

SEWA Creches for Tobacco Workers in Kheda District

M. S. S. R. F.

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REPORT
of the
EVALUATION TEAM

by

MINA SWAMINATHAN

and

K. V. ESWARA PRASAD

prepared for the

AGA KHAN FOUNDATION



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I. INTRODUCTION

The need to provide adequate day care for the children of working women has been acknowledged in several forums in India, since Independence. The attention given however has been intermittent and aperiodic and the provision of day care for children in rural and urban India remains an issue not transformed into action which can satisfy adequately the needs of women and children.

The Constitution of India in its Directive Principles, guarantees the right to education and to protection for the child in the family. Having ratified ILO conventions, several legislations enacted in India make it obligatory for employers to have creches, where women are employed in sufficient number.

The establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953 led to an extensive network of **balwadis**. The formulation of the National Policy for Children (1974) and its translation into action led to the establishment of the Integrated Child Development Services programme. In 1978 the Working Group on Women's Employment constituted by the Planning Commission saw the need to include child care services as a part of the Minimum Needs Programme to be spread all over India.

The Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974), having reviewed some of these programmes pointed out for the first time that child care services covered only a small section of women in the organised sector; according to its report a large portion of the labour force, mostly women in the unorganised sector, had no access to child care services at all.

The 80's witnessed a shift in the emphasis of these programmes; for instance, the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWACRA 1986) clearly acknowledges the need for provision of child care services for working women ; the National Policy on Education (NPE 1986) saw broadly the role of child care services as a part of Early Childhood Care and Education; the Department of Women and Child Development's proposals attempt at integrating programmes aimed at both women and children; the National Perspective Plan on women (1988) recommends the provision of creches in India both in the organised and informal sector. **Shram Shakti** (1988) acknowledging the multiple role of women as workers, home makers and mothers emphasised the urgent need to provide child care facilities.

Despite the recognition of child care as an essential service there seems little data available on the quality and quantity of services that are now in existence. The statutory sector and the voluntary sector have been the two major providers of child care services in India. Available data on the enforcement of various legal provisions in the statutory sector shows inadequate if not poor coverage. Again, in this sector evasion of legal provisions are well known as penal sanctions are not stringent enough, and the enforcement authorities are no threat to the employers.

In the voluntary sector, which is generally supported by Government assistance coverage once again is inadequate as shown by a number of reviews; the services do not seem to cater to the needs of or timings of working mothers; do not cover poor women; some like ICDS do not aim to provide day care services;

neither are they flexible enough to meet local needs; nor do they see community participation as essential for the functioning of these programmes.

Being aware of the inadequacy of child care services available through both the statutory and voluntary sectors, several forums, voluntary agencies, activists, trade unions and others concerned with the status of women and children in India have reemphasised the importance of child care for the following reasons:

- Child oriented - to provide children better health care, nutrition and pre-school education;
- woman - oriented to provide women support and release them for necessary economic reasons, as well as to enable them to participate in developmental and literacy programmes and acquire other skills;
- girl - oriented - to support school-age girls who are otherwise saddled with child minding and cannot attend school.

Some agencies see a broader role for child care services in catering to the needs of women in their multiple roles, and have moved ahead with organising child care services as a part of their overall activities. One such experiment is that by SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association, Ahmedabad) which, as a trade union has moved into the area of child care services some years ago.

This report is an attempt at taking stock of SEWA's experiment in organising and running creches for women tobacco workers in Kheda District for the last four years. The purpose

here is not an evaluation; rather its focus is on the following question - as a trade union organisation, what has it meant for SEWA to enter rural areas through a welfare programme focusing on meeting practical needs such as creche services, credit and health?

At this point it is essential to look briefly at child care services in Gujarat. The State has a higher than average participation of women in the labour force and almost 50 percent of them are employed in the unorganised sector. A number of agencies are involved with funding and provision of child care services. The main role is that of the Central Government through the Integrated Child Development Scheme, followed by voluntary and charitable agencies. A lesser role is played by State Government schemes, the Municipal Corporations, industrial houses and private individuals and groups. The public sector, banks, trade unions and cooperatives are hardly in the picture at all.

A review of the Gujarat experience in child care services shows that

- (a) women in the unorganised sector are not covered adequately;
- (b) the quality of services is not particularly satisfactory; and
- (c) there is a great need to enforce statutory provision.

In this context the SEWA programme was started with the following objectives:

1. To act as an advocacy group for poor, working women in national forums, focussing on their need for child care, especially for the 0 to 3 age-group.

2. To develop an innovative model of child care for children under the age of 3 years and to develop systems whereby this may be operationalised at the village level.
3. To develop and strengthen new and existing anganwadis and creches, both in urban and rural areas, as focal points for delivering child care services and organising women workers and the community in general.

