

REPORT OF MAHILA HAAT WORKSHOP

HELD AT, AND HOSTED BY,

THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TRUST,

5 DEENDAYAL UPADHYAY MARG,

NEW DELHI 110 002

APRIL 13, 14 and 15, 1986

by

Viji Srinivasan

April 1986

List of WPGs who came to the Workshop

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| (1) | Amarjyoti | (Orissa) |
| (2) | Annapurna Mahila Mandal | (Maharashtra) |
| (3) | Bhagavatula Charitable Trust | (Andhra Pradesh) |
| (4) | Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh | (Andhra Pradesh) |
| (5) | Charmadyog Association | (Rajasthan) |
| (6) | CODES | (Tamil Nadu) |
| (7) | Community Services Guild | (Tamil Nadu) |
| (8) | CROSS | (Andhra Pradesh) |
| (9) | Gaspidh Mahila Sangh | (Madhya Pradesh) |
| (10) | Gouri Handicrafts Cooperative Society | (Orissa) |
| (11) | Jeeva Sevalaya | (Tamil Nadu) |
| (12) | Kasturba Vanvasi Kanya Ashram | (Madhya Pradesh) |
| (13) | Mahila Vikas Sangh | (Bihar) |
| (14) | Ruhsa | (Tamil Nadu) |
| (15) | Sewa-Bhopal | (Madhya Pradesh) |
| (16) | Sewa-Delhi | (Delhi) |
| (17) | Sewa-Jaago | (Gujarat) |
| (18) | Sewa-Lucknow | (Uttar Pradesh) |
| (19) | Sewa-Munger | (Bihar) |
| (20) | Snehalaya | (Uttar Pradesh) |
| (21) | Sumangali Sevashram | (Karnataka) |
| (22) | Svavalamban | (Delhi) |
| (23) | Swallows Handicrafts | (Tamil Nadu) |

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| (24) Tajpur Mahila Mandal | (Punjab) |
| (25) Tribal Handicrafts Marketing Cell | (Bihar) |
| (26) Uttarshahartali Handicapped Society | (West Bengal) |
| (27) Vanvasi Seva Kendra | (Bihar) |
| (28) Women's India Trust | (Maharashtra) |

Summary

What came across most strongly was that in spite of having Central Cottage Industries Emporium, All-India Handicrafts Board, State Emporia, Dastkari, as marketing resources, of the 28 groups, only four reported that they did not have a marketing problem. Of these four, two did marketing through KVIC's retail outlets, and one had a Bombay market.

The next strong impression was that 'organising', a 'sangathan' was crucial for poor women's groups; all the groups who had tried 'organising' had extremely positive experiences.

A revolving fund was urgently needed for many groups.

The last but not least urgent need expressed was to develop pilot projects to experiment with building up a local market, in the rural areas, for rural poor women's groups.

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| AIHB: | All India Handicrafts Board |
| BCT: | Bhagavatula Charitable Trust |
| CCIC: | Central Cottage Industries Corporation |
| CSWB: | Central Social Welfare Board |
| DWCRA: | Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas |
| HHEC: | Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation |
| ISST: | Institute of Social Studies Trust |
| KVIC: | Khadi and Village Industries Commission |
| SEWA: | Self-Employed Women's Association |
| WPGs: | Women Producer Groups |
| WWF: | Working Women's Forum |

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Women Producers from low-income
households - "The Mahila Haat" -
A Proposal

Report of Workshop
on

MAHILA HAAT
April 13, 14 and 15, 1986

Introduction

The Institute of Social Studies Trust initiated the concept of Mahila Haat and has done a lot of preparatory work in the form of site visits and a survey (see Appendix II). This resulted in a workshop at Delhi on April 13, 14 and 15, hosted by ISST.

