180 tribal women from 3 districts received training and returned to their villages.

1985-1990 was a period of initial infrastructure developments. It was also a time when the Institute established a clear vision with which it could move forward as a human resource development centre.

Over the years the curriculum has evolved, but from the beginning it has emphasized the importance of work, the equality of the sexes, the elimination of prejudice, and the dignity of the individual.

Having started from nothing, the Institute has grown to the capacity of creating its own programmes for empowering women as "social change agents". Programme changes have resulted from innovative experiments and lessons learned from both negative and positive experiences. The training courses at the Institute have been diversified to include secretarial skills, cutting and tailoring, food processing and production, solar cooking and rural technology.

Initial challenges

One of the major challenges in the early days was recruiting trainees. It was not easy to convince the parents to send their daughters 200 Kilometers away with a person who was not known to them and who did not know their language. Trust was gradually developed as the author learned their language and lived with them in their homes, sometimes for days and weeks.

Another major challenge arose in 1988 when the director married a Northern Irish Bahá' í who had been working as a volunteer in another development project. With an Irish man on the staff, rumors ran wild in the villages that the girls would be sent overseas. Fears were quelled and trust re-established when the parents were invited to meetings at the Institute for three days at a time. The parents went

back to their homes and spread the word about the genuine sincerity of the staff and that it was a safe and good place for their daughters.

As the duration of the courses increased from ten days to three months, the changes in the young women became more pronounced. Although they returned home happy and eager to apply what they had learned, their families were not always pleased with the transformations they saw in their daughters and wives. Now able to read and write and earn a living, accustomed to making decisions about their lives, the young trainees were not the same docile girls that they were when they left home. This newfound confidence and assertiveness was sometimes perceived as a challenge to the authority of male family members.

To address this problem, the Institute established residential courses that allowed husbands and wives to explore together such principles as the equality of women and men and unity in diversity. By studying and developing skills in consultation, young couples learned how to share decision-making and resolve differences constructively. These changes dramatically improved the quality of married life, reduced alcohol consumption, and protected the young women from many forms of abuse that were common in their communities.

By 1991, the communities had accepted the Institute as being useful to them as shown by the recognition of and confidence in the Institute' s work. With a Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) proposal, in 1994 a new chapter of international funding was opened, bringing with it the challenge of data collection, the development of evaluation and monitoring systems, and more focus on field work and follow-up.

In September 2001, the Institute became independent with its own board of directors, taking the name The Barli Development Institute for Rural Women. It is currently accepting 75 trainees every six months: 60 learners, totally illiterate; and 15 school dropouts, who are simultaneously trained as trainers. They train the 60 under the guidance of master trainers who are former graduates, many of whom have gone on to higher education and have returned to serve at the Institute.

The Institute today is an oasis of green surrounded by the dusty streets and noise of the city. It is home to more than a dozen peacocks and their families,

squirrels, cuckoos and parrots and about 100 persons, of which 20 are permanent workers. All these inhabitants enjoy themselves among hundreds of trees including ornamental like *Ashoka*, Eucalyptus, Rosewood, Sandalwood, *Karanj*, *Amaltas*, flower trees and many fruit trees and bushes kept green by sprinklers that use recycled water.

Manufacture and transfer of rural technology

The Institute is a pioneer in the manufacturing and transfer of rural technology, especially in the field of solar cooking. This is helping to reduce reliance on scarce bio-resources.

Other than solar cookers, the Institute has been making systematic efforts to spread awareness regarding the need and importance of promoting appropriate technologies for the rural and tribal communities mostly by using these technologies in its training programme. These include:

- Growing, processing, using and marketing local vegetable and fruit dyes;
- Growing, using, and marketing indigenous medicinal plants;
- Improving small agricultural, forestry and horticultural hand tools, which can be made by the village blacksmiths;
- Food processing with local appropriate technologies;
- User friendly and fuel-efficient stoves and solar cookers;
- Promotion of bio-villages and biotechnology (like vermiculture);
- Rainwater harvesting and reuse of kitchen and sewage water.

Like many similar parts of the world, among tribal societies in Madhya Pradesh cooking is seen to be a female role. Right from early childhood, in addition to other main responsibilities, they have to cook for the family. This is a physically demanding, time consuming and even hazardous chore. Communities in these areas do not have the ' luxury' of cooking on gas. They use firewood or cow dung cakes for fuel.

Usually, collecting fuel wood involves walking as far as 15 to 20 kilometres. The issue is not just walking long distances in search of wood, it is the struggle full of threats that the women have to go through along the way. For instance, walking through isolated areas makes them vulnerable to abuse and rape. They also suffer mental and physical harassment from forest officials, under the guise of enforcing rules and regulations related to trespassing. Even if they are lucky and have escaped this harassment, they have to carry the heavy loads back to their homes. This is the time when they face the greatest threat. The maximum number of rapes in these areas occur during this time, when the women stop for a while to drink water, rest or relieve themselves. Even though they are aware of all the risks relating to collection of wood, many women don' t realize they have any other choice.

Solar cookers help women to escape the daily, backbreaking work of fuel gathering, to preserve forest and woodlands and to reduce air pollution.

The Institute makes SK 14 parabolic domestic solar cookers. Over 130 of these have been purchased by the graduates at a subsidized price. They are making optimum use of these cookers in their villages as well as having a demonstrative effect on their neighbouring communities.

Recently the Institute has also been helping other NGOs with establishing solar kitchens. It spent one month installing the largest solar kitchen in Central India at Chetna High School in Jhabua and is now working on dishes for another kitchen in Tillore Bazurg district and Keshav Vidya Peeth in Indore.

In November/December 2003, the Institute held a comprehensive workshop in which local and village blacksmiths were taught how to make the cookers.

Planner

In order to achieve its programme goals, every year the Institute staff prepares and follows a written planner, which is approved by its board of directors. The planner is an outline of well-defined and precise activities, which is meant for answering questions like “What will be done? When will it be done? Who will do it? Where?” In other words, the planner specifies the time when each of a series of

activities of a particular project will take place. This planner is a detailed month-by-month schedule of activities to be conducted by the institute. For instance holding of community volunteers training, area co-coordinators training, staff training, NIOS exams, the family orientation meeting, follow up, recruitment and training in villages, etc.

This written plan with a detailed schedule helps the Institute to follow guidelines according to a sequence set out for implementing the lines of action. It also helps in setting a routine and in taking all the necessary steps to become more organized. It's a tool to enhance the individual and institutional growth.

The Institute has well defined programmes that outline what needs to be done and the specified procedures to be followed. The planner lays out the manner in which a particular activity is to be done.

At the time of planning its schedules, the Institute ensures to be realistic and tries to foresee conditions and circumstances that could hinder the pace of planned activities. It also takes into account the socio-economic and cultural reality of people at the grassroots level. For example, before any activities are planned, the Institute makes sure timings are convenient to the local communities and do not clash with their farming activities, festivals, marriage season and other important events.

While making the planner, it is preferred to undertake the goals and activities that are achievable. This means that they are achievable and stable and should be growing organically. The principle being applied is that there should be no discrepancy between words and deeds.

This tool of administration keeps all concerned clear, focused and organized, and helps the Institute to be always on the move in a well-planned direction. Those who are accountable work and report within the given timeframe. Availability of this kind of tool also helps in maintaining transparency and helps the administration and management to report and document their performance of the project in the light of what they had planned.

5.2.2. Organizational Structure of the Institute

The Institute is an autonomous NGO administered and guided by its own Board of Directors having experienced professionals, academicians and experts in social and economic development. They continuously monitor and evaluate the progress of the Institute. The main functionary of the Institute is the Director who steers the implementation of and further development of the programmes of the Institute. An important part of this is managing all of the staff, supervising the office work and taking care of all public relations. The Director supports the programme officers who are independently responsible for ensuring the quality of training in health, literacy and vocations, including managing, admissions and conducting the National Institute of Open Schooling examinations. All of the trainers are graduates of the Institute and have received advanced training in their subjects. The boarding and lodging staff take care of food, accommodation and health care of the trainees.

The secretarial staff provides services that include word processing of letters and reports, compiling information, assisting in preparing the training materials and typing newsletters and inventories, etc. The accounts staff is responsible for maintaining and updating the financial records, handling leave accounts, banking, assisting the auditors, assisting the director in making and implementing the budget and doing related correspondence.

The Manager manages the efficient functioning of repair, maintenance and development at the Institute. He also supervises the construction work, the information systems and the farm. He is assisted by the rural technology, maintenance, logistics and garden staff.

The field staff assists in selection and admission of the trainees. They also collect news and views of the graduates and their communities and give feedback to the Institute.

All the staff of the Institute reach the communities through the area coordinators, trainees, families and *Mahila Mandals.* More details about the role of area coordinators, trainees, families and *Mahila Mandals* are given in Chapter 6.

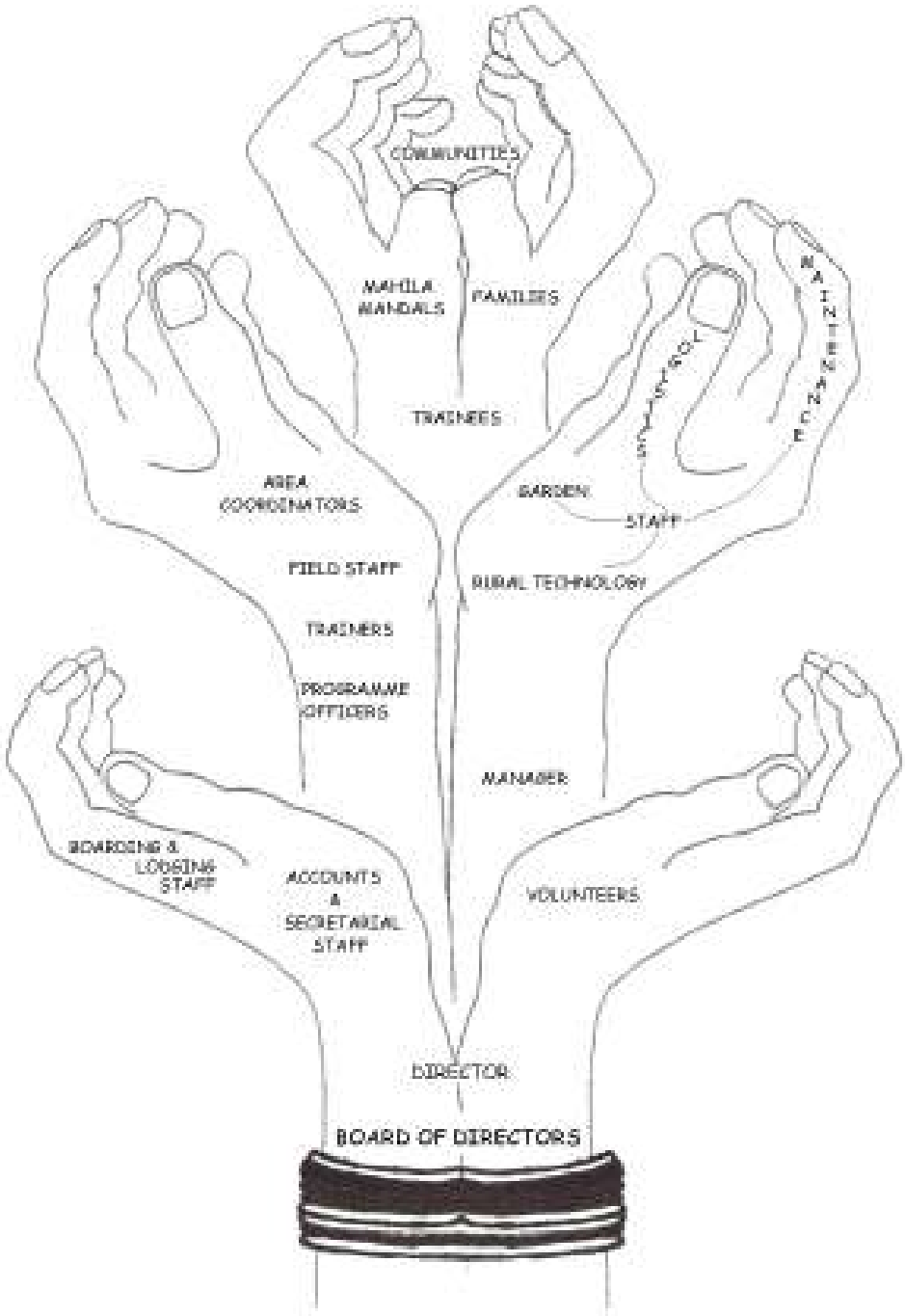
The Institute receives volunteers regularly, including those from overseas, who may stay between 1 month and 1 year. This includes students and researchers from various educational/professional institutions who are interested in learning about development or culture. There are also experienced and skilled persons who are committed to service and take out from their regular studies or work specially to volunteer at the Institute. Most of these volunteers are young Bahá'í women who come at their own expense to fulfill their goal of completing their year of service. The Bahá'í Faith encourages youth throughout the world to dedicate a year of their lives to humanitarian service in order to instill in them a sense of their spiritual responsibility to serve humanity and to give them experiences that will shape their characters and guide their lives.

Being a placement agency for 2 masters degree students from the Indore School of Social Work, and 4 from Indore Mahavidyala each year, the Institute manages to utilize these newly emerging social workers who learn as they work with the trainees as well as bring their academic skills and inputs to the programme.

The Institute invites discussions, welcomes support from professionals such as engineers, doctors, teachers, artists, communication persons, and designers. These professionals deliver lectures, give awareness-generating talks, provide information and share expertise with the Institute. Being a people friendly place, it seeks public participation in exchange of information and ideas by involving civil society, government and all such development agencies and individuals who come forward with the spirit of service and an empowering attitude. Technical, intellectual, and practical advice and encouragement from experienced people in the related field is also appreciated.

The working environment in the Institute is as human as possible, loving and caring but firm and achievement and performance oriented. There is an emphasis

Figure 1: Organizational Structure



on continuous endeavours to grow in their profession. All of the Institute staff work together with a clear and united vision. There is a decentralization of work and authority. When they take responsibilities, they also get freedom and trust to make decisions. They are also empowered with required authority and resources at their disposal. They get opportunities to ventilate grievances. They try to work very effectively but they live together like a family. Most of the staff are female. The success of the whole progamme largely depends on the capacity and motivation of these trainers and area coordinators.

It has been quite challenging to raise such a team made up completely of non-professionals and who are mostly “unqualified for the job.” Through the experiences of the Institute, it has been shown that if people have rectitude of conduct, purity of motive and a willingness to serve and apply acquired knowledge in improving one’s personality, character and performance, quality professionalism can be achieved. Mutual respect, cooperation, a feeling of interdependence and sense of belonging towards the organization and each other can easily be felt. There has always been room for individual and collective assertiveness, asking stimulating questions, giving vent to grievances, listening and consideration. The organization has no place for using pressure tactics or exploitation.

Staff have been encouraged to be innovative and make original contributions, be aware of latest developments, and stretch their imagination to produce, share and further develop their ideas and improve the quality of performance as they move towards completion of their tasks.

5.2.3. Accreditation

The Institute has been accredited to National Institute for Open Schooling since 1997 for Vocational courses. NIOS is an institution of Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, New Delhi. Keeping in view the needs of target groups, the NIOS is also providing a number of Vocational and community oriented courses besides general and academic courses. The NIOS has two features:

- Vocational exams, for Cutting & Tailoring and Hindi Typing;
- Secondary exam (Academic), equivalent to a 10th grade exam for those who have dropped out from or failed the 10th class.