The programme has also a number of first's to its credit:

- being the first trade union to enter the child care services field.
- meeting the needs of khali workers who have so far not been organised by the major central unions;
- having a systematic approach to establishing creches and seeing a broad role for the creche;
- recognising the creche teachers' worth and paying them adequately

How far has SEWA's SHAISHAV programme been able to move towards the objectives set for itself? What is SEWA's experience as a trade union in entering welfare programmes and how has it affected the mobilization of women in rural areas? What has been the effect on women workers, their children and families, and others in the village? What support systems have been built up and how sustainable is the programme? What are the lessons for others and what are the implications for child care policy? These are some of the issues this report attempts to examine in taking stock of the SHAISHAV programme.

II. A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The methodology primarily consisted of

1. review of documented materials including several reports from SEWA and AKF and quarterly reports on the implementation of the programme submitted to the Foundation since the starting of the programme.
2. Discussions with many persons particularly the supervisors, the teachers in the creches, the parents especially mothers and to a certain extent some fathers, village Sarpanches, Khali owners, Labour Department officials and others. These discussions were held during field visits to the villages where the creches were functioning.
3. Discussions with the Project Coordinator and Project Director of the child care programme and other SEWA organizers in the field and at SEWA Ahmedabad office.

All through the purpose was to understand how each of them saw the child care programme, SEWA as a union and its activities. In keeping with the terms of reference, no attempt was made to collect primary field data regarding the programme. The available research and documentation was taken as the authentic base. The report is based on field observations and information gathered in the above manner. The opinions are our own.

III. OBSERVATIONS ON THE CRECHE PROGRAMME

Setting and Programme

The Space and Facilities: The creches are mostly housed in comfortable, airy, clean and cheerful surroundings. Most are spacious in relation to the size of the group, though a few are cramped. The area is kept very clean, in spite of serious water problems in several places, and well decorated with bright coloured objects. Water supply is adequate and in a few, separate toilets have been provided. In spite of the constant challenge of finding suitable accommodation in the village, and of having had to move several times, in most places SEWA has been able to make the creche an inviting and homely environment for the children and their mothers. Basic equipment for taking care of the children is available and is well maintained. The creches are housed in Panchayat ghars, rented premises in homes, and in a few cases, specially built premises.

Teacher-child ratio: An outstanding feature of the creches is the excellent teacher-child ratio, with two women staff to about thirteen or fourteen children on average, which is essential for children of this young age, where one-to-one relationships with adults are so significant. The relationship between the caregivers and the children is obviously one of great warmth and affection, expressed in the secure behaviour of the children and the individual attention and knowledge of each child expressed by the teacher. Close emotional bonds have been forged, and children were often found clinging to the teachers and some were even unwilling to go home.

Timings: The day at the creche is a long one, starting at 7.30 am or 8.00 am and going on till 6.00 or 7.00 p.m. with a two-hour lunch break when the mothers come to take their children home, and the teachers also get time to go home. In some creches, some mothers are unable to take the children away at lunch time, so the teachers stagger their lunch break and one of them is always on duty. These timings, which are rare in day care in India, provide mothers with the real relief they need, so that the creche is really a support service.

Schedule: The daily programme is based on the child's biological rhythm, alternating sleep, feeding, play and rest. A schedule for feeding has been set up which provides for milk twice a day, a meal at lunch time and a snack in the afternoon, supplemented by breast milk in most cases. The children are cleaned, washed and combed in the morning and again in the afternoon if needed. Solid linen is washed immediately and not piled up. The cradle cloths are washed once a week. SEWA's health workers visit each creche once a week, screen the children for complaints and ailments, suggest treatment and supply the medication. Immunisation and weight taking are done regularly.

The children -- impact of the Creches

The basic needs of health, hygiene and nutrition seem well met, but less attention has been given to offering a stimulating environment and activities for the children's motor, cognitive and language development.

Health and Nutrition: Children were generally clean and tidy and were found eating with relish. All available evidence from records, the comments of teachers, mothers and observations of the children point to an excellent impact on children, in relation to health, hygiene and cleanliness. However, due to lack of baseline data on children's health status, this cannot be conclusively stated. The study done by SEWA shows that though the incidence of illnesses may not have declined much, the mothers' ability to deal with it has increased considerably. (Annexure III: Tables 16 - 19) Environmental and personal hygiene, proper nutrition (Annexure III: Tables 20 - 21) and immunisation have obviously helped a great deal in this process. A few areas however need greater attention.

Activity level: The activity level of children needs further study. The presence of visitors creates disturbances of various types, and the behaviour of children during a visit therefore cannot be taken as typical. Allowing for this factor, it seems that the activity level of the children was somewhat low for healthy children of this age. Several kinds of inadequacies could underlie this phenomenon, from nutrition, space, and materials for play, to stimulation and support from adults. A mix of all these seems to be involved.

Nutrition: The nutrition programme seems to be based on availability, acceptability and cost, and could probably be better planned with the help of a nutritionist or pediatrician. There is no accurate indicator of its adequacy in terms of calories and balance in terms of nutrient content and exact information about these aspects was not available. It is possible

that the dietary standard could be improved with no or a negligible increase in cost.