Walking into the basement of SMM Theatre Crafts Building, which had been hired for a month, was a heady, exhilarating experience. Here were brightly lit up stalls with women salespersons and producers exhibiting a wide range of products--
tasar from Central Bihar; reed mats, and fibre-craft from Tamil Nadu; tribal women's textiles from the Chota Nagpur plateau in Bihar; agarbathis from gas victims of Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh; wooden toys and block-printed saris from Andhra Pradesh; block-printed textiles from Gujarat; chikan work from Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh; batik textiles from Tamil Nadu, fibre craft from Uttar Pradesh; bead-work, block-printing and jari-work from Madhya Pradesh; and processed food products from Maharashtra. It was so exciting that we said to ourselves "we have to go on now; we can't stop."

The workshop began at 10 a.m. It was equally exciting. The women participants were in a majority, sat in front, and men, fewer in number, sat at the back. And the women spoke! Out of

all the groups, only the gas victims organisation in Bhopal had a male speaker, and even there, a woman also spoke. In session after session, it was women producers and organisers who took the lead; and, out of the workshop and informal consultations, Mahila Haat was given shape and form, credibility and legitimacy.

II. The Sessions

I give below, a report about the different sessions.

Session 1. April 13: Introduction to Mahila Haat

It began with Ela Bhatt, who has won international recognition for her work with poor, self-employed women, leading the singing of the "Ekta ka geet", the solidarity song.

"The colour of our blood is the same
So, who are the rich, who are the poor?
The poor are poor
Because you became rich
And you became a monarch
But still the colour of our blood is the same"

Ms. C.P. Sujaya, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Human Resources Development, chaired the session. Ms. Tara Appachu, of the Institute of Social Studies Trust, welcomed the gathering, and specially the women from the different producer groups.

"In the course of our research, we realised that the problems of Women Producer Groups are common. This was further emphasized in the course of a year of continuous interaction with all of you.

We felt that WPGs needed a place to meet. That is how Mahila

Haat was developed", said Tara. Then, the members of Mahila

Haat's Advisory Committee introduced themselves - Mr. K. B.

Jehan, Central Cottage Industries Corporation; Dr. Parameswara Rao, Bhagavatula Charitable Trust; Ms. Ela Bhatt, SEWA; Ms. C.P. Sujaya, Joint Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development; Mr. Gopikrishna, General Secretary, S.M.M. Theatre Crafts Trust; Ms. Viji Srinivasan; Mr. L. C. Jain, Consultant; Poonam Muttreja, Dastkar. Tara then requested two volunteers, to join the Advisory Committee on behalf of the Women's Producer Groups (WPG).

She went on to give a summary of the minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on April 12, 1986. The Committee had made the following suggestions for a future course of action.

- Develop a roster of products and problems from WPGs
- Facilitate a link between WPGs and the market
- Conduct surveys of rural weekly haats in four areas of the country, followed up by a conference with producers, designers and local haatwalis, and form a sub-committee which will finalise methodologies and finances for the haat surveys (volunteers from WPGs to do the haat surveys in their areas, requested)
- Foster alliances and collaborations with DWCR (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas), AIHB (All-India Handicrafts Board), Dastkar, CSWB (Central Social Welfare Board), National Vocational Training Institute, KVIC (Khadi and Village Industries Commission), Naika, Central Cottage Industries Corporation, Ministry of Welfare, Sewa-Bharat.
- Set up a sample room with samples from all WPGs displayed a design cum product development centre, to strengthen WPGs, and for taking orders (guidance and directions will be got from Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation - HHED - which has got the country's best sample room). This will be a clearing-house of information where even poor women can get collective advice on improving raw material purchase, and marketing links to the mainstream markets.

Jain gave an excellent presentation on the history and major objectives of Mahila Haat:

For Mahila Haat, this particular meeting is a very critical moment. ISST has been nursing this project for over one and a half years. Rekha, Nalini and many of our sisters have nursed this project. And I say it is critical because while we were nursing this project, nurturing it, we were wondering if it would ever be born. In a way it was just as well that it was not born. For, if it had been born out of our office, we would have felt we created it and put it on top of your heads.

Now all of you are here, I see this as a consultation with Women's Producer Groups, to decide what Mahila Haat should be. There are three questions we are struggling to answer, as initiators; you will give us clarity.