Examinations are conducted twice a year for two vocational courses - Cutting & Tailoring (six-month course) and Hindi-English Typing (one-year course). During a training programme, the first three months are focused on literacy and vocational training. Once the girls are literate then they start preparing for the exam by using repetition, reading, question and answer sessions, and then written tests.

The Institute is a full-fledged study Centre. It also conducts examinations of Vocational subjects like Early Childhood Care and Education Principles and Process, Computer Applications, Understanding the Child, Word Processing, Organizing and Managing an Early Childhood Care and Education Centre, Stenography, Secretarial Practice, Cutting and Tailoring and Typing.

5.2.4. Facilities

The Institute is set on six acres of land surrounded by a wall. One third of the campus is dedicated to a workshop, training classrooms, a library, a dormitory, solar kitchen facilities, an office, residence and staff quarters, and open areas for socializing, games and cultural activities. The rest of the land is over three acres of green space, with fruit trees scattered among crops of *daal*, vegetables, herbs, spices and flowers to satisfy the needs of the trainees and staff members, as well as to provide a space interaction.

Physical facilities on the campus include a large multipurpose hall, well-equipped workshops-cum-classrooms, dormitories, a kitchen with gas, wood and solar cookers, a dining hall, offices, staff quarters, volunteer accommodation and the Director and Manager' s residence. In addition, there is a jeep used for outreach work in the communities.

Infrastructure and resource development

Since 1997 - when the project finished - both the office facilities and

dormitories have been enlarged and expanded. In the office, a library and a computer room have been added. There are now two large dormitories for the trainees, and separate rooms for the trainers and caretakers. In 2004 construction began on a new training hall for larger activities.

The comprehensive solar cooking facilities have made a large impact on the sustainability of the Institute. The Institute has been successfully experimenting with solar cookers for over 15 years and, since 1998, have developed a kitchen tailored to solar cooking, which includes 3 large Scheffler parabolic cookers - the newest one being made onsite was erected in January 2004. The Institute has, additionally, the only working solar storage cooker in the world, which enables cooking after dark. The Institute's workshop is fully equipped to manufacture both the Scheffler solar cookers and the SK-14 Parabolic solar cookers (described in section 5.2.1.).

5.2.5. Collaborations

The Institute has been working on various projects in collaboration with Technology Mission on Water; Government of India; School of Energy and Bio Technology Department; School of Social Work and Indore Mahavidalya of Devi Ahilya, University of Indore; Ministry of Non-Conventional Technology; Madhya Pradesh Energy Corporation; UNICEF, Bhopal Eco Center Valsad. Solare bruke, Germany and PLAGE, Austria.

It has also organized various activities in partnership with Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Central Institute of Vocational Education (PSSCIVE); NCERT; National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, Regional Center Indore (NIPCCD); Municipal Corporation Indore; Indore Collectorate; ICNEER.

It is seeks continued support from local NGO's, like Sahayta, who give health check ups and supply medicine for the trainees of the Institute without charge, and Farmers Cooperative Cold Store Rau, who provide free cold storage service for the Institute's major crops throughout the year.

The Institute is visited by people from all walks of life. Both individuals and groups come to see how it is run, to observe classes, to learn about the environmental advances and various other activities of the Institute.

These visitors include engineers, teachers, scientists, doctors, social workers, students, representatives from NGO's and interested Individuals.

These visits have not only been beneficial to the visitors but also to the Institute. They have helped the Institute to keep a close relationship with other organizations in the community and they have also exposed the trainees to people who are part of the social mainstream. This helps to bridge the gap between the various sections of society coming from different cultures.

It also serves as a source of encouragement for the trainees. On top of this, it helps the trainees to improve their social skills and articulation when they answer various questions asked by the visitors.

5.2.6. Learning Environment

Classroom based training is interactive and not teacher-oriented. The classes run according to a timetable, which is based on self-discipline. The course content is presented in a holistic and integrated way such that principles and concepts are always based upon examples from the experiences of the female students. Creativity is also encouraged as participants develop songs and dramas to illustrate the themes and concepts of the lessons. Training methods are based on increasing the trainees' capacity to think and understand and to bring out all the inner talents and potentialities of each woman. Consultation enables the trainees to solve their problems as well as to function harmoniously in group decision-making.

One of the most important aspects of the Institute' s programme and educational material is the reliance, at every stage, on the participation of the trainees and their families. The method of the design and implementation of the programmes has been developed through a process of consultation with the trainees and the communities from which they originate, further increasing the effectiveness of the training courses.

Preservation of tribal and rural culture in the form of art, music, food, dance and language is emphasized throughout the training, as well as in the lifestyle of the Institute. Training materials and teaching aids incorporate local media of communication such as folk songs, folk dramas, local visual arts designs and images composed by the trainees.

As already mentioned, the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women empowers young rural and tribal women to become agents of social change through the acquisition of a wide range of skills and knowledge needed to improve the lives of their families, their communities and themselves.

The Institute works with the *Bhil*, *Bhilala*, *Korku*, and *Baria* tribes, which are Scheduled Tribes (ST), and *Balai Harijans*, which is a Scheduled Caste (SC). These are all the lowest in the Hindu hierarchy. They are socially excluded and considered to be 'untouchables'. They make up about 35% of the total population of the state. There is no inter-dining or intermarrying between them. They are not allowed at the same places of worship, sources of drinking water or cremation areas. Even the hostels of these caste groups are separate from so-called "higher caste groups" in all educational institutions.

More than 1,700 women from 320 villages in Madhya Pradesh and other parts of India, have completed residential training programmes. The Institute holistically addresses the problems of female illiteracy, high rates of school dropouts, high rates of female infant mortality, a lack of access to information, economic and social resources, a lack of access to vocational skills and male dominated institutions and governance

The Institute's curriculum is designed to achieve the following goals and objectives:

- To facilitate change in the traditional attitudes and practices which block or impede the efforts of men and women to live in equality, with dignity and security.
- To facilitate the initiation and execution of development activities in the communities.

- To impart the skills and knowledge needed to initiate development activities, improve health and nutrition, raise household income, increase literacy, and protect the environment.
- To increase awareness and knowledge of the potential for improving social and economic conditions in the communities.

The development of the curriculum has taken place over the nineteen years since the Institute' s inception. The curriculum is explained in more detail in chapter 6, section 6.4. It has evolved, taking into account the backgrounds of the trainees, using materials and ideas that are familiar in a tribal or rural setting and are relevant to their lives. The Institute has created a set of theoretical and practical curricula that encourage the trainees to take on an active role in improving the quality of life for themselves, their families and their communities. This is done using ex-trainees and by seeking professional advice in the development of the curriculum. Letting the teaching and training style and content evolve gradually and organically is an important part of the Institute's curriculum. The process of developing this curriculum has also included rigorous field studies, cooperation from national and international organizations, and various questions and queries asked by past trainees. The curriculum is continually being tested at the Institute in order to adapt and improve it. One of the curriculum' s aims is to overcome obstacles that outworn practices of the past have placed in the pathway of development. To this end, it empowers women to reflect on the nature of their relationships with others and with their social institutions. They are also enabled to question age-old caste, tribal and class prejudices. However, the Institute recognizes that reflection alone will not help the women become equal partners with men in the development of their communities. It also seeks to assist trainees in acquiring an awareness of their own innate capacities and in developing practical skills that can improve health and nutrition, increase household income, improve literacy, and preserve the environment.

Today, the Institute mainly conducts two types of training programmes: one for Community Volunteers who are illiterate or semi-literate and the other for Area Co-

ordinators*, who have either passed high school or have dropped out. Both courses are residential and free of cost.

Besides focusing on women, the Institute views the change in attitude of the other members of their communities - their husbands, parents, and children - as essential, and endeavours to promote such change through its programme.

With a life-cycle approach, all the subjects are taught holistically, in an integrated manner, using participatory and peer-tutoring methods in an enabling environment. Subjects taught at the Institute include personality development, literacy, and health and hygiene as described further in chapter 6.

5.2.7. Recognition of Programmes & Achievements

The Institute has been recognized for its work in a number of ways, not only by the families and communities from where the trainees have been coming. This is demonstrated very clearly by the stories and press clippings in chapter 7, section 7.2.3. Following are some of the important achievements of the Institute.

- In 1990, two tribal graduates of the Institute from Jhabua won first prize in a literacy- learning song contest in Delhi, which was sponsored by UNESCO and the International Task Force of Literacy. In addition, in 1990, the literacy methodology used at the Institute was adopted by the University of Leicester, U.K.
- In 1992, UNEP conferred the Institute with the Global 500 Roll of Honour for outstanding environmental achievements due to its work in helping to eradicate Guinea Worm in its working areas. In collaboration with government agencies, the Institute pursued an educational programme in a few hundred villages in Jhabua district for the prevention and eradication of guinea worm, a problem caused by contaminated water. When the programme began, several hundred people were infected and some 200,000 were at risk. Through the efforts of the

*In late 2003, the title of Area Co-ordinator was changed to 'Grassroots Trainer' to emphasise the local nature of most of their work. However, the term Area Co-ordinator, shall be used throughout, as it was used at the time of the study.

government health officials and the women trained at the Institute, the population of the Jhabua district was completely free of Guinea worm by 1992.

- In 1994, the Institute was in UNESCO' s INNOV database as one of the 81 successful basic education projects in developing countries.
- In 2000, UNICEF recognized the example of parent involvement by the Institute as a key strategy for "Empowerment through good practices" in an insert: Action for Girls, Vol. 1. No. 2

Chapter 6: Training of Rural and Tribal Women as Human Resources

This chapter mainly examines the complete process of training rural and tribal women as human resources. It includes the procedures followed for the selection of the trainees according to the criteria laid down in the project under study. It presents the socio-economic and demographic profile of the trainees, their families and the communities from where they came. It also explains the type of training programmes offered, the subjects taught, and various methods used for conducting the training. Some of the details given in this chapter shed light on the capacity building of the staff, post-training and other activities that support the trainees.

6.1. Selection of Communities

During selection of communities priority was given to areas lacking education and health facilities and services. As described in Chapter 2, almost three months before the project started, the teams of the Institute – along with graduates from the respective areas – visited 41 villages in Dhar, Jhabua, Shajapur, Dewas, Ujjain, Indore, and Khargone districts and prepared an initial list of villages to be covered under the project.

While monitoring the training programme at the Institute and in the communities during the follow-up, it was realized that it was better to focus on one particular area of concentration of communities rather than spreading out into many districts at one time. As a result, changes were made in selection of the areas after one month. Looking at the needs of the area and the trainees, priority was given to the districts of Dhar and Jhabua, though it was also decided to accept trainees from the communities in Dewas and Khargone districts at the initiative of the local people. Final selection of 20 village communities was made through this process (see list in Appendix XI).

The data, collected from 5 sampled communities, given in Tables 1 & 2 shows that communities selected had practically no facilities for health or education.

According to the surveys done under this study, all of these communities were predominately tribal, having scheduled tribe populations ranging from 90% to 100%. The female literacy level among these communities was extremely low, between 2.3% and 2.6% at the start of the project. For these reasons, preference was given to these villages.

Table 1: Educational Facilities: Distance In Kilometres

Educational Facility	Gangpur	Kawda	Khamat	Ojhad	Sukhi Bavdi
Primary School	1	2	1	2	1
Middle School	1	12	1	5	11
Higher Secondary School	10	12	5	5	11

Source: Census 1991 & the Institute' s Village Survey 1995

Table 2: Health Facilities: Distance In Kilometres

Name of Village	Local Hospital		Distance to P.H.C.
	Sub Centre	P.H.C.	
Gangpur	0	1	0
Kawda	0	0	12
Khamat	0	0	5
Ojhad	0	0	5
Sukhi Bavdi	0	0	10

Source: Census 1991 & the Institute' s Village Survey 1995

6.2. Selection of Trainees

Announcement of training programmes

Two months before the training course started, letters were written to graduates sharing with them the information about planned courses. The news of the forthcoming programme along with dates and terms of admission was

announced through the Institute's newsletter, *Kokila*, which is received by all the graduates in the area. Interested candidates started writing and sending applications.

Awareness campaigns

The Institute held awareness camps in each of the selected communities to explain the nature of the project in detail, its potential benefit to the community and their expected support to the trainees . Objectives of the project, the criteria for selection of trainees, the terms and conditions, the process of making applications for admission, and the outline of the curriculum were also explained in detail as well as circulated in writing. It was stressed that the communities from which these women were recruited for training would also benefit from the development work that these women were expected to initiate. The camps were conducted in the evenings, when the community was free from their day's work, and included tribal music and dance. The main speaker was always a graduate or member of the Institute's staff belonging to the local area.

Interested trainees filled out the admission form (see Appendix I). Support for the project was obtained from the selected women's families (including husbands, if they were married). Consultations were held with the families of women who were eager to take training at the Institute. In both the awareness camps and in family consultations, former trainees explained the Institute's programmes. They shared their own experiences of training and the empowering effects it had in their lives with the prospective trainees. All the queries raised by trainees, families, or community members were also satisfied. No one was enrolled unless their families agreed.

Scrutiny of applications

Of around 250 applicants, who were recommended by local women's committees, government officials or the Area Co-ordinators, 165 candidates, aged 15 and above, were selected by the Institute's training staff through interviews.

The interviews were conducted of all the applicants and their families to ensure full support and understanding of the programmes.

The Institute encouraged married women to come for training. 16% of the trainees were married. 5% of them were nursing mothers who were allowed to bring their infants with them. Admissions were given without any discrimination based on religion, language, caste, or education level. The selection of individual trainees took place mostly during and immediately after the awareness camps in the selected communities, based on the following criteria:

- desirous to participate;
- socially and economically disadvantaged;
- willing to volunteer their time to work in their communities on development activities after completing the course.
- enthusiasm to put the skills and knowledge they would acquire into use in the improvement of their own lives, and those of their children and other family members;
- understanding of how to use these skills to serve their communities, as well as motivation to do so.

Trainee profile

A look at the data relating to the trainee profile, presented in Tables 3- 9, reveals that trainees came from disadvantaged groups. The biggest majority (86.7%) was of the age-group 15-20 years; 52.7% had no formal education and the rest were school drop outs. 84.8% were unmarried and none of them had any vocational training before coming to this Institute. The majority of them were from scheduled tribes and 83% could only speak and understand Bhili/Bhilali (local unwritten tribal dialect). All of them were from families living below the poverty line. The total number of trainees between July 1994 and June 1997 was 165 and they all came from socially and economically deprived families.

Table 3: Age-wise Break-up of Trainees at Time of Admission		
Age at time of admission	No.	%
15 to 20	143	86.7
21 to 25	17	10.3
26 to 30	4	2.4
Above 30	1	0.6
Total	165	100.0

Table 4: Education Level of Trainees		
Level of Education	No.	%
Illiterates	87	52.7
Primary school Dropout (before passing 5th std)	18	10.9
Middle School Dropout (before passing 8th std)	32	19.4
High school dropout (before passing 10th std)	20	12.1
10 standard and above	8	4.8
Total	165	100.0

Table 5. Marital Status of Trainees		
Marital Status	No.	%
Divorced	1	0.6
Married	23	13.9
Unmarried	140	84.8
Widow	1	0.6
Total	165	100.0

Table 6. Vocational Training of Trainees		
Attended previous vocational training	No.	%
No	165	100.0
Yes	0	0.0
Total	165	100.0

Table 7. Income Level of Trainees (Rupees Per Annum)		
Income Level of Trainees (Rs./annum)	No.	%
Below 10,000	121	73.3
10,000-15,000	36	21.8
Above 15,000	8	4.8

Table 8. Caste-Wise Data of the Trainees		
Caste	No.	%
Scheduled Tribe	151	91.5
Scheduled and Backward Caste	11	6.7
Others	3	1.8

Table 9. Districts Represented by Trainees		
District	No.	%
Dhar	80	48.5
Jhabua	65	39.4
Khargone	6	3.6
Dewas	7	4.2
Ujjain	2	1.2
Khandwa, Baster, Bhopal and Shajapur	5	3.0
Total	165	100.0

6.3. Training Courses

During the project period, the Institute had three major components in its training programme. These included training for Community Volunteers, who were illiterate or semi-literate, training for Area Co-ordinators, who have either passed high school or have dropped out and family support activities.