Play: There do not appear to be any guidelines for the staff to involve the children in active play of various types, (with and without materials), in practising language appropriate to different stages, in stimulating and supporting motor development etc. They lack training of how to meet these needs in children.

Growth Records: Children's growth is yet another indicator of the adequacy of the nutrition and overall developmental programme. While children's weight is being carefully recorded every month, the absence of growth monitoring charts makes it very difficult to say at a glance whether growth rates are satisfactory or not. In some individual cases, children showed symptoms that could have been due to malnutrition, but it would be unfair to conclude this without further study. However, attention needs to be given to maintaining growth monitoring charts as well as planning the nutrition more scientifically. Attention also needs to be given to a programme of stimulation for social, personal, cognitive and language development.

The women--impact of the creches.

Most of the mothers met were agricultural labourers working in the tobacco fields. We did not come across any mothers working in Khalis with children in the creches. A few fathers were observed visiting the creche to collect their children and those we spoke to were supportive of the creche programme. However, most of our observations about parents relate to mothers.

Available evidence again indicates the significant positive impact of the creches on the women. Mothers everywhere expressed great satisfaction with the creches, in terms of giving them "peace of mind" enabling them to work more and earn more, (Annexure III: Table 1) and in terms of the good care which they felt their children were receiving. SEWA's study also gives data about the school attendance of older girls released by the creche from child caretaking. (Annexure III: Table 22) Requests for creches are coming in from other villages, also requests for continuation of the services for children aged three to six, and for keeping the creches open on Sundays and holidays.

Better parenting: The competence and confidence of the women as mothers also appears to have increased considerably as a result of the health training, the informal learning from the creches and their participation in various other activities organised by SEWA.

Mothers' awareness and knowledge: The health training for mothers regularly offered by SEWA's health team has achieved remarkable results. The level of awareness and articulation of

the women about the causes, cures and prevention of most common diseases, environmental sanitation and other health issues was extremely high. In one centre, some of the women even expressed their awareness of the factors determining the sex of children, and of the respective roles of the mother and father in this process, which is more than many Indian college graduates know! At the same time, it must be said that certain shortcomings exist. There is little emphasis in the health training on child growth and stages of child development, child nutrition or basic nutrition. The focus is on community and general health, preventive measures and gynecological problems. Also the women's own knowledge of indigenous medicine and home remedies does not appear to have been well integrated into the training.

Divergence of Interest: Though the creche and the union have supported each other and each has been used as the entry point for the other, at one level there appears to be some divergence of interests between the women as workers and as mothers. The creches are utilised both by women working in the Khalis, and others such as agricultural labourers. Over the years the Khali workers have been more closely associated with the SEWA Union than some of the others. So SEWA union activities and the creche seemed to be tending towards moving in different directions within the same village. Obviously, mothers of young children may have little time for active participation in union matters, and union activists are likely to be older women who may be least burdened by child care. Mothers' meetings focus exclusively, on matters affecting women as mothers of young children; while the union meetings focus on matters relating to

work. Mothers' meetings have also been used as the launching pad for savings and insurance schemes. Creche matters are brought up at meetings of the Trade Committee, but at the village level, the mothers do not seem to attend general union meetings.

Thus, the creche and its related activities tend to be seen by the women as a "service" provided by an institution with which they do not identify very closely and to which they feel free to make demands as parents; while the union is seen as militant and identified as their own, to which they owe allegiance as workers and which makes demands on them. That these are different aspects of SEWA may not be equally well understood by all.

Training

The teachers are very committed and dedicated workers and are putting in their best efforts. However there are some weaknesses which can be attributed to gaps in training.

Practical Training: The training programme for teachers has tremendous and evident strengths as well as some weaknesses. Its greatest value is the practical, field-oriented and need-based element. Teachers have been trained by experience, by other more experienced workers and by supervisors, in practical situations in the field, and without a burdensome theoretical component. Each new creche is launched with the help of a more experienced teacher who can set up the daily routines, while new recruits are given a period of observation in a running creche to learn the basics hands-on. Thus after the initial struggle to set up a viable programme in the first few creches,

the lessons have been passed on by the sound methods of demonstration and learning by doing.

Exclusive Focus: When it comes to more formal training this is handled almost solely by the health worker teams. This training focuses on community and general health and preventive measures with less emphasis on growth monitoring, child development, child nutrition etc.

Resource Persons: The supervisors, who are excellent managers and organisers, play no role in training, though they are well placed to do so, because of their own lack of knowledge and preparedness. Other resource people such as nutritionists, pediatricians, medical personnel, educators also do not appear to have been involved in setting up the programme or participating in the training. The pediatrician, Dr. Joshi, is being used only for referral of children in his clinic at Anand. He was not aware of what was happening in the field programme or its impact on the health of children, nor has he been involved in the training. A pediatrician with an urban middle-class practice may not be best suited for training paraprofessionals, but medical people with mere relevant experience could be utilised.