- What is Mahila Haat? What should it be? What does it define itself to be, compared to other structures of this kind?
- What role can it play?
- Who will manage it? Who will make it play this role? We thought yesterday that the people who play this role should be the women producers themselves.

Where, in our vision, would it go? The dream for Mahila Haat would be a federation of member-organisations. The members should be WPGs from Delhi and all over India, so that ISST will be another form of Sewa, or WWF, a service organisation, which would facilitate and start the process as initiators, but all of you, as clients, would take the process over.

Then it would have a focal point, hopefully in every part of India. But, you will ask, Why is it now in Delhi? This is merely to have a chance for exchange of information. And that is why it is so important that you decide its clarity, its kind of membership, its kind of role. Even the Managing Committee ultimately, should be from the group.

We should take a few steps along this route - so that at the end of these few days there will be self-definition, and a work programme. Then we have to create it into projects, projects have to be given money, human resources, space - and then it will be on its way.

What is the genesis of Mahila Haat? There are three sources of inspiration. The first inspiration was IGST's experience, where we had been really studying women workers - in large-scale projects and in small income-generating projects.

The studies became the case-studies in Women's Quest for Power - the Machubani painters, which has now become Sewa-Mithila - the dairy workers which has now become a huge project in Andhra Pradesh, with women dairy workers.

The second inspiration was an evaluation of the CSWB's socio-economic programmes, ten years ago. The groups were producing objects kept in rooms, and cubboards were full of unsold goods. So we thought of a market facilitation centre.

But Mahila Haat would not be a shop, for that there is Dastkar; but it would be a stronger and more continuous place, to link WPGs to shops.

When Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and L.C. Jain started CCIC, it became a successful merchandising place. So, we, with the agreement of the then M.D., sent 150 telegrams to different WPGs through the Chairmen, CSWB. Only two answered.

Why? Why could we not make the fit? WPGs had small stocks, they didn't know how and where to send the samples, they didn't know how to send a person to Delhi... they didn't have working capital... it is a macro-problem for micro-units.

The third inspiration was the Sewa-Bharat experience. There are ten Sewas all over India, who came to a Sewa-Bharat workshop in Delhi, and there was an Exhibition. The most wonderful thing happened at that moment - when the women came, they bought each others' goods. The Lucknow Muslim chikan-workers bought lac bangles from Machubani, the Machubani women bought the Lucknow kurtas - the quality and the price were what the poor could afford. This was a big mind-opener. Why don't we have a genuine women's stock exchange - where women producers can periodically come and trade with each other, at one class level - kurtawalis, banglewalis, chunniwalis and juthiwalis can come to one point and barter, exchange and trade.

Back for a moment to the rural weekly haats. Here we will do surveys of haats of products and their sources - where are products coming from? Delhi and Bombay? All right. We women will produce these products. Then we will

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identify product gaps - these products are needed, but not being produced; we women will produce these products also. But that is not enough! The Bombaywala has a very strong distribution network! We can't enter it! We need 'organisation' to create the space in that market! We will have a conference of local women producers and haatwalis. Mahila Haat is an employment support system.

Finally, Mahila Haat can, and should, create consumer preference, a consumption ethic - a Gandhian ethic - buy in order to support poor women! Create work! Create employment! A sisterhood through buying! And sharing through sisterhood.

Thus Mahila Haat could be a focal point for different movements. The Prime Minister is inaugurating a hawkers' conference on April 15; I see a very strong connection between the hawkers' movement and Mahila Haat; a very strong connection between the Self-employed Commission and Mahila Haat; I see a very strong connection between the CSWB's women and work bulletins and Mahila Haat; I see a very strong connection between Mahila Haat and the non-aligned movement; I see this movement-connection, because I've seen in the past that micro-groups need to be organised and mobilised into a net pulling system - otherwise all programmes addressed to them get dispersed, if they are depending on government focal points. Mahila Haat should be an n.g.o. focal point.