6.3.1. Community Volunteers

A three-month residential training programme for "Community Volunteers", was the core activity for all the 165 trainees who came. The Community Volunteers curriculum was focused on overall capacity development of the participants in a holistic manner.

For many women attending the course, it was their first experience living with others from different tribes and regions. It is a well-known fact that, due to caste and class prejudices, it was almost unheard of for people from scheduled tribes and scheduled castes to inter-dine and share hostels. Thus, while acquiring knowledge and skills, they learned to overcome their social prejudices and to work together in groups with a spirit of service and mutual love. They began to develop a sense of connection with other human beings and started appreciating the teamwork.

The training helped them to enhance their knowledge, skills and experience of literacy, health, environmental education, and personality development. They also gained income generating, vocational skills to improve the quality of life for themselves, their families and their communities. They learned cutting and tailoring, and some of them chose to learn fabric design; batik, block and screen-printing; hand and machine embroidery and bead work; making herbal detergents, shampoos and henna powder; and growing and processing vegetables.

6.3.2. Area Co-ordinators

A second level of the programme was the training of 43 women as Area Co-ordinators. The Area Co-ordinators were trainees who took the Community Volunteers course and then continued with one month of advanced training. Area

Co-ordinators had to demonstrate outstanding capability, during the training, in the following areas:

- the ability to communicate clearly and boldly;
- the capacity and interest in continued learning;
- an understanding and dedication to the BVIRW objectives
- a willingness to give of her time, interest and enthusiasm in promoting the development of other girls and women in her community; and
- the desire and willingness to promote community improvement and development overall.

The Area Co-ordinators were chosen from trainees whose literacy skills were well developed and/or showed promise for further development. They focused on strengthening their ability to read and understood that they would need to devote their time in order to fulfil their duties and assist in the communities. They were expected to work under the direct supervision of the Institute' s Field Workers.

An Area Co-ordinator' s responsibilities included:

- follow-up on trainees in her assigned area - for continued learning - helping them to organize and utilize the skills they have learned at the Institute; giving encouragement and support; monitoring and supervising activities. This means she needed to make periodic, regular, scheduled visits to the villages she was assigned to
- formation and follow-up of *Mahila Mandals*. Offering encouragement and ideas for income generation and other projects to assist *Mahila Mandal* members to improve the community, especially in the areas of health, nutrition, and environment; encouraging and assisting *Mahila Mandals* to promote the education of children through children' s classes
- increasing community awareness of the work of the Institute and its training programs and identifying and recruiting trainees for future courses

- assisting with field research and data collection as needed and, using the required format, sending the information gathered to the Institute
- sending (and encouraging graduates to send) written materials to be included in "Kokila"
- periodic reporting as per request by the Institute

In addition to practical and vocational skills, the Area Co-ordinators learned about and discussed the concept of being an Area Co-ordinator. This included what it means and how they would carry out their responsibilities; logistics and arrangements for working in rural communities (time schedules, travel arrangements, finances, etc.); how they were to monitor and supervise trainees; and how they were to report progress back to the Institute.

Area Co-ordinators have been key to setting up *Mahila Mandals* with graduates in their communities and are essential in the promotion of equality of men and women and the importance of service to the community. They are also instrumental in planning and executing community improvement and income generation projects; initiating basic health measures that can improve the health, nutrition, and environment of communities; and supervising the local production of health education materials.

The Institute' sstaff spend approximately 100 days every year on field visits to conduct awareness campaigns, recruit women for courses, conduct surveys and research and to assist the former trainees to organize women' s committees. Much of this work is carried out by the Area Co-ordinators, who report regularly to the Institute.

The goals of the Area Co-ordinators' programme are:

- to follow-up with community volunteers in focusing on continued learning and helping them to organize and utilize the skills learned at the Institute
- to encourage the graduates and the *Mahila Mandals* towards income generation aimed at family and community improvement

- to encourage the graduates to maintain practices in the specific areas of health, nutrition, environmental husbandry and the education of children
- to increase community awareness of the Institute and its programmes and to identify and recruit trainees for future courses
- to assist the Institute by sending reports and helping with data collection and fieldwork

6.3.3. Family Support Activities

In order to get support from families of the trainees and get their inputs into the programme, the Institute organized family support activities. The family support activities included a three-day workshop for the family members of the trainees, and a ten-day course for couples on Family Life Skills. Both of the activities were focused on making the participants aware about their positive role in supporting the trainees in their initiatives for community development.

Halfway through each Community Volunteers course, the parents, husbands and families of the trainees were invited to attend a three-day orientation workshop in which they could see the progress of the trainees and become more familiar with the philosophies and processes in place at the Institute. 160 members of the trainees' families attended these orientations during the project period. A lot of positive feedback was received from the family members of the trainees. They expressed their appreciation for the trainees and the staff. Before they left all of them assured that they would give their positive support to their daughters' efforts and pledged personal support to the Institute in the future. It is mainly because of the relationship developed with the parents at these orientations that during the field surveys and field training programmes they offered their hospitality and accommodated the staff in their homes. They played a great role in backing up all the post-training activities.

The structure for the orientation is outlined below:

Day 1: After the welcome and introduction session, having had the project explained to them, all of the family members observed the training programme as it went on. This provided them with more insight about the Institute.

The relevance of the programme in their family and community life was also explained to them. At night everybody watched videos demonstrating various aspects and benefits of the training programme.

Their input about the programme was requested for use in future planning.

Day 2: The trainees shared in each session what they had learned. In the evening they went out with their families for a picnic, shopping and other social activities.

Day 3: The Institute staff shared the approach, methodology, principles and ultimate objectives of the training programme.

The Couples Training course has trained 38 couples in family life in a series of 10-15 day residential course during the project period. Selection was made on the basis of their willingness and ability to attend the course and put the skills and knowledge gained into practice in their own lives. Couples training focused primarily on values and attitudes, which enable family life to benefit all members equally. Topics covered during this course included sharing parental responsibility, the importance of children's education with special emphasis on the female children, gender equality with special reference to 'equality of husband and wife,' the use of consultation in all matters, living a happy and healthy life, living in harmony, and serving the community.

Courses were participatory in nature and included creative games, songs, drawings and picnics. They were also encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences with other couples in the community and to give advice to the couples who were planning to get married. This course itself was the most important and first step in implementing the principle of equality of the sexes. Invariably, most of the couples were visibly moved by the new experience. Results of the courses included the practise of mutual respect and care for each other, sharing parenting

responsibilities, some cases of husbands who have ceased drinking and violence, and positive transformations in family life and social and economic progress.

6.4. Curriculum Subjects

As described in Chapter 5, the Institute has developed a broad curriculum that empowers the trainees with the knowledge that they themselves can take an active role in improving the quality of life for themselves, their families and their communities. The curriculum aims to promote gender equality in order to overcome the social attitudes and practices, which hinder the advancement of women. It also aims to foster community development processes by spreading awareness that helps people to improve their social and economic status. All this is possible by building the capacities of the trainees and providing them with all the necessary skills in literacy, health, environment and income generation.

Care for the environment

' Caring for the Environment as a spiritual responsibility' is taught with a focus on sustainable development. The women are exposed to appropriate solutions for the current problems of forest degradation, the depletion of groundwater resources and rainfall dependant vegetable gardening. The trainees are shown the value and benefits of the environment. They are taught to use the Institute' s solar cookers, and are encouraged to propagate energy saving devices in their villages. The value of indigenous knowledge is emphasized in these lessons. In practice, they learn planting, maintaining and protecting the trees, energy conservation techniques, waste management and how to reduce their impact on the environment through their daily routine.

Each morning the trainees and staff work in the garden and clean the building and surrounding areas. They learn how to grow vegetables and fruits, how to irrigate, different methods of composting, raising and maintaining nurseries and other methods of plant propagation. They also learn how to grow other crops on a larger scale for storage. These crops include potatoes, onions and garlic, different

pulses and grams, peas and beans and spices (including turmeric and chillies). The trainees get hands-on experience of water, soil and energy conservation.

Personality development

Personality Development is a combined result of in-class training and the trainees' life-styles at the Institute, behaviour of the Institute staff, volunteers and the other people who interact with them and their overall experience in a peer group-learning atmosphere. The curriculum of the class includes training them to conceive, visualize, plan, organize, become conscious decision-makers, make action plans, implement their plans and share their successes with others. The main objective is to develop the trainees' leadership skills, to enable them to take initiatives, and to show the importance of the role of women in developing society, while respecting and reinforcing the value of their culture.

The Institute tries to inculcate in them a scientific temperament and spirit of inquiry, foster ethical and human values like freedom from prejudices of all kinds and encourage children's education (especially the female child). The women are trained to become sensitive to social development issues and to act to solve them, mobilizing and developing local resources. They are taught that work is worship and service is prayer, and they are encouraged to foster love, peace and unity. They also learn to recognize their self worth and develop self-esteem and self-confidence.

As explained in Chapter 5, Section 5.1.2., consultation is considered the key to decision-making and problem solving. The trainees learn the communication techniques necessary for consultation by taking part in group discussions and sharing their thoughts, ideas and experiences in front of an audience.

The curriculum focuses on the following three areas:

- *Emotional and mental capabilities*: Development of self esteem and confidence; acquiring abilities to consult and make decisions independently; emotional maturity; development of communication skills like public speaking and approaching officials and unfamiliar people.

- *Physical and material capabilities*: Educational and training skills; knowledge, attitude, and practices that lead to advancement in material well-being; learning how to access their rights; acquiring knowledge of ways to get loans; forming and running micro credit groups; setting-up and managing small businesses and learning marketing skills.
- *Social and spiritual capabilities*: Development of moral leadership; setting and achieving individual goals to develop themselves, their families and communities; internalizing universal values, such as respect for all cultures and religions, unity in diversity, peace, love and non-violence, gender and caste equality, service to community and freedom from prejudice. At the same time, they are encouraged to identify positive elements in their cultures that need to be preserved and strengthened.

Since its establishment, one of the main subjects at the Institute has been equality of men and women and bringing about social change based on this principle. Having participated in the Beijing conference, the author prepared an exclusive module on gender equality, including the inputs from the documents of CEDAW[171] and the Beijing Platform for Action[172]. Legal Literacy was also incorporated into this module. The legal rights of women was further simplified, repacked and disseminated in locally understood terminology on the basis of information from MARG (Multiple Action Research Group).[173] This information

[171] Ibid. United Nations, CEDAW*s*
[172] United Nations, Department of Information, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with the Beijing +5 Political Declaration and outcome Document*, 2001
[173] Mehra, S., *Our Laws 1: Laws for Working Women, Workers' Right to Compensation, Child Labour,* New Delhi: Multiple Action Research Group, 2000
Prakash, S.A., *Our Laws 2: Contract Labour, Inter-state Migrant Workmen,* New Delhi: Multiple Action Research Group, 2000
Prakash, S.A., *Our Laws 3: Bonded Labour, Protection of Civil Rights,* New Delhi: Multiple Action Research Group, 2000
Dhagamwar, V., *Our Laws 4: Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956, Medical Termination of Pregnancy,* New Delhi: Multiple Action Research Group, 2000
Joshi, A.S. and Rizvi, S., *Our Laws 5: Hindu Marriage Law, Right to Property,* New Delhi: Multiple Action Research Group, 2000
Abbas, A., *Our Laws 6: Muslim Marriage Law, Right to Property,* New Delhi: Multiple Action Research Group, 2000
Gupta, J., *Our Laws 7: Christian Marriage Law, Right to Property,* New Delhi: Multiple Action

included the subjects of ‘laws for working women’, ‘workers’ right to compensation’, ‘child labour’, ‘contract labour’, ‘inter-state migrant workmen’, ‘bonded labour’, ‘protection of civil rights’, ‘medical termination of pregnancy’, ‘right to property’, ‘dowry’, ‘rape’, ‘kidnapping and abduction’ and ‘the police and you’.

Literacy

The empowerment of women is not possible without literacy. Most of the trainees arrive illiterate. Though literacy is incorporated into all subjects, formal literacy classes take place twice each day. The Institute provides each trainee with basic literacy in Hindi to enable her to understand herself and the world in which she lives. She learns to read, write and understand simple forms, notices, messages, letters, signs and simple books. She learns numerical and simple arithmetical calculations and how to use measurements of length, weight and time.

All subjects at the Institute are taught holistically, i.e. peer-group learning interwoven with literacy and numeracy. For example, in horticulture and gardening, the women learn to count the tools, trees, fruits and vegetables, to weigh them and to write their names. In health instruction, they learn preventative measures against illness and injury, how to write the names of different diseases and how to take body weight and height. They learn to understand and record the times for immunisations and for pre and post-natal care. The newly learned measurement skills are immediately put to use making patterns, cutting and stitching according to measurements and measuring cloth and the person for whom the garment is being made. Trainees learn, through practical experience, to write a receipt, calculate stock, estimate costs, count cash and give change. They also learn to approach a bank or a local government official to apply for a loan.

Research Group, 2000
Joshi, A.S., *Our Laws 8: Dowry,* New Delhi: Multiple Action Research Group, 2000
Daruwala, M., *Our Laws 9: Rape, Kidnapping and Abduction,* New Delhi: Multiple Action Research Group, 2000
Lokur, M., *Our Laws 10: The Police and You*, New Delhi: Multiple Action Research Group, 2000

Health and hygiene

The curriculum in health and hygiene is designed to provide the skills and develop the potential of the trainees and their communities to deal with health problems using preventive measures and practical solutions. Trainees acquire knowledge of common diseases and their prevention with good nutrition, safe drinking water and a healthy lifestyle. They also learn personal and home hygiene and sanitation, childcare and nutrition, the benefits of immunization and pre and post-natal care, caring for the sick or elderly, the damaging effects of alcohol and domestic violence and the basics of waste management. All of this is taught with a gender-sensitive perspective. Great emphasis is placed on encouraging healthy traditional practices and dispelling harmful myths.

In the villages where most of the trainees come from, there is very little or no access to Pre and Post Natal Care. More than 90% of all deliveries take place at home, and are assisted by poorly trained or untrained so-called mid wives who carry many unsafe traditional practices, such as cutting the umbilical cord with an arrow or sickle.

The trainees learn how to care for a pregnant woman, the physiology of conception, the symptoms of pregnancy and social practices relating to pregnancy. Regarding the care for a pregnant woman, they learn about immunization, check ups, problems expected during pregnancy, how to identify emergencies, solutions, proper food, the importance of rest, dealing with the family and the social environment and preparing for delivery. Post-natal care involves training in safe delivery, immediate care for the new born and mother, tying and cutting the umbilical cord, handling and disposal of the placenta, hygiene, breast feeding, significance of being a mother and the supporting role of the family. Other subjects covered are nutrition, child immunization, cleanliness, massage, clothing, weaning, precautions against home accidents, treatment and prevention of illnesses and injuries and management of low birth weight. The value of registration of births and deaths is also emphasized.