Training Support: An attempt was made earlier to work out a system of ongoing supervision and training in child development with the help of the Department. of Child Development, MSU, Baroda, but this fell through due to some difficulties on both sides. Very recently, (January 1993) after nearly three years of operation, an orientation course was arranged at Mobile Creches, Delhi for half the teachers and supervisors. While the framework offered there is very useful, the orientation is in a sense too

little and too late. Also because of the distance, the follow-up, implementation and ongoing nature of the training is likely to be weak.

Alternative Approaches: More effort has to be made to improve the training with a view to improving the quality of the programme for children. This could be done in several ways

- by including on the staff of the project a specialist with Education or Child Development background;
- by developing a close relationship with a nearby training or educational institution, such as Department of Home Science, Agriculture University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, if not MSU;
- by exposing the supervisors to a higher level of training which they in turn could pass on to the teachers;
- by developing a curriculum development exercise with the help of resource persons;
- or by a combination of all these.

But training is a key to strengthening and further development of the project.

Organisation and Management

Roles and Responsibilities: The present structure of organisation and style of management is goal-oriented and geared to problem solving at all levels. Roles and responsibilities are well delineated and clearly understood by all from the creche teachers, union activists and mothers at the field level through the supervisors to the Director and Project Coordinator.

Work Culture: The day-to-day running of the creche is the responsibility of the two creche teachers jointly. This is an unique and remarkable experiment in creating a non-hierarchical style of management, quite contrary to the normal practice in our country. The almost universal pattern is to have one person, usually designated a 'teacher' or word of similar connotation, who is in charge of the creche, and a lower paid, less educated worker, often known as "helper" or 'ayah' who usually finds herself doing most of the low-status, demanding physical work while the 'higher' worker focuses on record-keeping, public relations, and activities of an "educational" nature. This experiment in partnership with two workers at the same level, which seems to be working out quite satisfactorily, is hence highly commendable both from the point of view of proper attention to the children and organisational relationships. The two teachers seem to cooperate and share their duties amicably, even substituting for each other and taking turns to go home etc. However, no satisfactory arrangement seems to have been worked out to find substitutes when either of the teachers has to take leave for any reason. This should not be difficult to arrange in a situation with so much support from the client community.

Supervisors: Of the four supervisors provided, three are currently on the job. Their grasp of the situation, devotion and attention to work, relationships with staff, community, village leaders and local officials are excellent, especially in view of the fact that none of them has had previous experience of this kind. Each handles six to seven creches, instead of five as originally planned, and is able to visit each centre at least

once a week, oftener if needed. Their work demand continuous monitoring of the working of creches, organising monthly meetings with the teachers and mothers, arranging supplies to the creches, surveying villages to explore the possibility of opening new creches and so on. They were undoubtedly deeply involved in all the activities.

Nevertheless, their own experience in child development being limited, they have not been able to guide creche teachers adequately. Despite having been with the child care programme of SEWA for the last few years, the supervisors have only been trained recently on child development/creche administration. As a result, when queried about the growth monitoring charts, for example, they (and later the creche teachers) said they were not aware of the need to have one for each child in the creche.

Hence they are unable to monitor the programme effectively for quality or take steps to remedy shortcomings even if pointed out. Considering their ability, this situation could be easily remedied by giving them the necessary exposure followed by the responsibility. Furthermore, since they may have to deal with a variety of situations that often suddenly arise in rural areas, e.g. dealing with the power structure in the villages, they would benefit from some kind of leadership training.

The Project Coordinator: Having been in charge of the project since before its inception, right from the planning stage, the Project Coordinator has borne most of the brunt of setting up the programme in the teeth of severe difficulties. She is a remarkable mix of dynamism and patience, negotiating skill and social commitment, public relations and attention to

organisational detail. However, she has in the last few months also been assigned the responsibilities of District Organiser for SEWA in Kheda District, and as a result, she is now able to devote less time to the creche programme.

Now that the period of setting up and the initial teething troubles are over and a new phase of the work has started, it may be desirable at this stage to appoint a Project Coordinator with a different kind of background. Keeping in mind the needs at this stage for improvement of programme quality, it would be good to find a person with a background (qualifications and/or experience) in Child Development, or Early Childhood Education or some other education -related discipline.

Problem-solving: Monthly meetings of workers are being conducted for sharing of experiences and problem-solving, but not for training as such. At one of the monthly meetings the following were raised as major issues to be more closely examined.

1. The need for own space for the creche. Many were in rented premises and faced the threat of eviction. For example in one of the villages the creche had moved its premises at least six times in the last two years
2. The need for substitutes to take care of the creche when the teachers wanted to take time off
3. Higher wages and benefits such as provident fund etc.
4. Many mothers not being particularly cooperative regarding payment of monthly dues or extending some help when urgently required for running the creche, and
5. Only some men were willing to help.