You have to give it rebirth, make it walk, make it work, for at least five years, create a responsible structure, and create a movement.

Ela Bhatt translated Devaki Jain's speech into Hindi. In addition she expanded on the concept of the self-employed "We are 20% of the workers of India. But we are economic producers in our own right - hawkers, home-based producers and labourers selling our labour. The majority of the self-employed are women. But we are invisible; we are treated only as reproducers. That is why we have invited the Prime Minister, we are asking him to declare April 15 as Self-employed Worker's Day and to appoint a Commission for the Self-employed."

The other sessions were conducted in Hindi and English, and sometimes in Tamil and Telugu.

Session 2. April 13: Marketing

Ms. C. P. Sujaya continued to chair this session.

Mr. K. B. Johar, Managing Director, Central Cottage Industries Corporation, was the speaker. He began with outlining a few questions, and introducing the subject of marketing for WPGs:

"The first principle is that all your products cannot be sold only in the cities. There has to be a local market. This is why we will do haat surveys in four areas. The sample room in Delhi is not for a retail outlet, but to take orders."

"The second is, that in the case of Manila Haat, marketing is an exchange of goods and money, for employment, and for improving the quality of life of poor women."

"So, we need to hear from you!

What are your products?

Where are you selling your products?

What are your problems?

What is the total value of the products you have brought to Manila Haat?

Is there a demand for your products?

Do people like it?

Is it an important product?

Can its design be improved?

Can its quality be improved?

If we wish to broaden our market, what changes should we bring

What are the market's requirements?

For which market-group or segment is it?"

A discussion followed, during which the following problems

are highlighted:

- With regard to marketing, almost all the WPGs said they had problems of marketing
- In KVIC retail outlets in Bihar, women salespersons are not being appointed
- Even in CCIC, there is often a long delay in getting payments
- For some WPGs, transport is a problem
- Because WPGs pay higher wages than 'middlemen' or 'traders', the products become more expensive and even CCIC refuses to buy them
- Similarly, because WPGs make payments for raw materials against bills only, whereas 'traders' don't, the products of WPGs become more expensive

The following suggestions were made:

There is need for a revolving fund, which would give loans to WPGs when they have orders to fulfill, but don't have working capital

Almost all WPGs said that there should be a 'permanent' shop in Delhi, a 'permanent' sample room in Delhi, a women producers khaadi shop in Delhi

CCIC should be requested to give a small counter within it for Mahila Haat, so that consumers will get an opportunity to see the different products made by poor women

There should be lobbying efforts with KVIC, to appoint women salespersons in their retail outlets, and for KVIC's recruitment policy to be made more women-oriented

All government programmes for women's income-generation should reserve 30 per cent of the budget, for marketing support

There should be lobbying efforts with CCIC to buy products of genuine WPGs, even if more expensive than similar products made by 'commercial' organisations, if the higher price is due to minimum and high wages for artisans, and purchase of raw materials against bills.

The groups which specially mentioned marketing problems

are: Tribal Handicrafts Marketing Cell (IAC), Ankur (garments), Sewa-Munger (woollen shawls), Swallows (batik textiles), Sewa-Munger (embroidery), Ruhsa (cotton lungis); Ruhsa, for example, had an unsold stock of Rs.3 lakhs.

Many groups stressed the need to build up local markets (Simon's India Trust was a keen advocate, Sewa-Munger was trying to set up weekly haats in their area of operation).

Session 3, April 14: Raw Materials

This session was chaired by Vidyaben of Sewa-Munger.

Shri Mitra was the resource person. Mr. L. C. Jain introduced the subject:

"The problem of raw materials is an organic part of the lives of small producers and their organisations, the problem is entwined with their lives. They don't have capital, so they buy raw materials in very small quantities; raw materials become very expensive, so the products become expensive, and cannot compete with bigger production units (they do not get higher wages). Small producers also do not have storage space; they store it on the streets, and are then subjected to harassment by municipal authorities.