Vocational

Vocational training at the Institute empowers the trainees with a means to generate income that allows them to be economically independent. Focus is placed on preserving, reviving and developing their indigenous arts and crafts so that the trainees can take pride in their heritage and pass it on to the next generations. Below are some of the vocations and related skills the trainees learned at the Institute during the project period:

- Cutting and Tailoring
- Weaving
- Bike riding
- Embroidery and Fabric Design
- Growing and Marketing Vegetables
- Making Herbal Shampoos and Various other Household Items

6.5. Training Methodology

As mentioned in chapter 5, the curriculum is designed looking at the specific needs of the trainees and the areas from where they come. It takes into account their background, culture, beliefs and experiences. Ongoing training helps the Institute to monitor and improve the curriculum in an effective way. Having considered that most of the trainees are new to any education system, and in an attempt to make the lessons easily understood, the teaching style has been developed to use three main methods; activity based learning, practical examples and peer tutoring.

Peer tutoring

One of the newer practices implemented at the Institute is that of systematic peer tutoring. The trainees are placed into groups of around seven and each group has a facilitator. The facilitator is always one of the trainees taking the Area Co-ordinator course. This method helps increase the quality of lessons as the number of trainees is too large for one trainer to teach effectively. The group

facilitators go through the day' s lesson with the trainer one day previous to the lesson being taught and act as peer tutors. This enables more effective teaching and also allows the Area Co-ordinators to become more assertive and confident in their roles. During the whole process, whenever the facilitators have difficulty in teaching, they seek help from the trainer.

When the trainees return to their homes they act as community workers and for this reason they are encouraged to become more self-confident and increase their self-esteem. The curriculum, through its use of the aforementioned methods encourages the trainees to speak in public and consider their own opinions to be of worth. By facilitating their personal empowerment, they become more active and eager participants in the development process.

More specifically, the curricula are taught based on the principles of simplicity, participation, and experimentation, with a field-to-lab approach. The trainees actively participate at all stages as the lessons* progress. To make the classes more active and participatory and to enable the trainees to understand the information easily, the mediums used to train them have the flexibility to be changed according to the need, understanding and interest of the trainees:

- *Revision and Testing*: Each lesson, the information taught is reviewed several times and all the trainees are tested on it. For the first few lessons, until the trainees learn reading and writing, they take oral tests conducted by the Area Co-ordinator trainees. Later on, they take written tests.
- *Marketing and Exhibitions* - The trainees, under the guidance of the staff, participate in the marketing and exhibitions of handicrafts in Indore, at various markets and exhibition halls as well as at the Institute. At these events, the trainees bring the products made by them during training to show and sell. These products include garments, food preserves, indigenous handicrafts, bed sheets, curtains and pillow covers. In addition to this they have also demonstrated the use of solar cookers. This is the only stall of its type at the

* The health curriculum, for example, consists of 20 lessons. Each lesson is divided into around 10 sessions, each lasting 1 hour.

markets and exhibitions. Through this the trainees learn the strengths and weaknesses of their products and learn marketing and public relations techniques. By conducting sales they learn how to manage money, which helps raise their confidence.

- *Exposure Trips* –The trainees have the opportunity to enjoy visits outside of the Institute to experience various aspects of mainstream culture and development. These trips have included going to a college where an exhibition was set up for disabled and destitute people, seeing the festival of lights (*Diwali*), participating in a rally to promote the conservation of energy, attending a programme of folk dances and music and going to an exhibition of handicrafts and homemade food items. These activities give them a chance for entertainment as well as expanding their outlook and understanding of the society in which they live.

6.5.1. Training Tools and Techniques

While the curriculum has an enormous amount of information to get across to the trainees, to do so in the traditional Indian format of memorizing the trainer' s words would be ineffective for a group who find this process completely alien. Instead, the training methods used by the Institute are creative, interesting and active. This enables the trainees to remember more and to enjoy learning. Thus, the various curricula employ games, stories and discussions as a central part of the learning process. These methods encourage the trainees to discuss the issues invoked in the lessons amongst themselves and consider how the topic relates to their own lives. Stories, for example, are mostly set in villages and involve situations that they could envisage as part of their own lives.

Practical examples

While similar to the activity-based learning, this method is more geared towards the vocational part of the curriculum. Each afternoon the trainees focus on cutting and tailoring, or on learning to type in Hindi if they have chosen to pursue this path. In addition to this, two hours in the morning are spent working in

the gardens of the Institute. This enables the trainees to learn how to cultivate a small garden and grow food for their own consumption. Thus the information they have learned about diet and healthy eating in the health curriculum is reinforced as they learn how to grow these foods. Other, more regular practical exercises, such as brushing teeth and practices for the removal of head lice again reinforce what the trainees have learned in the classroom.

Games and role-play

A lot of information is imparted through games, either active or written, and role-plays so that trainees may grasp the information easily. This method is also effective because it boosts their interest and therefore ensures active participation.

Storytelling and quotations

Every lesson contains stories and quotations that are practical and inspired by people's real lives. Quotations from the Bahá'í Holy writings offer spiritual guidance, in keeping with the Institute' s holistic approach to health education.

Active examples and discussions

To ensure relevance and understanding, ideas are often demonstrated using examples from the lives of previous trainees. All examples and discussions are issue-based and enable all the trainees to participate in the classes.

Audio-visual

Illustrations, overhead projections and photographs depicting a rural lifestyle enable the trainees to understand information easily, quickly and effectively. The Institute has also made transparencies with the help of many other institutes working in the field of health or literacy. Posters and pamphlets developed by other institutes and organizations working in the field of health are often used.

Folk songs

After each lesson, theme songs based on the content of the lesson are provided. These songs are written and sung in the trainees' dialects, but are now being translated into Hindi as well as English. These theme songs enable the trainees to review and recreate the whole lesson. Including the songs after each lesson ensures that the trainees will remember the information for a longer period of time. Also these songs are easily taught in the villages once they return thus giving the trainees a simple and effective way to educate others.

6.5.2. Post-Training Supporting Activities at the Community Level

From time to time, the Institute carries out short-term courses and workshops for *Mahila Mandals, Gram Sabhas* (village community collective) and *Gram Panchayat* (village government) members on issues like gender sensitisation, importance of the development of female children, rural health and hygiene and women' s reproductive health.

The Institute has made a significant effort to help the trainees to access government sponsored development programmes available in their areas.

In order to strengthen and empower the *Mahila Mandals* to take initiatives for people' s participation as well as supporting the community development programmes taken up by the government, the Institute conducts 3-day training programmes at the local level. These programmes establish links between graduates and local government functionaries. These include village secretaries and the elected local council (Chairperson, Vice/chairperson, Treasurer & Members, in India known as members of *Panchayats*).

It is in this context that UNICEF, in the State of Madhya Pradesh, approached the Institute to take up the training of *Panch*, *Sarpanch* and Village secretaries at the grassroots, local body level in the tribal area under its project area. The Institute conducted these programmes only in the project area for 216 members of *Panchayats*, including *Panches, Sarpanches* and *Gram Sachives* between 1995 and 1996. This included 49 female *Panchayat* members. The main objective was

to strengthen the relationship between our trainees and these bodies. The subjects focused on were orientation on gender, health education issues, etc.

The *Panchayats* also gave feedback about how the training of our women in their communities is improving the cleanliness, immunization, income-generation and literacy in the area. Some of them had brought our graduates along as their spokespersons. They promised to give all their support to the Institute' s graduates on a priority basis. Strong relations between our trainees and *Panchayats* could be felt whenever our staff went to their villages. These bodies gave a great welcome and support. This helped to bring about active collaboration of women's committees and government bodies at the local level. It has also been confirmed that the women's committees in these areas are doing better than others.

6.5.3. Advanced Training for Staff

To build the capacity of the staff, the Institute has an ongoing process of organizing various training workshops and activities with the help of professionals, experienced resource persons, organizations and institutions. They are also encouraged to participate in various seminars and orientations in subjects related to their own areas of specializations.

6.6. Follow-up Activities

Following the completion of the training programmes, staff of the Institute does extensive follow-up work, which includes the following activities:

1. Going to the communities, getting the graduates together, and facilitating orientations on how to share their knowledge and experience of literacy, hygiene, mother and child care with their respective communities. A particular emphasis is put on holding children's classes, starting small businesses and other income generating activities, identifying problems through participatory methods and finding solutions themselves through consultations.

2. One of the most regular means of follow-up has been the Institute's monthly newsletter, Kokila (Nightingale), which is published and circulated to all the graduates and communities. Copies of the newsletter are also left in the centres of the *Haats*. Women pick up each issue and share it with their friends and communities. This makes it possible for Kokila to reach thousands of people. After leaving the Institute, the trainees once again lack access to information of the world beyond their families and communities. Kokila reestablishes a link with the Institute, state, country and the whole world. It provides information about subjects related to development and gives details regarding various programmes and schemes run by government and development agencies. As well, Kokila advertises the forthcoming programmes, admissions and details about meetings and conferences organized by graduates and the Institute to be held in the villages. The trainees can then read about and attend these events and potential trainees can learn the dates of course admissions. Kokila is an important means to help the graduates maintain and improve their literacy level, as they have little opportunity to practice their reading and writing when they return home. When these formerly illiterate women are able to write letters to the Institute, the results of Kokila' s literacy developmen programme can be seen. Not only does Kokila provide the trainees with valuable information, it also takes their voices into the world. The graduates are encouraged to share their stories and theme songs related to development issues, written in their local dialects, which are published in Kokila and used as a source of inspiration for other rural and tribal women. See Appendix IX for a detailed list of subjects covered.

3. The Institute has set up and maintained a two-way correspondence. This involves writing post-cards between the trainees and the Institute. Trainees are encouraged to continue writing and it has been found to be a very effective method of helping them maintain their literacy. When the Institute receives a post-card from a graduate it is read to all the trainees at the Institute.

The courses are complemented by the formation of teams of women in each village. Each team is made up of one Area Co-ordinator and ten or more graduates of the Community Volunteers course. Operating at the community level, each team is capable of the following:

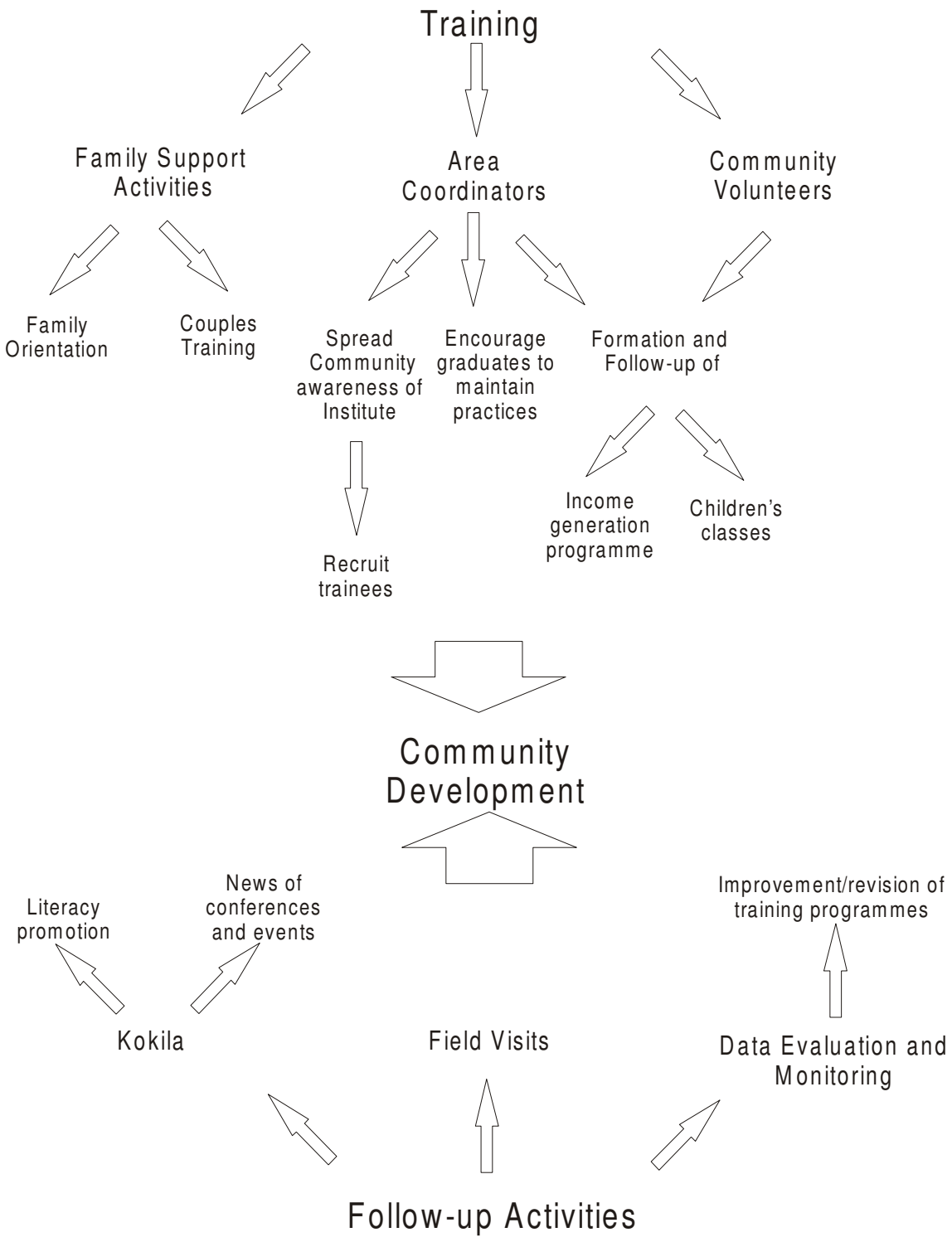
- initiating an ongoing process of decision-making within the community;
- identifying community needs and undertaking small initiatives to meet them at the grassroots level;
- maintaining small kitchen gardens, securing a source of clean water, applying practical methods of food preservation and initiating small business ventures;
- forming youth groups, facilitating literacy classes for women, providing moral education to children, holding parenting classes, and conducting alcohol prevention programmes;
- promoting the education of girl children, which has resulted in a measurable increase in the number of girls attending school in a few areas.

6.7. Community Improvement Projects

Appendix X summarizes the development initiatives of 20 particular communities that have been started by Women's Committees with the help of local people.

In addition to the reports from the 20 individual communities listed in Table 10, there have been many joint ventures of various Women's Committees raising awareness of participation in playing an active role in community development. Chapter 7, section 7.2.2. provides a detailed account of how trainees have tried to put into action what they learned at the Institute.

Major activities of the Institute



Chapter 7: Research Findings

Introduction

The primary objective of the research was to study the results of training women as human resources. The secondary objective was to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Institute' s model of sustainable community development through training and empowering rural and tribal women.

This is an attempt to determine whether the training resulted in positive changes in the trainees as individuals, and as members of families and communities. This should include changes in their levels of literacy and knowledge, ability to generate income and their attitudes and practices relating health. The study also measured changes in self-confidence, awareness of women' s rights, and knowledge about accessing loans and keeping accounts.

The results presented in the following sections of the chapter reveal positive changes in the social and economic status of the trainees, their families and communities.

The secondary objective can only be realized after the primary objective has been achieved. The results of both the primary and secondary objectives have been presented below.