The newly emerging organisational problem, to do with issues such as work load, timings, leave, emoluments, benefits and privileges of employment etc of the staff is related to the creche teachers finding their identity as child care workers rather than as the agricultural or tobacco workers that they were originally. This represents a kind of upward mobility and improved self-concept and is to be welcomed.

Further, helping them to recognise themselves as belonging to the cadre of child care paraprofessionals in the country, and organising them as such under SEWA's umbrella, may help the entire group to achieve recognition, better wages and working conditions. SEWA's creche teachers could indeed play a leading role in such an upliftment of child care workers.

IV. LINKAGES

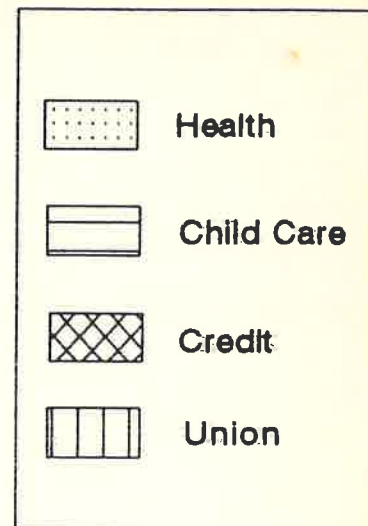
The impact of the SHAISHAV programme has to be seen in relation to its stated objectives. These are strengthening the union as an organization on the one hand and in its proposed advocacy role in mobilising greater public opinion on the need to integrate child care services with women's employment on the other. Both can be viewed in terms of the linkages the programme has established with

- a. The SEWA union's other activities - internal linkages
- b. Local authorities and
- c. Employers in the tobacco industry
- d. State Labour Department
- e. Programmes of the State and Central Governments, such as State social Welfare Board, Departments of Health, Women and Development, Community Development, Education, Tribal Welfare etc.

In this section, we shall focus on the linkages of SHAISHAV under two broad dimensions namely **internal** (i.e. a) and **external**.(i.e. b to e)

a. Internal Linkages

SEWA finds the combination of unionising with offering services like health care, credit (banking) and child care to be effective for organising women workers. The philosophy of SEWA as reflected in the SEWA tree is represented in Fig. 1. Unionisation is the main activity and other activities such as credit, health and child care are taken up within the union to fulfill the expressed needs of workers.