Elaben took me to Ahmedabad to see the bamboo-workers. The big factories take contracts for bamboo forests; the CCFs are given promises of jobs after retirement, for example, WIMCO takes whole forests on long-term leases for 30 years! The big factories also get bamboo at very cheap prices - If Ela's bamboo-workers pay Rs.7 for a particular quantity of bamboo, the big factories pay 70 paise for the same quantity. Originally, the small producers had priority, but this is no longer true.

Under these circumstances, Manila Haat (or some forum) has to lobby for: (a) a reservation of 10 per cent for the local artisans, of all raw materials. (ii) bank credit, (iii) a reasonable price (after all there is a dual pricing policy for sugar) which will enable their products to be competitive (we have done a survey of 200,000 artisans in 200 blocks which showed that people liked their products, the only problem was the high cost of raw materials).

The reason why I keep on saying "Raise your voice" is because the Government keeps on promising, but doesn't do it and for example, the cotton yarn for handloom weavers is 30 per cent higher than the mill-owner's yarn; the Government said that the National Corporation would be set up and would supply Rs.250 crores worth of handloom yarn, but, in reality, supplied only Rs.2 crore worth, last year."

Therefore the women's movement, and WPGs have to raise very strong voices and press the Government for a policy package for raw materials - for a price agreement and quota agreement with the Government - 10 per cent of raw materials will be first reserved for the local area, and, made available to local workers at a reasonable price.

In the brief discussions which followed, the following official suggestions were made:

A revolving fund for raw material purchase
 Impress on government, the need for special grant assistance for groups who wish to grow their own raw materials (e.g. silk plantations to grow cocoons).

Groups which talked about problems of raw materials were, India Trust (fruits), Vanvasi Seva Kendra (wood, wool, etc.), Manila Vikas Sangh (cocoons), Sewa-Lucknow (cotton etc.), Tribal Handicrafts Marketing Cell (cotton yarn), CODES (for mats).

Session 4, April 14: Organising (Sangathan)

Vidyaben continued to chair the session, Manosni Mitra continued as chairperson; Kanta Tyagi, of Kanya Ashram, Niwali, was the first speaker.

This session revealed that almost all the groups, in one way or another, had tried 'sangathan' and felt it to be an important programme instrument. Group after group related their positive and moving experiences.

Kanta Tyagi: "I went for a year, to Niwali, with Rs. 2,000; I have spent 34 years. It is in a very remote area of Madhya Pradesh, within the jungle. No one even knew Hindi in the area; the moneylenders, traders, police, excise officials, all threatened us and tried to frighten us. But we persevered in sangathan, we had sammelans under trees; we, tribal women, broke the liquor pots, we held open people's courts and tried the aparis. The government knows the value of sangathan."

L.C. Jain: Kanta Tyagi has struck a very vital and very timely note. When we disperse, the power which we feel now will not disperse; there should be an associated power of women in sangathan - which is, as Kanta Tyagi expressed, the only surviving force in the face of exploiters, an indifferent corrupt bureaucracy, an oppressive police force, to get development programmes and government schemes going, in the area.

Namrata (Sewa) - Our women garment-workers were being paid Rs.7 for stitching 12 petticoats; out of this Rs.7, Rs.3 would be spent in transport etc. After sangathan and a union, and their grievances being sent to the government, it has gone up to Rs. 17 per dozen.

It is not only Sewa's membership who benefitted; the wages went up for all garment-workers - this is the ripple-effect of Sangathan.

Shabana (Sewa-Lucknow) - Due to sangathan, the mahajans, after our long dharna are paying 20 per cent more for chikan-work. But it was a long struggle.

Hira Devi (Manila Vikas Sangh) - Six of us, all women, were trained in Ranchi, then we surveyed all villages in the area. The people are very poor - the men had no clothes, only langotis, women collect firewood in the jungle miles away; if they can't sell it, they sleep hungry. We went from house to house, organising them; many thought we were dacoits, many thought we were family planning workers. We nearly left our jobs - there was not even drinking water available in these villages. Now there are four spinning-cum-weaving centres, and they are very happy.