7.1. Impact of the Training Programme

7.1.1. Overall Project Outputs and Village-wise Data

This section mainly deals with the impact of the project in terms of the village demographic and the related socio-economic changes that took place in the communities. The core activity of 3 years involved 165 women being trained as Community Volunteers, 43 as Area Co-ordinators, and 38 couples being given family life training. All of the participants of these programs came from socially and economically deprived families. All of the achievements exceeded the targeted goals. The goals were to train 150 Community Volunteers, 30 Area

Co-ordinators and 30 couples. Due to the increasing demand for taking the course, more people had to be accepted than had originally been intended (according to the goals). In addition, 20 *Mahila Mandals* were established in the villages. All of these *Mahila Mandals* were headed by Area Co-ordinators who had started grass root community initiatives, which are explained in more detail in Appendix X. Table 1 summarizes the project' s goals and achievements.

Table 1. Summary of Goals and Achievements

Type and number of courses	1994- 97		% of Total Goals Achieved
	Total Goals	Total Achieved	
Training of Local Women - 6	150	165	110
Area Coordinators- 3	30	43	143.3
Married Couples- 3	30	38	126.7
Establishment of Women' s Committees	14	20	142.9
Community Development	17	20	117.6

Table 2. Age Wise Break-up of Total Population of the Surveyed Households

Age Group	Pre-Project Survey						Post-Project Survey					
	Males		Females		Total		Males		Females		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0 - < 6 years	78	18.6	85	19.4	163	19.0	79	18.5	75	16.9	154	17.7
6 - 15 years	97	23.1	106	24.2	203	23.7	95	22.2	117	26.3	212	24.3
Above 15 years	245	58.3	247	56.4	492	57.3	253	59.3	253	56.9	506	58.0
Total	420	100	438	100	858	100	427	100	445	100	872	100

Table 2 shows an age-wise break-up of the results of the house-to-house baseline survey. It reveals that, during the project period, the percentage of infants

born has decreased, whereas as the percentage of people aged 6 to 15 years and above 15 years of age has increased. The reason given by the trainees was use of family planning. However, there is a lack of data available to verify the same.

7.1.2. Analysis of Health Indicators

Studies by development experts from UNICEF have rated Madhya Pradesh as one of the ' sickest' states in India. Dr. M.S. Eimi Watanable of UNICEF wrote: "On the basis of the overall socio-economic indicators, the state of Madhya Pradesh is declared as "*Bimaru*" (sick), and the one with the highest infant mortality rate due to malnutrition and frequent infections in the new born babies in the villages."[174] Almost seven month before this, Dr. Manu Kulkarni, had written: "The state has, at present, 40,000 malnourished children who will fight through adulthood. Nearly 50% of rural children die in the very first month. Only 20% of the rural women are familiar with oral rehydration."[175] One can also refer to press reports enclosed in the appendices.

The governments of India and the state of Madhya Pradesh planned and launched many schemes focused on improving the situation. For example, in 1996, Pulse Polio, one of the biggest grassroots campaigns ever, made an effort to administer polio drops to all of the children in the state. This achieved significant results with the people' s participation and the commitment of those who implemented this campaign, including the Institute' s graduates.

With knowledge and understanding about the grassroots reality, the Bahá'í Vocational Institute focused, in this project, on training and increasing the knowledge of health issues among women who volunteered to spread awareness in their communities. In this way, people's participation was increased and the process of empowering them to handle their own health problems was started.

Health Curriculum

Analysis of the health-related indicators was done within the context of the Institute' s health curriculum. The training methodology has been developed at the

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[174] Eimi Watanable, M.S. (Dr.) (UNICEF), article, *Free Press,* June 3, 1993
[175] Kulkarni, M. (Dr.) (UNICEF Representative of the state of Madhya Pradesh), article, *Free Press*,

Institute through continuous practice, experimentation, amendments and additions with consideration for the culture, need and understanding of the trainees. Because of the routine and lifestyle at the Institute, the trainees are immediately able to put into practice all that they study in the lessons. A full description of the Health Curriculum has already been presented in Chapter 6, Section 6.4.

Analysis of knowledge and practices

One of the specific objectives of the project was to see a positive change in the trainees' health knowledge and practices. Indicators analysed here were:

1. Child immunization rates.
2. Infant and child mortality rates and causes.
3. Maternal mortality and immunization rates.
4. Number of trainees with knowledge of hygiene.
5. Number of trainees with knowledge of common diseases.
6. Numbers of trainees with knowledge of pre and post-natal care.

Immunizations

Essential to achieving this objective is an increase in the percentage of children immunized against DPT3, BCG and Measles. It can be seen from Table 3 that, since the implementation of the project, there has been a significant increase in the overall percentage of immunized children, i.e., from 22.7 to 63.6 percent. The same has been tested with the help of the chi-square test given below in Table 3.1.

Table 3. Immunization of Children in Surveyed Households

Village Name	Pre-project survey			Post-project survey		
	No. children 0-6 years	No. children immunized	%	No. children 0-6 years	No. children immunized	%
Gangpur	30	10	33.3	25	19	76.0
Kawda	31	6	19.4	23	14	60.9
Khamat	33	7	21.2	38	28	73.7
Ojhad	51	10	19.6	55	28	50.9
Sukhi Bavdi	18	4	22.2	13	9	69.2
Total	163	37	22.7	154	98	63.6

Table 3.1. Observed Frequency of Table 3

	Immunized	Not immunized	Total
Pre-project survey	42	60	102
Post-project survey	98	56	154
Total	140	116	256

Statistical Analysis

Take the null hypothesis that there had been no significant change in the number of children immunized by implementation of Project. Calculated value 12.498 is greater than table value (3.84), therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. It can thus be said that there had been a significant improvement in number of children who had been immunized after the implementation of Project.

The data reveals that the highest increase was in Khamat, followed by Sukhi Bavdi. This is most likely because these communities have good relations between the *Panchayats* and the Institute's trainees. It is also important to mention that in these communities the local governments employed an Area Co-ordinator who is officially responsible for the immunization of children and mothers.

One specific measurement the project used was the percentage of children immunized with Oral Polio Vaccinations 3 (OPV3). During the project period, the Government of India started a nation wide immunization campaign. Members of

the *Mahila Mandals* were officially involved by the district administration as volunteers to motivate people to participate in the programme.

Analysis of the data in Table 4 shows an overall increase in the percentage of children immunized with OPV3 from 25.5% to 66.9% in the sample villages. In the pre-project house-to-house baseline survey, the number of immunized children was 42 out of a total of 163. In the post-project house-to-house survey, it was revealed that this number increased to 103 out of 154, possibly saving many children' s lives.

Table 4. Polio Vaccination

Village name	Pre-project survey			Post-project survey		
	No. children 0 - 6 years	No. children immunized	%	No. children 0 - 6 years	No. children immunized	%
Gangpur	30	10	33.3	25	20	80.0
Kawda	31	6	19.4	23	14	60.9
Khamat	33	7	21.2	38	28	73.7
Ojhad	51	9	17.6	55	28	50.9
Sukhi Bavdi	18	10	55.6	13	13	100.0
Total	163	42	25.8	154	103	66.9

In the village of Gangpur in Dhar District, the percentage of immunized children increased from 33.3% to 80%. At the same time, in Sukhi Bavdi, where the Institute' s Area Coordinator is posted as an *Anganwadi* worker, who is officially responsible for this work, all of the children were immunized. The success of this immunization programme was largely due to the initiative of the local *Mahila Mandal,* under the leadership of the Area Co-ordinator (see Appendix X).

Another essential indicator used to measure the impact of the project was the infant and child mortality rates. Through interviews with mothers and pregnant women, data was collected on the number of children under 6 who had died in the previous year. Table 5 shows that, when the project started, the number of children under 6 years old who had died in the previous year in the sampled

households was 28. This was reduced to 4 in the post-project house-to-house survey. The overall percentage of child deaths in the sampled households came down from 14.7% to 2.5%.

From the village-wise data, it can be seen that in both Ojhad and Khamat 2 children died. These villages show a decline in the overall percentage of child deaths from 15% to 3.5% and 21.4% to 5% respectively. There were no occurrences of infant/child deaths in Gangpur, Kawda or Sukhi Bavdi. Further analysis was done using the chi-square test presented below in Table 5.1.

Table 5. Number of Child Deaths In Previous Year

Village name	Pre-project survey				Post-project survey			
	Total no. births	No. children surviving	Child deaths		Total No. births	No. children surviving	Child deaths	
			No.	%			No.	%
Gangpur	32	30	2	6.3	25	25	0	0.0
Kawda	38	31	7	18.4	23	23	0	0.0
Khamat	42	33	9	21.4	40	38	2	5.0
Ojhad	60	51	9	15.0	57	55	2	3.5
Sukhi Bavdi	19	18	1	5.3	13	13	0	0.0
Total	191	163	28	14.7	158	154	4	2.5

Table 5.1. Observed Frequency of Table 5

	No. of child deaths	No. of surviving children	Total
Pre-project period	19	102	121
Post-project period	4	106	110
Total	23	208	231

Statistical Analysis

Take the null hypothesis that, there is no significant reduction in number of death of children in the age group of 0-6 years.

Table value at V = 1 chi-square = 3.84

The calculated value, 9.362, is greater than table value, 3.84, therefore the hypothesis is rejected. Table 5 stated a substantial fall in percentage of child death after the implementation of project. This change was found to be significant by performing a chi-square test. It can be said that project was successful in significantly reducing the death rate of children through a rise in the level of immunization.

Table 6. Causes of Infant Mortality

Cause of death	Pre-project survey		Post-project survey	
	No.	% of total	No.	% of total
Pneumonia / cold and fever	9	32.1	1	25.0
Diarrhoea and vomiting	14	50.0	0	0.0
Accidents	1	3.6	0	0.0
Mother had no milk	2	7.1	0	0.0
Other diseases	2	7.1	3	75.0
Total	28	100.0	4	100.0

When further investigation was done to find out the causes of deaths amongst the children who died in the year before the project started, it was found that diarrhoea and vomiting was the cause of 50% of the deaths and 32.1% had died of pneumonia, cold and fever. Table 6 summarizes this data.

Through educating the trainees to promote the use of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), the number of child deaths has been reduced to a great extent. In the post-survey there were no deaths of infants and children caused by diarrhoea and dehydration. Out of 4 deaths, 1 died of pneumonia and the other 3 died of unspecified illness but had symptoms like swelling or weakness, etc.

Even though no children died of diarrhoea or dehydration, there were still children who had these symptoms. However, it was interesting to see in Table 7

that the *incidences* came down from 55 to 24 as reported by 122 mothers interviewed during the pre-project house-to-house survey and 128 during the post-project house-to-house survey. This was because of changes in the practices of the mothers in handling babies and children suffering from diarrhoea. As can be seen in Table 8, in the post-project period 91.7% of those whose babies got diarrhoea sought medical treatment, compared with only 43.6% before the Institute' s trainees returned to the villages. The impact the Institute's training had can further be seen when one looks at Table 15, below. The percentage of trainees who had knowledge of the causes and treatment of diarrhoea rose from 30% to 99.4%. Also the percentage of people going to a traditional faith healer, *Badwa*, for treatment declined at a considerable rate (from 32.7% to 8.3%).

Table 7. Incidences of Diarrhoea among Children 0 To 6 Years

	Number of mothers interviewed	Incidences of diarrhoea	
		No.	%
Pre-project survey	122	55	45.1
Post-project survey	128	24	18.8

The most positive and significant change in village practices is an increase in the use of Oral Rehydration Solution and seeking proper medical treatment. According to Table 8, the percentage of mothers using ORS dramatically increased from 1.8% to 79.2% during the project period.

Table 8. Practices of Treatment of Diarrhoea among Children 0 To 6 Years

Method of treating diarrhoea	Pre-project survey		Post-project survey	
	No.	%	No.	%
Use of ORS	1	1.8	19	79.2
Going to *Badwa*	18	32.7	2	8.3
Going for medical treatment	24	43.6	22	91.7

Negligence of women's health adversely affects the health of the entire community. 30 – 40% of the infants born in India are of low birth weight.[176] This can be attributed to improper and inadequate care taken during pregnancy. In view of the seriousness of this problem, emphasis is given at the Institute on education in both maternal and childcare.

Table 9. Reported Deaths of Pregnant Mothers

	Respondents who reported deaths of pregnant mothers in last year		Total No. of Respondents
	No.	%	
Pre-Project Survey	2	1.6	122
Post-Project Survey	0	0	128

Table 9 shows that the percentage of reported cases of death of pregnant mother has come down from 1.6% to 0%. Similarly, as seen in Table 11, the percentage of miscarriages and stillbirths has come down from 42.6% to 36.7%. This can be attributed to the work done by the graduates who were able to spread important information regarding both pre and post -natal mother and childcare.

Table 10. Reported Cases of Miscarriages and Stillbirths

	Miscarriages and stillbirths		Total No. of Respondents
	No.	%	
Pre-Project Survey	52	42.6	122
Post-Project Survey	47	36.7	128

A more detailed look at the responses of pregnant women given in Tables 12 and 13 reveals an increase in the percentage of women getting pre-natal care, especially relating to immunization. For instance, among 13 pregnant women, the percentage of women who got immunizations and health check-ups increased from 46.2% to 61.5%.

[176] Ibid. UNICEF, *A Programme of Cooperation for Children and Women,* p.25

Table 11. Village Wise Break-down of Pregnant Mothers

Name of village	Pre-project survey		Post-project survey	
	No. of pregnant mothers	%*	No. of pregnant mothers	%*
Ojhad	4	30.8	4	30.8
Gangpur	2	15.4	3	23.1
Kawda	2	15.4	1	7.7
Khamat	3	23.1	4	30.8
Sukhi Badvi	2	15.4	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0	13	100.0

*percentage of total no. of pregnant mothers

Table 12. Pregnant Mothers Getting Pre-Natal Care

	Immunizations		Health check-ups		Not available		Pregnant mothers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Pre-project survey	6	46.2	6	46.2	7	53.8	13	100.0
Post-project survey	8	61.5	8	61.5	5	38.5	13	100.0

Table 13. Immunization of Women

Village Name	Pre-project survey			Post-project survey		
	No. of women	No. immunized	%	No. of women	No. immunized	%
Gangpur	20	13	65.0	17	13	76.5
Kawda	28	15	53.6	27	22	81.5
Khamat	28	12	42.9	33	23	69.7
Ojhad	37	9	24.3	40	30	75.0
Sukhi Bavdi	9	6	66.7	11	11	100.0
Total	122	55	45.1	128	99	77.3

The data given in Table 13, showing the rate of immunization of pregnant women and mothers in the sampled communities presents a significant increase in the percentage of immunized women from 45.1% to 77.3%. Village wise data, shown in Table 13, reveals that *all* the women in Sukhi Bavdi village were immunized. A significant increase in the percentage of immunized women has been observed in the other villages also.

It was learned that some women *did not* get immunized because they and their family members believed that immunization might adversely affect the birth of the baby and they did not trust the people who administered the immunizations. It is likely that one of the reasons why Sukhi Bavdi has a 100% immunization rate for pregnant women is that they trusted the Area Co-ordinator who was in charge of immunization, since she was born and brought up in their own community. It again demonstrates the positive effect the training at the Institute can have through graduates with a strong sense of commitment to fulfill their goals and a spirit of service to their community. For more information about initiatives taken up by *Mahila Mandals* see Appendix X.