KEY

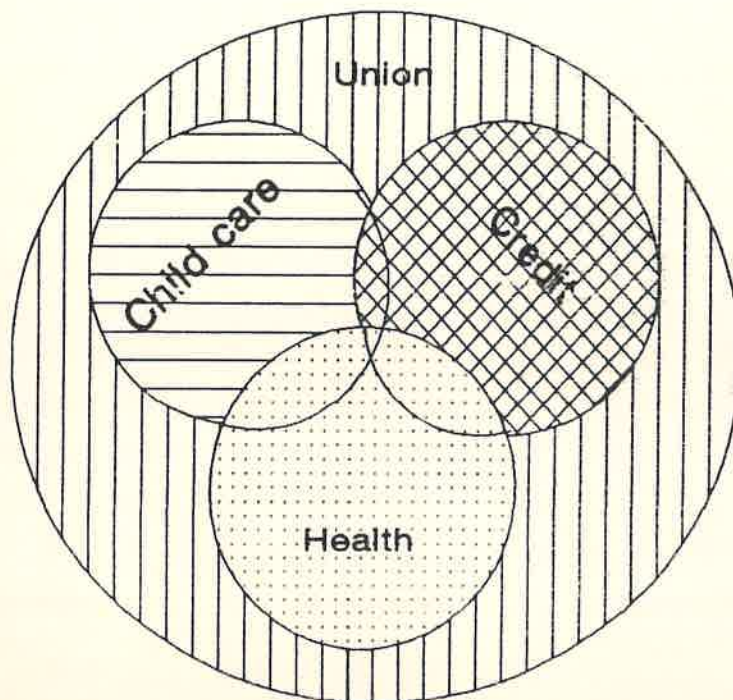


Figure 1 How SEWA sees the linkages

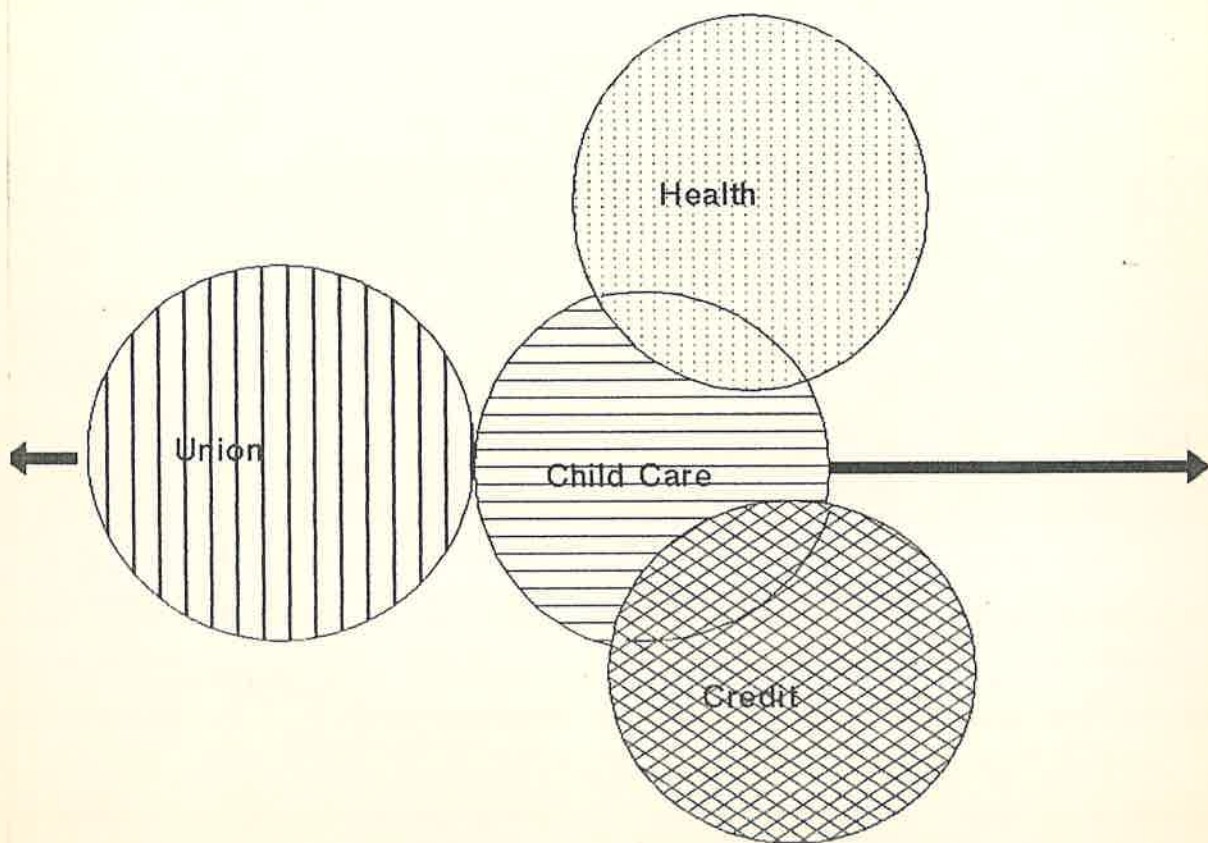


Figure 2 SEWA's linkages as seen by us

In the practice of this philosophy however what was seen (by us) in the field is represented in Fig. 2. The following points are noteworthy from this representation.

- a. there does not seem to be much interaction between
 - i. the union and the creche on the one hand and
 - ii. credit programme and health services on the other
- b. the interaction between creche and health programmes seems to be independent of that between creche and credit programmes; and
- c. the welfare programmes consisting of creche, health and credit seem to go in one direction and the union in a different direction.

In other words all the ongoing activities seem to be compartmentalised. The separating of creche mothers from the union activities is one example of such a compartmentalisation. In taking care of practical needs of rural women, mobilisation seems to have not been adequately attended to. This has to a certain extent contributed to raising expectations among parents and teachers, and to differing perceptions among the various actors. Has this in some way also contributed to some of the actors, for example, creche mothers not seeing themselves as a part of the union?

External Linkages

b. Local authorities/leaders

In establishing the creches with considerable effort, SEWA has been fortunate in a number of villages where the Sarpanch has been supportive of the programme. Nevertheless problems remain regarding toilet facilities, frequent shifting of the creches from one venue to another etc.

However SEWA has had numerous difficulties in obtaining an entry in villages where the sarpanch is also a tobacco grower and/ or, khali owner. Part of SEWA's difficulty stems from the general resistance in villages towards implementing programmes which focus on the poor.

The strength of SEWA seems to lie in its ability to change its course of action having confronted these difficulties. This process has considerably offered scope for leadership to emerge from the local community. This in turn has been a source of pressure on the village power structure.

c. Employers

SEWA union's struggle at trying to organize Khali workers in villages has a strong undercurrent of suspicion of both employers and the labour bureaucracy on the one side and a weak awareness regarding 'do's' and 'don'ts' in a crisis situation. e.g. In the recent struggle that took place in Rasnol, leading to an out-of-court settlement, SEWA union's strategy did not seem to be based on a clear appreciation of the factual position. At least one of the organisers did not seem to be aware that the Appellate Authority under the Payment of Gratuity Act was the ALC

Kheda District. The organisers claimed that sometimes they preferred direct action leading to out of court settlement as this was faster compared to going to courts and getting a settlement.