Amarjyoti Nilayam - "Why education for women? They are going to wash vessels," said the men in our area (Uttar Pradesh). The women cover their heads all the time. "Why?", we ask. "Otherwise our husbands will die", they say. They are forbidden

anyways. they are married when they are children.

They are being sent to our Centre ... they have not been
 of villages. After a lot of persuasion, the men let
 of Varanasi with us - they saw everything with
 change has slowly come into their lives ...

Kumari (CROSS) - Women agricultural labourers are so
 ited... they are bonded labourers ... they are not even
 to feed their babies during working hours ... I am
 on the floor, by the time the spit dries up, you must
 feeding your baby, says the landlord's wife. Only
 has helped them.

But women need supportive services also... we have
 Balwadis.

Statt - Sewa's experience also has been that we cannot
 'struggle' alone, there has to be 'development' also. For
 our patchwork women (chindi-workers) formed a union and
 against extremely low piece-rate wages. They were
 and thrown out of employment altogether. So we had
 a production unit - now 200 chindi workers are in the
 . But, now the 400 chindi-workers who are not in the
 they also benefit, they also got the strength to ask
 wages, even without sangathan. They know that they
 the cooperative if they are victimised and they can ask
 wages and for work throughout the year quoting Sewa's
 It has automatically increased bargaining power; but
 and development had to go hand in hand.

We believe that there should be national organisations of workers. For example, there should be one national textile organisation for tassar spinners and weavers, batik workers, block-printers, rag patch workers, then only people in power will listen to us. Organising is like a receptacle; it is absolutely empty; but then it can be filled with anything - water, liquor, sugar.

The government has plenty of programmes - IRDP, DWCRA - but they will never work without organising. We need primary membership at village level, then state-level membership, and then national-level membership. We will have success only if we have strength.

Radha Bhatt (Laxmi Ashram) - We are in a small village on the edge of the Himalayas - nobody knows us or our products, which we brought to Delhi some years ago - we are a small women producers' group - with a lot of problems of raw materials, transport, marketing.

Barter is the best economics. Why not a group in Kausani, a group in Bihar, a group in Bombay, support each other?

We should make first for local markets; but the world is changing and we have to exist ... so I suggested Manila Haat to Levaki ... and she has done it finally.

We, WPGs, should have one platform, our voice should be strong.

The country's development is going in the wrong directions.

Government's policies and emphasis on industrialisation, frequent exploitation, and, centralised decision-making; the current should be reversed, a true meaning should be given to development, the current should be brought back to rural areas where women know their problems and priorities best; Mahila Haat should be set up in this and take development into the right direction."

Shri Valsada (Kashtapari Sangathan) - "This is a mass movement in Thana district of Maharashtra in which women have played a major role in land-based issues - the whole issue of land grabbing (moneylenders and traders have taken over a lot of land) - and of 'encroachments' (when tribal families who had their land to moneylenders began subsistence food production in forest areas, the repression by foresters was unbelievable) - women are militant and have got into direct confrontations with landlords, police, foresters - these are outsiders. But on their own men, they are victims of an unfair division of labour - wife-beating, witch-hunting. Even the women's art, the paintings, have been snatched by the men."

Shri Jain - "I went to see Sewa's vegetable-vendors, the woman tied her child to the cot, at her home, by a thread through the child's ankle. When the policeman harasses her for selling tomatoes in an 'unauthorised' place, and asks for a bribe of 200, the blood goes to her head, and, she and 200 vegetable-vendors surround him and ask "how many tomatoes do you want" but immediately she calms them down, for the thought that goes through her mind that if I do not reach home today, who

untie my child?

Vidyaben (Sewa-Munger) - "All of us, women producers' groups, are like flowers in a garland; and Devaki united us into la Haat."

Session 5: April 15, Designs and Training

Jolly Rohatgi and Poonam Muttreja made presentations.

Poonam Muttreja - "Eighteen years ago, there were no trained designers in India who would provide design training in villages. That situation has changed dramatically."