As already stated, the immunization of children is one of the most important preventative health measures and can help to significantly reduce the infant mortality rate. Table 14 shows that, before the training, only 50.3% of the trainees knew the importance of immunizing children. The training increased this percentage to 98.2%, which may account for the statistical village-wise increases shown in Table 3 and the reduction of child deaths shown in Table 5.

Comparative analysis of Table 14 also reveals that there has been a considerable increase in the number of trainees who know the importance of immunizing mothers (up to 94.5% from 33.3% at the time of admission). There is a direct correlation between this increase in awareness of the trainees and the increases in immunizations in the communities shown in previous tables.

Table 14. Knowledge of Maternal and Child Health Care

	Pre-training		Post-training	
	No. of aware trainees	%	No. of aware trainees	%
Harmful effects of tobacco on pregnancy	63	38.2	150	90.9
Importance and timing of immunisation of mothers	55	33.3	156	94.5
Importance of colostrum and mother' s milk	149	90.3	165	100.0
Importance of proper weaning	101	61.2	163	98.8
Importance and timing of immunisation of children	83	50.3	162	98.2
Total Trainees	165	100.0	165	100.0

The importance of mother's milk, especially colostrum (the thick, nutritious milk produced for the first few breast feeds) was already known to 90.3% of the trainees. However those who did not know, were given this information during the course. All of the women in the villages breast-feed as there is no other method for feeding infants in these parts of India. However, there is a problem in rural and tribal areas with *over* breast-feeding the child, particularly during the period when a child should be weaned. After 6 months babies should start being given semi-solid foods but in these areas the baby is often breastfed to the age of 1-2 years without getting any supplementary food. This results in malnutrition contributing to high infant mortality and morbidity rates. Similarly there are some areas where, due to superstition or a traditional belief system, the colostrum is *not* given to the baby.

On the basis of the data gathered from the field, the importance of and the specific period for weaning was included in the training programme. The success of this can be demonstrated by the fact that when the trainees were interviewed before training, only 61.2% knew about the proper weaning period, while at the end of the course 98.8% were aware of it.

Before coming for the training, 38.2% knew that habit-forming drugs like tobacco and alcohol have harmful effects during pregnancy. After completing the course 90.9% recognized this.

While conducting training programmes during the project years, and through the Admission Assessment Forms, it was learned that tribal people lack awareness of how to handle health problems like diarrhoea, malaria or snakebites. Some of the reasons for this are a lack of education, a deprivation of quality health services and a mistrust of doctors. For all of these reasons, the people continue to depend on the traditional practice of going to the local faith healer (*Badwa*) for treatment and remain unaware of more effective means of dealing with illness and injury. At the Institute, the trainees' knowledge of common health problems was increased enormously. As already seen, the instances of infant deaths from diarrhoea (an utterly straightforward ailment to treat) were reduced in the sample villages over the study period. As seen from Table 15, amongst the trainees, the percentage of those who had knowledge of the causes and treatment of diarrhoea rose from 30.3% to 99.4%.

Table 15. Knowledge of Causes and Treatment of Common Diseases

	Pre-training		Post-training	
	No. of aware trainees	%	No. of aware trainees	%
Causes and treatment of Malaria	45	27.3	152	92.12
Causes and treament of snake bite	27	16.4	161	97.58
Causes and treatment of diarrhoea	50	30.3	164	99.39
Total Trainees	165	100.0	165	100.00

Table 16. Knowledge of Hygiene

	Pre-training		Post-training	
	No. of aware trainees	%	No. of aware trainees	%
Importance and proper method of regular brushing of teeth	136	82.4	165	100.0
Importance of regular bathing	151	91.5	164	99.4
Total Trainees	165	100.0	165	100.0

The percentage of those who acquired the proper knowledge about potentially life-threatening malaria increased from 27.3% to 92.1%. Before training, only 16.4% of the trainees knew about the treatment of snakebites, while after the training programme, 97.6% of the total had acquired this knowledge.

Another important factor contributing to good health is the level of knowledge, attitude and practices relating to hygiene. An assessment of Table 16 shows an increase in the trainees' knowledge of how to brush their teeth properly and the importance of regular bathing.

7.1.3. Analysis of literacy Indicators

Literacy curriculum

It is important to state that at the heart of the Institute' s training programme was training in Hindi literacy and numeracy, which are both applicable to the other skills taught by the Institute, such as sewing, stitching, marketing, making crafts, vegetable gardening and riding bicycles. Each literacy class was built upon discussions on generating “Key Words”. Each word generated the acquisition of some 20 different words. Literacy was integrated into the knowledge and understanding of the concepts of balanced diet nutrition, mother and childcare, hygiene, the value of health care, preventive methods of first aid and treating illness.

One of the specific objectives of the project was to see a positive change in the level of literacy and education amongst the trainees and their communities. Indicators used here are:

1. Village-wise breakdown of literates.
2. Number of literate trainees.
3. School drop-out rates amongst trainees.

In order to see how successful the project has been in achieving this goal, it was important to start measuring from the village level to get a clear idea of the status of literacy and education in the areas from where the trainees were came. Table 17 shows that, over the total population of the five sampled villages, in 1991, the total percentage of literates was only 11% and, of this percentage, less than 22% were women.

Table 17. Village Wise and Sex Wise Break-down of Literates in 1991

Village name	Total population	Male literates		Female literates		Total literates	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Gangpur	953	123	83.1	25	16.9	148	15.5
Kawada	1431	80	78.4	22	21.6	102	7.1
Khamat	1634	207	82.5	44	17.5	251	15.4
Ojhad	2235	163	73.4	59	26.6	222	9.9
Sukhi Bavdi	516	13	68.4	6	31.6	19	3.7
Total	6769	586	79.0	156	21.0	742	11.0

Source: Government of India Census 1991

The sex-wise break down of literates according to village, given in Table 18, shows that the percentage of literates in these villages that were women increased from 23.9% to 33.8% over the three years of the project. It is significant to note that the *total* percentage increase of female literates across all five villages during the period between the 1991 Census and the pre-project survey in 1993 was only

1.2%. This demonstrates that the women trained at the Institute not only retained their knowledge but pass it on to other females in their communities.

Table 18. Village-wise and Sex-wise Break-up of Literates in Sampled Villages

Village name	Pre-project survey			Post-project survey		
	Total sampled population	Total literates		Total sampled population	Total literates	
		No.	% of total population		No.	% of total population
Gangpur	165	29	17.5	139	53	38.1
Kawda	178	23	12.9	169	35	20.7
Khamat	202	29	14.3	217	56	25.8
Ojhad	240	19	7.9	275	34	12.4
Sukhi Bavdi	73	9	12.3	72	17	23.6
Total	858	109	12.7	872	195	22.3

Literate males

Village name	Pre-project survey			Post-project survey		
	No.	% of total literates	% of total population	No.	% of total literates	% of total population
Gangpur	25	86.2	15.2	43	81.1	30.9
Kawda	16	69.5	9.0	19	54.3	11.2
Khamat	24	82.7	11.9	38	67.9	17.5
Ojhad	13	68.4	5.4	20	58.8	7.3
Sukhi Bavdi	5	55.5	6.8	9	52.9	12.5
Total	83	76.1	9.7	129	66.1	14.8

Literate females

Village name	Pre-project survey			Post-project survey		
	No.	% of total literates	% of total population	No.	% of total literates	% of total population
Gangpur	4	13.8	2.4	10	18.9	7.2
Kawda	7	30.5	3.9	16	45.7	9.5
Khamat	5	17.3	2.5	18	32.1	8.3
Ojhad	6	31.6	2.5	14	41.2	5.1
Sukhi Bavdi	4	44.4	5.5	8	47.1	11.1
Total	26	23.9	3.0	66	33.8	7.6

Pre and Post surveys, which contain village wise data of literates according to sex, shown in Table 18, very clearly reflect an *overall* percentage increase in literates in the populations under study. For instance when the project was started, the total number of literates was 109 out of 858 persons interviewed in 5 villages, which comes to 12.7% of the total. This percentage went up to 22.3% after the completion of the project. The percentage of literate females as per total population more than doubled from 3% to 7.6%.

Table 19 shows that the number of girls who are going to school increased from 26 to 66 over the last three years. The overall number of middle and high pass girls increased from 5 to 14 during the project period.

Table 19. Village wise Break-up of School-going Female Literates According to Level of Education*

Village name	Pre-project survey				
	Attended primary level		Middle or high school passes		Total female literates
	No.	%	No.	%	
Gangpur	3	75.0	1	25.0	4
Kawda	5	71.4	2	28.6	7
Khamat	4	80.0	1	20.0	5
Ojhad	6	100.0	0	0.0	6
Sukhi Bavdi	3	75.0	1	25.0	4
Total	21	80.8	5	19.2	26
Village Name	Post-Project Survey				
	Attended primary level		Middle or high school passes		Total female literates
	No.	%	No.	%	
Gangpur	8	80.0	2	20.0	10
Kawda	11	68.8	5	31.3	16
Khamat	14	77.8	4	22.2	18
Ojhad	13	92.9	1	7.1	14
Sukhi Bavdi	6	75.0	2	25.0	8
Total	52	78.8	14	21.2	66

*all percentages are taken out of the total female literates in each village

The United Nations has stated that "…we know, from study after study, that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls and women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition, promote health — including the prevention of HIV/AIDS — and increase the chances of education for the next generation…In other words, literacy is not only a goal in itself. It is a prerequisite for a healthy, just and prosperous world. It is a crucial tool in our work to translate into reality the Millennium Development Goals — adopted by all the world' s governments as a blueprint for building a better world in the 21st century."[177]

The graduates of the Institute play a considerable role in encouraging more girls from their communities to go to school.

Table 20. Literacy Level of Trainees

	Pre-Training		Post-Training	
	No.	%	No.	%
Literate	78	47.3	164	99.4
Illiterate	87	52.7	1	0.6
Total	165	100.0	165	100.0

Data given in Table 20 clearly shows that, through training, it is possible for the percentage of women who are literate to more than double. The Institute' s trainees, taken as a representative sample of the tribal female demographic, increased their overall literacy rate from 47.3% to 99.4%. This is extremely high when it is examined in the context of their communities. For instance the overall post-project survey literacy rate in Ojhad is 12.4% (refer to Table 18 above).

According to the statistics given in the report on the Development of Female Education Among Tribal Communities, published by the National Commission for Women in November 1994, female literacy in India is very low. 9.2 per 1000 tribal girls are literate, 3 per 1000 complete middle school and only 1 in 1000 pass

[177] Anan, K. (Secretary General, United Nations), *message for International Literacy Day,* September 8, 2004

higher secondary school. Expressing its concern over the existing level of female literacy, the Commission states:

"We are constrained to state that literacy seen among scheduled Tribe females is indeed serious, and unless strenuous effects are made, a large segment of our population still remain outside the realm of development."[178]

Added to this low literacy rate, is the alarming school dropout rate among tribal girls, at various stages of schooling. For instance, according to the above-mentioned report, the dropout rate of tribal girls in Madhya Pradesh is 59.6% in primary school, 80.8% in middle school and 93.1% in higher secondary level. These percentages are much higher than for tribal boys (i.e., 47.1% in primary 70.7% in middle school 83.2% in higher secondary).

One of the indicators of the success of the training programme was a reduction in school drop-out rates. It can be observed from the data given in Table 21 that, out of the 78 school drop outs, having been highly motivated to study further, after completing their training at the Institute 16.6% went back to school and took the 10th standard exams.

Table 21. Status of Education Among Trainees

Status of education	Pre-training		Post-training	
	No.	%	No.	%
School drop-outs	78	47.3	65	39.4
Going to school and preparing for 10th class	0	0	13	7.9

Table 22. Trainees' Ability to Read, Write, and Speak

Skills	Pre-training		Post-training	
	No.	%	No.	%
Reading	71	43.0	164	99.4
Writing	67	40.6	163	98.8
Speaking and understanding Hindi	71	43.0	164	99.4

[178] Ibid. National Commission for Women, *Report on Development,* p.56

The implementation of this project has assisted the trainees by increasing their ability to read, write, speak and understand Hindi. For instance, the number of those who could read/write/speak and understand Hindi, went up from 43.0%/40.6%/43.0% to 99.4%/98.8%/99.4% in the post-training period (Table 22). Most of these tribal women were previously cut-off from all the important sources of information and communication because they could only speak and understand their own unwritten tribal *Bhili/Bhilala* dialect.

7.1.4. Analysis of Vocational Skills Indicators

Hand in hand with literacy is numeracy. Looking at Table 23, significant changes can be observed in the practice of numeracy in the lives of women who underwent training. For instance, the total of those who could recognize numbers up to 100 was 43.0% before training, while after training *all* trainees could read up to 100. The percentage of those who could solve simple arithmetic problems rose from 41.8% to 100%.

Similarly, it was observed that, before they took training, only 27.3% of trainees could recognize the currency notes, (Rs. 2,5,10,20,50, and 100). After training, 99.4% could recognize them. One of the reasons, observed during fieldwork, why women fail to recognize bank notes was that, even when women go out as farm or construction labourers or receive stipends or loans, they hardly ever handle cash themselves. They are the ones who do the work, but they just put their thumb impression onto forms and then the receipts and payments are handled by the men-folk.

Pre and Post training data collected about the practices relating to the postal system, and current weights and measures, reveals that the percentage of women who could recognize postal stamps rose from 26.7% to 99.4%. The total of those who could actually weigh items using the existing system was only 25.4% (of 165 women) in the pre-training survey; while after completing the training, 98.8% of the total could use the existing weights.

Table 23. Numeracy Skills of Trainees

Skill	Pre-Training		Post-Training	
	No.	%	No.	%
Reading and writing of numbers	71	43.0	165	100.0
Solving arithmetic problems	69	41.8	165	100.0
Recognition of rupee notes	45	27.3	164	99.4
Recognition of postage stamps	44	26.7	164	99.4
Use weighing scales	42	25.5	163	98.8
Use a measuring tape	27	16.4	165	100.0

The highest increase in percentage (i.e., from 16.4% to 100%) can be found amongst the trainees who learned to use a tape measure (measuring tape), which is reflected in the high number of women who have now set up tailoring businesses in their communities (see Table 24).

Women living in the tribal regions of Jhabua and Dhar districts of Madhya Pradesh are amongst the most marginalized people in India. They have practically no access to education and training for skills in their own areas. The data given in Table 6 in Chapter 6, shows that none of the 165 women had any access to vocational training before they came to the Institute. As the data shows, having been trained for three months in income generation activities, almost 96% of the trainees are now using the skills they learned to earn income.

The highest percentage of trainees who are using income generating skills (46.1%) have actually bought sewing machines and are able to use them for tailoring. 41.2% are growing fruit and vegetables for sale. This is significant as it is uncommon to grow fruits and vegetables in the tribal areas. At the Institute, as has already been described, trainees learn to grow fruit, vegetables and lentils. This training is systematically integrated with eating nutritious food and the value of the kitchen garden in terms of self-reliance and as a source of income.

Table 24. Benefits of Income Generation Skills - Post Training

Acquired income generation skills	Trainees using income generation skills	
	No.	%
Fruit and vegetable growing and selling	68	41.2
Machine sewing and tailoring	76	46.1
Employed in services	13	7.9
Grocery shop	1	0.6
Unemployed	7	4.2
Total	165	100.0

One graduate has opened a grocery shop. 13 (7.9%) are employed in Government services. Out of these, 4 are employed in their own communities as Women and Child Development Workers, running the Integrated Child Development Programme of the Government, and 3 are employed as teachers of non-formal education in villages. One graduate has become a vocational trainer at the Institute and she has completed a one year advanced course in tailoring at the New Era Development Institute (another Bahá'í Institute) in Western India. One graduate, who was previously washing dishes for 5 households, is now working as a warden at the Institute on the basis of her capacity, experience, acquired skills and willingness to serve. The Institute has employed two more graduates as housekeeper and cook. Not only have these recruitments helped the trainees, but it has also made a big difference in the functioning of the Institute. The new trainees become comfortable when they see their own people working with them. Graduates working at the Institute are also more effective in communicating with the trainees because they understand the local culture, language and problems of the trainees, as they themselves have gone through the training.