Since SEWA's base is the union, union struggles and their outcomes have implications for the welfare programmes the union is involved with. One of us was an observer to the fag end of a recent struggle where negotiations were taking place. As it was the last stage which finally culminated in an out of court settlement, it is difficult to conclude about the process of union functioning, its internal democracy, its approach to making more of its members (as the members of local community) participate in the struggle etc. Perhaps these processes exist to varying degrees given SEWA's philosophy of struggle for achievement.

The need for these processes do seem relevant for the union's welfare programme in particular. The organisers need to ensure that there is participation from every side, namely the community, the parents, community leaders, supervisors, in the running of these programmes and that they feel it is their own. It must be ensured that the prime actors, namely the mothers, teachers and supervisors see a larger role for themselves vis-a-vis the creche. In other words, although provided by a union, can this be a people's programme - is an issue which needs to be continuously addressed.

d. Labour Department

SEWA's mobilising khali workers through its union, organising a recent gathering of women tobacco workers from

several villages in Kheda at Anand and having the meeting addressed by the Labour Minister, Gujarat, and other such activities have contributed considerably to bringing the plight of rural women to the surface. These have also acted as a pressure point on the State Labour Department to inspect the khalis more frequently. SEWA is presently the only recognised union in the tobacco industry in Gujarat for negotiations regarding Minimum Wage fixation etc.

Such a recognition has however not led to fostering stronger linkages between the Labour Department at the local level and SEWA for better enforcement of labour laws in the khalis. In fact there appeared to be an undercurrent of helplessness on the part of SEWA when it came to seeking any legal assistance from the Labour Department. The Labour Department on the other hand, has been unable to look beyond its procedural orientation when it came to issues raised by a trade union consisting of women workers only.

SEWA union organisers often wonder, quite justifiably given the nature of the State Labour beaurocracy, whether at all it will be allowed to effectively reach the workers in the khalis to inspect the implementation of labour laws. The Labour Department admits that there has been an increase in the number of inspections and that these are even carried out during days when wage-payment in the khalis are made. It was however not particularly clear if workers benefited in any way from the increasing inspections of the Labour Department.

SEWA, for instance, has often experienced the attitude of Labour Department at local level to be non-facilitative. It would nevertheless in our view be worthwhile for SEWA to consistently continue with legal procedures and pressures on the Labour Department to attain its objectives.

e. Other Government Programmes/Departments

SHAISHAV programme so far seem to have made some efforts to approach other State Departments, like the ICDS or State Social Welfare Board, to foster linkages. Similarly efforts have been made to link up the programme with the State Health Department, the nearby medical college, the agricultural university etc. Nevertheless there is scope to expand these efforts to a greater degree. The medical / Home Science colleges could be of help in conducting health surveys or camps, and in developing nutrition guidelines and training curricula. Similarly the agricultural economics department of the Agricultural University could be approached to help in demystifying the political economy of the tobacco industry of the region., This in turn can help the union in being armed with data when wage-fixation takes place in the industry.

V. SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability can be considered at two levels, financial and programmatic. It also has implications for policy.

Programmatic

Multiple Roles: SEWA, with its constant exploration of ways and means of promoting women's development, has entered into a new field in experimenting with providing child care services to women workers. In so doing, it finds itself playing several roles at the same time, some of them with inherent contradictions. The sustainability of the creche programme is linked to the understanding and handling of these multiple roles which could be potential sources of identity confusion. The three major roles here seem to be:

1. The militant union - (of self-employed as well as women working as wage-earners, contract workers, etc) devoted to protecting women's interests as workers
2. The service agency - delivering services like child care and health for working women and functioning as an institution
3. The employer - employing workers to perform specific functions and deliver specific services

However, the perceptions of the various players the SEWA organisers, the mothers and the creche teachers with regard to the three roles are not similar. While the mothers identify themselves with the union and perceive themselves as 'users' rather than 'owners' of the service, the creche teachers identify

themselves as child care workers and perceive themselves as employees. SEWA organisers however see themselves, the mothers, the creche teachers and the other tobacco workers as working partners in a movement in which all are required to play different roles at different times. The process of clarifying and understanding these multiple roles, resolving potential contradictions and identity confusion, developing appropriate attitudes and living out the roles effectively is a long, slow and complex one, which SEWA has begun to address. Sustaining creche services and expanding them is related to success in these efforts. Whether SEWA plans to expand the number of creches in this area or spread into other geographical areas, attention will have to be given to this question.

Replicability: The elements which are the outstanding characteristics of the child care system and which are largely responsible for the quality and relevance of the programme, are

- high teacher-child ratio,
- non-hierarchical work culture
- high supervisor-teacher ratio
- style of management and operation
- links with the union activists and other women workers

These are also by definition the most difficult to replicate by others, besides being expensive in financial terms, precisely because they are related directly to SEWA's unique work ethos, goals and style of working. A parallel case can be seen in Mobile Creches, the pattern of whose high-quality creches has not been replicated in the last two decades by other agencies for similar reasons.