"In Dastkar, we have tried out three methods of training in design."

(a) A design workshop for 15 days with all the members of the group. For example, Laila Tyabji did this with the Vasna work cooperative in Ahmedabad. She helped them to understand the market, as well as colour, fabric, quality, costing. The response has been very positive."

(b) "During Exhibitions, we have worked with craftspersons, the Exhibition itself. Here we have worked on the premise that craftspersons know best - they know the raw materials, know production, they know skills, they know the rural areas, and they have dealt with all this for generations. So we don't try to change the entire design and production. We just strengthen them. The experience here has been both positive and negative. Some learn quickly and add their own ideas and innovate much further. Some don't even feel the need."

(c) "We invited one craftsman from each group to Delhi. It has not been a good experience. They didn't share designs with the group; one even left the cooperative!"

Jolly Rohatgi - "I agree with Poonam that the craftsman is a much better designer than us. I also agree that the group should be involved."

"My experience has been that design has a lot of inter-relationships with the method of production. For example, in pottery, those working with the clay are in a sense designers and the artists control the product. How does one raise this equality question? Who should control the product? Should everyone involved know the whole process?"

"The democratic approach also, often doesn't work. If we ask many women say, cutting and tailoring!"

"Designing is also very much related to the market. In the local market, the market and production are both controlled by the craftsman and the customer and the craftsmen are intimately related. In the national market, the market is only slightly removed from the craftsman's vision. But in the export market, the craftsman is completely dependent on the design and has only skills.

I feel that the designer should give control to the craftsman, and this should be the aim of service organisations.

It is often assumed that designing is not required for the

market. But this is not the case. In the local market, a big industries have crept in, with a lot of second-rate, quality, but low-priced goods e.g. chai glass. A design for this market, has to be very special, and the products made, stronger, longer-lasting, higher quality, low-cost, and very cost-conscious. An alternative design cell is thus needed with a lot of inventiveness, because the means of production have become so diverse and divided that the individual person is no longer in control."

Conclusion

Meanwhile, all the WPGs had been requested to write their suggestions for Mahila Haat. Based on these suggestions and on discussions in the different sessions, the Recommendations were drawn up and presented at an evening session. They were presented on the last session, and again to Mrs. Margaret. Since we feel that the Recommendations are an important part of this report, we are presenting it here itself, rather than as an Appendix.

Recommendations

• are women's non-governmental organisations who are working with women producers who are making

handicrafts
garments
household goods
utilitarian products
food products

Our work is essential for the nation. Besides, handicrafts is a very large sector earning a lot of foreign exchange. In 1984-85, Rs. 1,700 crores was the foreign exchange earned; in 1984-85, the production of handicrafts in the country was Rs. 3,500 crores. Over 27 lakh persons get employment in India in the handicrafts sector.

But, we face a lot of problems, and we know that our women producers are facing a lot of problems. So we feel that there is an urgent need to set up an organisation which will cater to the needs of women producers all over the country. Therefore we support the formation of Mahila Haat.

1. For whom?

It is recommended that Mahila Haat is for women's non-governmental organisations (n.g.os.), producer groups who are producing

- handicrafts
- garments
- household goods
- utilitarian products
- food products

It is also recommended that Mahila Haat's women producer groups should be groups working with poor women.

2. What is Mahila Haat's Objectives?

It is recommended that the two objectives stated by the Institute of Social Studies Trust

- to extend, increase, regularise women's incomes
- to set up a network of women's producer groups

should be taken now, as a starting point, and the advisory

Committee should add to these objectives.

What would be the programmes of Mahila Haat?

It is recommended that the first programmes of Mahila Haat should be

- Sample room
- Rural weekly haat project

Sample Room and Facilitation Centre

It is recommended that the Sample Room and Facilitation Centre should be located in Delhi. Samples should be bought from all the producer groups and a permanent and growing Sample Room and Facilitation Centre should be set up. This Centre should provide the following services:

- raw material procurement advice
- design-cum-product development advice
- credit services
- marketing support
- network and exchange of information among groups, foster "barter" among groups
- policy support

1.1. Raw Materials

It is recommended that the Facilitation Centre should provide advice in raw materials procurement as well as provide policy support. It should help groups to get raw materials at a price which will enable their product prices to be competitive. It is also recommended that there should be a social fund for P.Gs wishing to grow their own raw materials.