The next logical question is how much of their monthly income is earned from the skills they have acquired at the Institute? It is important to mention that they use their income generation skills to *supplement* their present income, which is mainly earned from rain-fed farming and raising cattle and goats. According to the trainees, they need to acquire the skills to do something when they have less work on the family farms. Almost none of the farmland has a permanent source of

irrigation. Only those who have good wells or other permanent sources of water can grow more than one crop per year. Being labourers on their families' land, the women want to do anything they can to supplement their main income.

According to the data collected during the follow up surveys (after 6 months of the training, as revealed in Table 25) the largest percentage of them (49.1%) are able to earn up to 200 rupees per month using the skills taught at the Institute.

Table 25. Monthly Income of the Trainees (Average Rupees Per Month)

Average income per month	No.	%
Up to 200 Rs.	81	49.1
200 to 400 Rs.	43	26.1
400 to 1500 Rs.	34	20.6
No income	7	4.2
Total	165	100.0

43 trainees earn from 200 to 400 Rupees (26.1%). 20.6% are very well established and are able to earn between 400 and 1500 rupees per month. This is an incredible achievement, considering over 70% of trainees' families usually earn around Rs. 830 per month without these supplements (see Table 7, chapter 6 for details). The variation in the income group is because most of them have set up sewing businesses in their homes. The bulk of their work is seasonal - mainly before festivals during February, April and September, and during the wedding season, which is normally May and June.

The name and location of your village, city or country is information that many of us take for granted and learn at a very young age. However, most of the trainees could not even name the continent that India was on before they started training. In the villages, the concept of time is unspecific. People wake when the cock crows, or calculate hours of work in the fields by estimate according to the sun. This leaves them vulnerable to exploitation by those who pay their wages. If they have appointments in the cities, because they do not know the time, they will often arrive very early in the morning, in order not to miss the appointment,

thereby wasting a day of work. Knowing how to tell the time enables us to function more easily in the modern world. Despite this, almost 38% of trainees did not have this basic skill when they arrived at the Institute.

Table 26. Trainees' General Knowledge

General knowledge of	Pre-Training		Post-Training	
	No.	%	No.	%
Days of the week	101	61.2	165	100.0
Months of the year	101	61.2	163	98.8
Telling time	103	62.4	139	84.2
Name of the state	52	31.5	151	91.5
Name of the continent	20	12.1	98	59.4

From Table 26, it can be seen that training increased the number of women who could tell the time from 62.4% to 84.2%. Those who could tell or write the name of the state to which they belong rose from 31.5% to 91.5% and the percentage of those who could tell or write the name of the continent in which their country is located rose from 12.1% to 59.4%.

7.1.5. Analysis of attitude indicators

Personality development curriculum

As already explained in Chapter 6, the whole focus of the subject "Personality Development" is to build the capacity of the trainees in a way that by identifying themselves as equal members of society irrespective of gender, caste, class, level of education or demographic background. This subject also helps them to recognize the importance of their conscious role to bring positive changes in their families and societies. In order to become social change agents, they need to have the knowledge of the issues relating to all these disparities. Having

knowledge, however, is not enough until they translate it to reality by changing their attitude and practices.

Analysis

In order to measure the changes in their level of knowledge, attitude and practices, the trainees were asked questions regarding their views and perceptions about ”women riding a bicycle“, “caste disparity“, “income generation by women”, “promoting reading and writing among women” and “the importance of women' s education”.

Pre and Post training assessment shows that there was an increase in positive changes in the attitudes of the trainees towards gender issues. Such issues include women generating their own income, women riding a cycle, and women’s education being as important as men’s (refer to Table 27).

Despite the common notion that prejudice mainly exists between the “higher” and “lower” caste groups, caste prejudice is extremely prevalent between scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. Each tribe and caste group also suffers from internal prejudices based on their hierarchical structure. “Caste prejudice” means that no inter-dining or inter-marrying is permissible. Practically speaking, it means treating others as untouchables. For example, one year at the Institute, when a group of scheduled caste women came from a village for training and found the scheduled tribe women already eating in that kitchen, they immediately left the Institute with the male relatives who had brought them. This attitude of inequality on the basis of caste has changed amongst the trainees. Before training, 43% of the trainees had already stated that disparity based on caste is not good. The percentage of women who said so after training rose to 87.9% (see Table 27).

Table 27. Trainees’ Attitudes Towards Social Issues

Attitudes towards social disparities	Pre-Training		Post-Training	
	No.	%	No.	%
Women should be allowed to ride a bicycle	96	58.2	158	95.8
Caste disparity is not good	71	43.0	145	87.9
Income generation by women is good	135	81.8	163	98.8
Reading and writing by women is important	109	66.1	162	98.2
Women' s education is as important as men' s	74	44.8	163	98.8

This is a result of education based on spiritual and ethical principles such as equality of sexes, oneness of mankind, education as a source of empowerment and commitment to service. These trainees were enabled to renew their relationships with one another. Age-old caste differences based on language and gender prejudice were changed during their stay at the Institute, where the trainees had intimate involvement with other (mainstream) women from the state, other states of India and volunteers from foreign countries. Table 27 highlights a significant change in the attitude of the trainees towards the need and value of women to read and write. Only 66.1%, before training, responded in favour. After training, 98.2% of women recognized the importance of female literacy. Similarly, the percentage of women who agreed to the equal importance of education for women as for men more than doubled from 44.8% to 98.2 %.

It was envisaged at the beginning of the project that, after the grassroots level women have been trained, they would offer their voluntary service as community workers to facilitate the process of social change in their families, as well as in the communities. In all, 20 *Mahila Mandals* were established, one in each community, Table 28 shows that 75.8% of the total of 165 trainees were participating in *Mahila Mandals* after graduation.

Table 28. Participation in *Mahila Mandals*		
Post-training participation in *Mahila Mandals*	Trainees	
	No.	%
Participating	125	75.8
Not participating	40	24.2

The survey revealed that, in these 20 villages, there were no women' s committees before the graduates returned to their communities. This is, therefore, the first time these committees have been formed in these areas.

Upon further examination of the data regarding the frequency of the meetings of Women' s Committees organized by the trainees, 40.6% reported that they meet once every 20 days, 13.3% hold their meetings every 15 days and 9.1% every month. Those who meet every week constitute only 6.1% of all the trainees. 24.2% of the total are not active in women's committees. The fact that the *Mahila Mandals* meet so regularly is indicative of the commitment they have to establishing local initiatives to bring about positive changes in their communities.

Table 29. Frequency of Meeting of *Mahila Mandals*		
Frequency of meetings held by trainees	Trainees	
	No.	%
Once in 7 days	10	6.1
Once in 15 days	22	13.3
Once in 20 days	67	40.6
Once in 25 days	11	6.7
Once in 30 days	15	9.1
Not active	40	24.2
Total	165	100.0

7.1.6. Training of Area Co-ordinators

43 Area Co-ordinators were trained over a period of 3 years. Courses lasted one month each for the first 2 years. In the last year the course lasted for 2 months, including 15 days of training in the trainees' communities. Training was holistic, participatory and experimental.

Normally such projects are planned and implemented by people coming from outside. The bottom-up approach of the Institute empowered the community members themselves to plan and implement changes in their own areas. It was important to see if the trainees (the area co-ordinators) understood that their role in the community was of a voluntary nature with the spirit of service. In order to find out, they were interviewed before and after the training. It is interesting to note from Table 30 that, in the beginning, 65.1% understood this concept, but during the course 93% developed this understanding.

It was expected that the Area Co-ordinators would be trained to shoulder various kinds of responsibilities as social change agents in their respective communities. After completing the training, 58.1% understood that one of their roles was to co-ordinate with the community workers and work with women's committees, 37.2% said that their role was to start community development and 97.7% understood that their role was to promote literacy, children's classes, hygiene, education and development of the land and their community. The trainees understanding the purpose of their training and how they will use it is one of the most important achievements of the project.

Table 30. Concept of an Area Co-ordinator

Concept of Area Co-ordinator	Pre-training				Post-training			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Trainee understands the voluntary concept of an Area Co-ordinator	28	65.1	13	30.2	40	93.0	3	7.0

Table 31. Perception about the Role of an Area Co-ordinator

Specific activity	Pre-Training		Post-Training	
	Area Co-ordinators who were aware of their role		Area Co-ordinators who were aware of their role	
	No.	%	No.	%
Co-ordinating with community workers on *Mahila Mandal* activities	13	30.2	25	58.1
Start community development	10	23.3	16	37.2
Start literacy, children' s health, hygiene, and develop land	10	23.3	42	97.7

Table 32. Area Co-ordinators' Understanding of Role of Mahila Mandals

Understand role of *Mahila Mandals*	Pre-training		Post-training	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	26	60.5	40	93.0
No	17	39.5	3	7.0
Total	43	100.0	43	100.0

Just to be sure that they understood the concepts involved, they were asked "What is a Women's Committee?" When the responses were tabulated, it was found that during the pre-training survey only 60.5% could clearly explain the correct concept of a Women's Committee. This increased to 93% in the post-training survey.

In order to ascertain their level of knowledge about starting income generation activities, two specific questions were asked about the 'source of loans' and 'use of skills'. It is interesting to note that 40 trainees (93%) already knew that the source of loans was the bank but they were not aware that they, as women, could

access loans and they didn't know the procedure to apply for loans. This was taught as part of the Institute's training programme.

Table 33. Area Co-ordinators' Knowledge about Income Generation Activities

Knowledge about income generation activities	Pre-training		Post-training	
	No.	%	No.	%
Source of loans	40	93.0	43	100.0
Use of skills: sewing, gardening, teaching, mother and child care	23	53.5	43	100.0

When the Area Co-ordinators first arrived at the Institute, only 53.5% were able to specify the use of the skills they were to acquire. After the training, all of them were sure of what use they would be in helping themselves, their families and their communities.

Table 34. Area Co-ordinators' Knowledge of Measures to Improve Community Health

Knowledge of health improvement measures	Pre-training		Post-training	
	No.	%	No.	%
Hygiene and sanitation	36	83.7	43	100.0
Safe drinking water	14	32.6	43	100.0
Improve nutritional standards	41	95.3	43	100.0

The Area Co-ordinators were trained in various skills to be used for the benefit and continued development of their families and communities, but especially in the field of health. For this reason it was particularly important to increase their knowledge about this subject. The data in Table 34 reveals that, when they came for training, 83.7% of them gave importance to improving hygiene and sanitation. Upon their return to their communities, 100% of them recognized this as one of the measures to improve their health.

Safe drinking water is essential to remain healthy. Surprisingly, this was suggested by only 32.6% of trainees when they arrived. At the end of their course,

all knew that safe drinking water is one of the most important aspects of being healthy. Improvement in food habits, i.e. to have more nutritious food, was another important measure already known to 95.3% of the trainees before they started training. The remaining 4.7% acquired this knowledge during the training period. Through the lifestyle of the trainees while at the Institute, they all learned how to put this knowledge into practice in their daily lives. They also learn the implications of not having a healthy diet.

The women took great interest in learning about maternal and child health care. Assessment of their knowledge of this subject (Table 35) shows that the percentage of those who knew about pre- natal care increased from 67.4% to 90.7%. A considerable increase, from 81.4% to 100%, occurred in the number of trainees who knew about the care of newborn babies and lactating mothers.

Table 35. Trainees' Awareness of Maternal and Child Health Care

Proper methods of care	Pre-training		Post-training	
	No.	%	No.	%
Before pregnancy	29	67.4	39	90.7
During pregnancy	39	90.7	42	97.7
Newborns and lactating women	35	81.4	43	100.0

The state of the environment is one of the important issues that affect the lives of women more than anyone else in the community. During the training, this subject is taught theoretically as well as practically. This subject is included to prepare the Area Co-ordinators to educate their communities to think, plan and do something about the environmental problems they feel are prevalent in their areas.

Table 36. Trainees' Awareness of Measures for Improvement of the Environment

Improvement measures	Pre-training	Post-training

	No.	%	No.	%
Plantation of trees	40	93.0	43	100.0
Maintaining trees	31	72.1	43	100.0
Maintaining cleanliness in surrounding area	11	25.6	43	100.0

Most of the trainees already knew that the most important measure in protecting the environment is planting trees in their areas, but did not know that caring for planted trees is equally important. Post-training assessment reveals that all the 43 trainees knew that care of planted trees was as important as planting them. When further asked about maintaining cleanliness in the surrounding areas of their houses, farms and villages, the percentage of those who suggested cleanliness as one of the measures for improvement of the environment was increased from 25.6% to 100%.

7.2. Qualitative Analysis of Research Findings: Knowledge, Attitude, Practices

Whenever training programmes like the one under study are conducted, it is very logical to raise questions such as: ”How did the training help the target group?”; ”What difference did it make in the life of those people?” and “ How can these changes be measured?” All such questions can be, to a considerable extent, answered using quantitative and qualitative research methodology.

All the above sections in this chapter deal with answers to these frequently raised questions, using a quantitative method of research that shows how the training given to the Community Volunteers and Area Coordinators responded to the needs of their communities, families and themselves. The above mentioned findings also reveal that the project has been able to achieve its major goals like empowering the individual trainees to become social change agents in their families and communities.

In this context it is important to clarify that the project took an organic approach rather than following more rigid structural strategies. The trainees were not told

exactly what they should do when they returned to their communities. Instead they were given the practical knowledge and skills to plan and implement original and innovative developmental initiatives. For practical purposes, all of the trainees were given a well-defined concept about social change activities. For instance, it was clear that the trainees and area-coordinators were the agents of social change and the families and communities were the targets. The trainees were taught to seek the support of their families, peer groups, *Mahila Mandals* and grassroots institutions like *Panchayats* and literacy department, health workers and *Anganwadi* workers. The Institute also provided them with support by establishing linkages between the graduates and these groups and agencies. This was systematically incorporated into the curriculum.

As a result of the supporting activities carried out by the Institute and the graduates, the participants became more aware of the need and importance of increasing their knowledge and promoting positive attitudes and practices in their communities. They were also sensitized to the harmful values, perceptions, feelings and behaviour that needed to be changed. Specific emphasis was put on prejudice and discrimination based on caste, tribe, gender, class, religion, age, language and other demographic and ethnic factors. They were encouraged to make choices that would positively influence the inter group relations and cultural patterns of society at large. They learned to apply their positive knowledge, attitudes and practices to conflict resolution, education, social and economic improvements and environmental status.

In order to ascertain the quality of such changes in terms of its intrinsic value, an effort has been made to complement the data with some qualitative inputs into the analysis. This qualitative analysis is not comprehensive in nature but is more basic and practical. It broadly follows the qualitative tradition of inquiry by drawing on success stories of the graduates, the goals and initiatives they developed for community improvement, feedback from family members, local officials and grassroots representatives of the communities who witnessed these changes over time.