1.2. Design-cum-product development advice

It is recommended that the Facilitation Centre should set up nearhead teams of designers, technology, equipment, etc, who

would travel to the different producer groups and assist them on the spot. Of special need is advice on new designs, design training, product development - shape, size, utility etc. - improved production techniques, pricing, management, appropriate technology.

3a.3. Credit Services

It is strongly recommended that the Facilitation Centre should have a revolving fund, through which loans should be given to all producer groups for bulk purchase (and consequently cheaper price) of raw materials etc. (which can be returned as soon as the goods are sold). Apart from this, the WPGs should be linked to financial institutions.

3a.4 Marketing Support

It is in this area that most groups strongly expressed the need for assistance. It is recommended that Mahila Haat should undertake the following activities:

- publicity (e.g. on television)
- sample room and booking of bulk orders, linkage with CCIC, HHEC, AIHB
- exhibitions
- quality and price control advice
- studies defining market and consumer type
- market research
- marketing training
- linkage with alternative marketing (trading) organisations abroad (Third World shops)
- assistance in setting up a women khadi producers shop
- assistance in assessment of product in terms of appropriateness for village level, state capital level, national level or export level markets
- promotion of artisans' organisation.

So, it was decided that four or five areas will be chosen as pilot projects, where the local n.g.o. is interested. A survey will be done of the village markets in and around the project village.

Some of the project villages will have permanent markets, some, periodic markets. All these will be surveyed; also, in survey, would be:

- detailed list of products
- who makes these products?

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| men | women | children |
| : | : | : |
| rural urban | rural urban | girls boys |
| | | : |
| | | rural urban |
- who buys these products? (by sex, class, caste)
- about the women marketeers
 - credit
 - bank
 - moneylender
 - other
- support services
- possible interventions
- problems of women marketeers
- volume of sales of each product
- what are products that do have a market in the haats, but are not being sold now, and can be introduced.

The surveys would then be presented at a workshop, where pilot projects on rural weekly haat interventions would be worked out; then the pilot projects would in the course of three years work, test out models for horizontal expansion.

The highlight of the workshop was that Mrs. Margaret Alva recently arrived, in spite of having regretted earlier.

"What you are doing is something I have dreamed of doing for women of India. Women in this country have to be removed from the concept of inequality. Women can change their own economic

3a.5. Network and exchange of information

It is recommended that a number of workshops should be held in the first year. In subsequent years, other methods should also be devised for this purpose. It is also strongly recommended that the 'organising' strategy, the 'sangathan' should be considerably strengthened at the village level, and all the village level organisations be federated into national level 'sangathans'.

3a.6. Policy support

There is a wide range of requests for policy support, and we recommend that Mahila Haat should study each one of these problems in depth and should present the studies to the concerned authorities:

- mat-weaving groups face heavy competition from powerloom mats; even Government departments buy from powerloom mats
- a 'consumption ethic' needs to be built up 'buy from poor women', a counter in CCIC, television programmes, etc.
- groups have sales tax problems
- groups paying minimum wages should be given preference by CCIC and by other government agencies, even though, because of their paying the minimum wage, their products are more expensive
- groups should get preference in allocation of raw materials
- Khadi women's groups should be allotted a separate shop by KVIC
- Existing KVIC shops should make it a policy to appoint staff members.

3b. Rural weekly haat project

All the participants felt that there was a need to systematically build up local sales, in and around their own villages. Many have tried building up village-level sales, but not systematically.

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status. We women are creative, we only need infrastructural support to allow us to contribute. My dream is to set up a National Development Corporation for Women. Women like me feel proud to work with women like you", she said.