7.2.1. Success Stories of the Graduates

Leela Rawat[*]

Leela Rawat, a villager of Ojhad, Jhabua district, said that many children used to die before the age of 14 in her village. People were not aware of the proper care of pregnant mothers or the immunization of mothers and children. Every year diarrhoea claimed the lives of many children because they did not know about Oral Rehydration Solution. When Leela returned to her village after taking the training, with the help of the *Panchayat* member for her area, she collected 15 women from her *Falia* and started a *Mahila Mandal*. After that she started educating mothers about immunization and ORS. The *Mahila Mandal* members co-ordinated their activities successfully and helped in the regular health check-up of pregnant mothers and children. They also started checking up on health and hygiene.

All the *Mahila Mandal* members decided to collect 15 rupees from each member every month to save in the bank. They opened an account in the bank and they used the money as and when necessary. Leela herself is doing sewing and stitching work to pay for her expenses. Every day she teaches classes to give children moral education, education on hygiene and sanitation, and to motivate them to go to school. In this way Leela is changing herself and she is helping her family and the community with their own progress and development.

Leela' s activities were talked about in an article written by ManuKukarni, a representative from UNICEF, Bhopal. He said "Leela, is affected by polio. After she was trained by the Bahá'ís, she ensured that every child get polio drops, and now almost talks like a health worker."[179]

Ghichali Sastiya

When the Institute team went to meet of Ghichali Sastiya, her house was locked. Ghichali had taken training at the Institute earlier and had trained her husband, Khuman Singh, also, in cutting and tailoring. Together, they had

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[*] Because of Leela's dedication to health and her success in getting 100% of the children in her village immunized against polio, the 1996 State Plan of Action for Women and Children, released by UNICEF, Bhopal, was dedicated to her. For more information refer to UNICEF, *Progress of State Plan of Action for Women & Children of Madhya Pradesh 1996,* Bhopal: UNICEF, 1996

[179] Kulkarni, M., "It' s Better for theBhils", *FORUM,* June 1997

purchased 2 sewing machines and started earning about 100 rupees per day. They were living a happy life, but suddenly Khuman Singh died after a short illness. Neighbours said that after her husband had died all the relatives took everything and threw her out.

On reaching Ojhad, her maternal home, Ghichali was found busily stitching on her old sewing machine. She said that, even after losing every thing she had, she was able to regain her confidence and start working in Ojhad to support her two innocent children who were solely dependent on her. She said: "I lost everything- money, husband, house and shop- but my training is still with me and because of it I am able to fight against all the problems and constraints in my life."

Jangri Mandloi

Ms. Jangri Mandloi of Kawda village, Dhar district, took training at the Institute for 3 months, from June to September 1995. After receiving the training she took a loan of 15,000 rupees from the Bank of India, and purchased a sewing machine, and now she is able to earn 40-50 rupees per day. Besides this, she also gives training to the people of her hamlet on the topics of health and hygiene and teaches them to live with love and unity. Jangri has taught all the people of her family to take children and pregnant women to health centres and to immunize them at the proper time. She taught them to drink filtered water and keep food covered. She also encouraged the people of her hamlet to send their children to school.

Pupi Dodva

Miss. Pupi Dodva, now a community worker from the village of Chotihatwi in the Jhabua district recounts: "Before training we did not know anything, we could not even speak well. In training we learnt so many things, now I can read a little and I understand many things. When we understand it is easier to solve problems. If I had not come to training, I would still be illiterate. We get so many benefits from training. It changes our lives. If *Didi* (big sister) did not open this institute in Indore,

then many tribal girls like me would never be able to learn good things, things even school children do not know."

7.2.2. Community Development Initiatives by *Mahila Mandals*

Each *Mahila Mandal* identified the specific needs of their respective communities. Following is an outline of the actions that they took to respond to these needs.

1. Ojhad:

- Women's credit society started to help women in the community to obtain small loans
- Water-shed management and reforestation at community level
- Programmes to increase people's participation in immunization and the use of ORS to bring down infant mortality
- Promoting hygiene, use of new blade to cut umbilical cord, weaning of children, education of girls.

2. Sukhi Bavdi:

- Controlling diarrhoea, promoting immunization of women and children, abating superstitions about health practices
- Encouraging more women to take vocational training
- Teaching women to ride cycles
- Planting trees
- Programmes to prevent blindness
- Moral education for children
- Educating women about safe delivery

3. Kulwat:

- Educating people about the harmful effects of alcohol and, with the help of the *Panchayat,* prohibiting the sale and purchase of liquor in the village
- Increasing peoples participation in watershed management
- Promoting cleanliness
- Encouraging more girls to go to school
- Growing and eating fruits and green/leafy vegetables

4. Umrali:

- Promoting girls education
- Encouraging women to open tailoring shops for income generation
- Promoting unity in community life
- Motivating people to take vocational training and family life training
- Educating women in mother and child care

5. Walpur:

- Increasing people's participation in watershed management
- Starting literacy programmes
- Promoting immunization of children
- Educating people about hygiene as well as pre and post -natal care
- Encouraging people to start growing, selling and eating vegetables

6. Hatwi:

- Conducting children's classes free of cost
- Encouraging children to go to school
- Educating pregnant women about pre and post -natal care and safe delivery

7. Khamat:

- Educating about hygiene, safe drinking water, and prevention and treatment of diarrhoea
- Motivating people to send their children to school
- Encouraging adults to attend literacy classes
- Helping the community to get mothers and their children immunized

8. Kukria:

- Providing health check-ups for pregnant women
- Teaching good habits and morals to the children
- Encouraging more children to go to school
- Holding regular meetings with women

9. Ali Kamath:

- Arranging meetings with women
- Spreading awareness about the Institute
- Conducting moral, health, hygiene and children' s classes

10. Begalgaon:

- Promoting cleanliness and safe drinking water
- Planting trees and growing more vegetables
- Improving food habits
- Decreasing the use of alcohol and violence against women

11. Dharamrai:

- Growing and selling vegetables
- Increasing the number of school-going girls
- Educating women about mother and child care, immunization of pregnant women and children
- Promoting use of ORS

12. Balwani:

- Reducing the use of alcohol and tobacco in the community
- Conducting free literacy classes for women
- Educating about safe delivery practices
- Sharing information about safe drinking water, hygiene and pre and post-natal care

13. Kawda:

- Establishing unity in the community
- Motivating people to send their children, especially girls, to school

14. Temria:

- Education about making choices about marriage
- Motivating and encouraging tree plantation
- Abating superstitions and stopping the practice of going to a local faith healer rather than a doctor to treat snake bite
- Educating people about the harmful effects of drinking alcohol
- Improving the management of land
- Growing and eating more vegetables and fruit

15. Jamada:

- Growing and selling vegetables

- Increasing community participation in watershed management & reforestation programme
- Promoting education in the community
- Motivating girls to go to school
- Promoting literacy and nutrition

16. Piplud:

- Educating about prevention and treatment of diarrhoea
- Stopping the use of alcohol and violence against women
- Immunizing all the women and children
- Sending more children to school
- Moral education for small children

17. Dahi:

- Contacting government officials to help get facilities for their villages
- Sending more girls for higher education and typing courses
- Growing vegetables and fruits

18. Gangpur:

- Educating about prevention and treatment of diarrhoea
- Improving literacy and education level amongst girls
- Increasing love and unity in the community

19. Ahirkheda:

- Promoting the education of children and conducting free children's classes
- Educating people about ORS, immunisation and mother and child care
- Improving nutritional standards in the community
- Increasing the level of education of girls

20. Rodia:

- Promoting the use of consultation
- Using songs, stories, games and prayers for children' s personality development and the promotion of hygiene
- Teaching women about their role in bringing about positive changes in the village

In addition to the reports from the above individual 20 communities, there have been many joint ventures of various Women's Committees raising awareness of the people in order to increase their participation in community development. For instance, many graduates started observing International Women's Day, World Environment Day and International Literacy Day in their communities.

7.2.3. Articles, Reports and Feedback

Shiri V.R. Katolkar, Literacy Planning Co-ordinator of Sondhwa in Jhabua district, wrote the following article:

"…a flock of birds, having covered long distances flying across the sea, started living here." The condition of Indian women is also like the fate of the birds of sinking banks. The condition of tribal people of Jhabua District is worsening. In such a situation an Institute, named ' IndoreBahá'í Rural Women Vocational Training Institute' is trying to bring a ray of hope.

The Director of this Institute, Mrs. Janak Palta McGilligan, and her husband, Mr. James R. McGilligan, visit remote villages. They stay with the people in their tribal homes. At night they meet these innocent women and their husbands and talk to them. They help them and give them vocational training.

There is a saying: "Necessity is mother of invention." Mrs. Janak Palta McGilligan has proved it by giving training of tailoring, embroidering, etc., and by organising 3 and 6 month courses in the Bahá'í Vocational Institute.

Being posted as a Co-ordinator of Literacy Mission of Government in District Jhabua, I travel from village to village and come across many women, who were once my students, and they had left their studies midway due to family or social pressure. Some among them are Somli, Surma, Kasli, Sanjana and many others whose names I don't remember. After getting training at the Bahá'í Institute these girls get a new light of hope. They are trying to reduce bigamy, alcoholism and other social evils. During one programme, held on 7th Jan.'97 in Bicholi village, presided over by District Collector Manoj Jhalani, the people witnessed some of these tribal women playing a drama on the subject of "our education and our health". These plays have been successfully noticed and are appealing to the

masses. The women have become self-dependent and are giving better results in literacy programmes and in all fields of social upliftment.

I personally believe that the results of the work done by this Institute will be seen after 6-7 years. More such social organisations should come forward and help these rural women, because these areas need more help. Only then will this society and country progress." [180]

Mrs. Lilo Herman, a German citizen, consultant of the Indo-German tool room, wrote:

"At the end of 1991, when I came to India, I started research work in technical and vocational training of girls and in the mean time I came in contact with Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women. I have taken interviews of many girls who were receiving 3 months training at the institute. I have seen the shy and nervous girls at the time of recruitment become bold and happy in a very short time. I watched them singing and dancing, riding cycle, learning many things. The most interesting thing I observed was, that every evening they all were busy, in reading and writing without any pressure. They all want to do something, want to get more and more information. It seems they are really thirsty for knowledge and education. I wish them all success and happiness."

Mr. Madhu Singh, Regional Executive Secretary of the National Council of the YMCA of India, said, "I came as a stranger, yes, an absolute stranger to your Institute but go back to my place with a heavy heart, because I leave a family which provided me with a home away from home."

O. P.Rawat, Collector of Indore, said: "Very impressive effort to bring out the best of the tribal women by means of training and education. The environment provided to them is really conducive to the fulfillment of the cherished goals."

A volunteer wrote: "It is wonderful to be in these spaces of learning, of widening options, of possibility. It is an enchanting place seeping with female energy, full of progressive thinking, and actions being made for change."

At the graduation ceremony for the 53rd training course of the Institute, Dr. W.S. K. Phillips, principal of the School of Social Work, said that the Institute had

been "successful in developing an understanding among the women for developing themselves in social and cultural context."[181]

At an event organized at the Institute for World Environment Day, in 1994, District Collector, Mr. S.R. Mohanty, lauding the efforts of the Institute, said that voluntary organisations served an important link between the people and the administration and they can play an important role in launching a full fledged movement in the City to maintain its ecological balance.[182]

At a graduation ceremony held in April 1995, Ms. Judith Behrendt, International Health Consultant from the USA, said that the institute motivates the women to bring changes to their communities.[183]

Speaking at a graduation ceremony held in January 1996, Mr. N.P. Jain, the former Indian Ambassador to Belgium, said that the institute had sown the seeds for human resource development through its wonderful training programmes.[184]

Renaissance, the National Journal of Dharma Rajya Vedi, said in its March-April 1996 issue that “Anyone who visits Bahá’í Vocational Institute, Indore can see and experience the noble efforts being made for the development of women from weaker sections especially from the interior villages.”[185]

In her speech at the graduation ceremony in April 1996, Ms. Vajpayee said that the Bahá’í Vocational Institute was a laboratory of sort for social and cultural development in rural areas where the tribal women were empowered with the literacy, health and skills for community development. She applauded the institution’s role in imbibing self-confidence and moral courage among the rural women.[186]

In May 1996, at an Institute graduation ceremony, Mr. Moojan Momen, a medical practitioner, writer and scholar of comparative religions from UK said that

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[180] Katolkar, S., "Flock of Birds", *Kokila,* February 1992, p.3
[181] “Bahá’ís center trains 22 tribals”, *Indore Free Press,* August 15, 1994
[182] “Action plan to save environment presented”, *The Garha Chronicle,* June 6, 1994
[183] “Graduation ceremony held”, *Indore Free Press*, April 21, 1995
[184] “Bahá’í graduation ceremony held”, *The Garha Chronicle,* January 15, 1996
[185] “Champion of Women’s Welfare”, *Renaissance,* March-April 1996
[186] “Training programme held”, *The Garha Chronicle,* April 14, 1996

the family is the first learning place of humanity and that the Bahá'í Institute had strengthened the roots of the whole world by educating the family.[187]

In June, 1997, Manu Kulkarni wrote an article about the problems that the *Bhils* face. In it he said, "The ethos of the Bahá'ís is to help people to help themselves. The McGilligans taught these *Bhil* girls basic literacy, home management, health and hygiene and most importantly 'empowerment values'…Soyali, a 19 year old girl from Kulwait village, who attended the Bahá'í Training Centre, and her father, the *Sarpanch* of the village, invited us to stay at their house on one night, Soyali's father said that Soyali lectured to him on the ill effects of drinking, and he felt so ashamed, that in a few days he stopped drinking- a rare thing for a *Bhil…*Kamy and Ramesh Chauhan from Umrali village are a happy couple. Kamy has learnt to stitch shirts and blouses, and Ramesh helps her iron the clothes. He has stopped drinking and beating her ever since she started earning through her tailoring."[188]

At the graduation ceremony held in November 1997, Dr. Avinash Tiwari from Jiwaji University Gwalior stated that the holistic and comprehensive training programme and methodology and approach of Bahai Vocational Institute for Rural Women will lead to sustainable development of the rural communities, because it empowers these young women with learning literacy, environment, health and hygiene along with income generating skills based on building their self confidence and inculcating spiritual values like service to people and service to country.[189]

At the 70th graduation ceremony, held in May 1998, the District Collector, Mr. Gopal Reddy said that the Bahá'í Institute has been incessantly working for the betterment of tribal and rural women of the country. He said that the Institute has removed the misconception that these women cannot be trained so easily.[190]

At the 71st graduation ceremony, held in September 1998, Professor R.L. Sawhney, head of school of energy and environmental science, DAVV said that Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women has developed a unique curriculum, approach and methodology of training the rural and tribal illiterate women from

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[187] "Bahá'í Institute completes 61st training programme", *The Garha Chronicle,* May 19,1996
[188] Ibid. Kulkarni, M.
[189] "Graduation ceremony held by Bahá'í Institute", *The Garha Chronicle*, November 17, 1997
[190] "Graduation ceremony at Bahá'í Institute", *Madhya Pradesh Chronicle,* May 16, 1998

remote areas. The success and strength of the institute lies in keeping all the components in mind at the same time. He also stated that the Institute is doing noble work.[191]

In the "Free Press' on November 2, 1998, Dr. Rajni Rai lieutenant Governor of Pondichery in her address to the Ngo's at the institute said "Bahá'í Institute is playing a vital role in the development of rural and tribal women."[192]

[191] "Rural women training programme concludes", *Indore Free Press*, September 8, 1998
[192] "People urged to work for tribal women's uplift", *Free Press,* November 2, 1998