If a funding scheme is being prepared for use by SEWA as well as by other agencies, then these factors will have to be taken into consideration. The limitations of Government funding and of agencies with different goals and styles and lacking such linkages, will have to be kept in mind, while at the same time finding ways to retain some of the positive elements already described. Schemes which are meaningful to a range of agencies need to be developed through a process of networking.

Changes and Improvement: Bringing about desirable changes in the programme and adding new elements are also necessary. A major issue would be that of addressing the needs of the older 3-6 years old group of children. SEWA has been thinking about this issue but has not come to any firm conclusions as yet about what approach to take.

Financial

Cost-Benefit: Looking first at the cost side of the picture, the present cost per child per day is about Rs.11.50 if all project costs are included, and about Rs.10.50 per child per day, if costs of training and mothers' education are excluded. At first sight, this seems very high in comparison with a programme like ICDS, but such a comparison has little meaning, if one looked at the extent, nature and quality of services provided in each case. ICDS has never so far been involved in providing day-care, and does very little for under-threes. Further it should be noted that the younger the child the higher the cost, because of increased vulnerability, and hence any programme focussing exclusively on infants below three is bound to be more expensive than one catering to 3-6 years or even 0-6 years old.

In comparison with most other creche programmes, which are funded by the Government of India's Scheme of Assistance to Voluntary Agencies for Creches for Working/ailing mothers, the major differences are, (besides the focus on children below three and the full day care), the following:

1. high teacher-child ratio
2. high supervisor-teacher ratio
3. payment of minimum wages/wages equivalent to that of the mothers

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Most other agencies are unable to meet these standards.

The most useful comparison would be with Mobile Creches, which comes nearest to meeting these conditions. Mobile Creches has an excellent programme for infants, offers full day-care, pays high wages and maintains a high supervisor-teacher ratio. The teacher-child ratio is not so high, but cannot be exactly compared, as the units are larger, with mixed age-groups and the staffing pattern is different. The current cost per child per day at Mobile Creches (1991 - 1992) is Rs.6.50 per child per day, not including donated milk powder.

A closer study of the costs of the creche programme needs to be made to understand the cost-benefit ratio. Sharing of information with Mobile Creches on costs and programme content may be helpful. A larger size of unit, including children aged 3-6, may be one way in which costs could be cut without reducing programme quality, since the number of teachers needed would not increase proportionately. Other ways of reducing costs could also be explored. For example, since the children continue to be

breastfed, milk, which is the most expensive source of protein, could be substituted by cheaper protein-giving foods. However, advocacy for child care services must draw attention to the fact that organised child care, which is more than merely custodial, does not come cheap.

Sources of Funding

Alternative sources of funding for the programme have to be explored, and the process has already begun.

Employer Funding: Our understanding of the working of the tobacco industry as it is today and talks with the factory owners and Labour Department officials do not leave much room for hope that the factories will contribute much more to the cost of running creches. Though mandated by law under the Factories Act to do so, most owners find it easier and cheaper to evade the law by various well-known strategies. Some owners are contributing, as a gesture of philanthropy, but would not like to be pressed to fulfil their contractual obligations. On the contrary, with their growing perception of SEWA as a militant union fighting for workers on wages, the attitudes of the owners may harden further.

The law on creches is not strictly enforced; and there are too many loopholes in it to make enforcement realistic at present. SEWA has been working for some time, and with some success, to ensure payment of Minimum Wages to the women tobacco workers. They have established relationships with the Labour Department and its officers at various levels, and have entered into an informal agreement to monitor the implementation of the Minimum Wages Act. They have rightly concentrated their efforts

on negotiations and using their influence with Labour Department on this front, and have not so far fought for the implementation of the weak creches regulations. It is in this context, and in the absence of some amendments putting "teeth" into the law, that it seems unlikely that much financial support will be forthcoming for creches from this sector in the foreseeable future. However, the same business community traditionally places great emphasis on charity as a religious obligation, and many of the owners have set up philanthropic trusts, giving both time and money for charitable activities. Approaching them for donations from this angle may prove to be more rewarding.

Local Authorities: As far as local governments, Panchayats and village communities are concerned, the struggle waged by SEWA over the last few years to get simple accommodation for the creches is a depressing indicator of what could be expected from this sector. SEWA is still trying to get the village Panchayats to construct buildings on village common lands for the creche and is still stuck in the paper work and the inertia of the system towards such ventures. The next step would be the construction of toilets; here again the same difficulties are being faced, as this is not evidently a priority for the village panchayats.

An understanding of rural social dynamics and of the caste and class structure of society in this area also needs to be taken into account here. SEWA's clients are by class, caste and gender at the bottom of the heap in rural society; while the village Panchayats are (most often) controlled by those at the top of the class, caste and gender hierarchy. That is, SEWA's

members are poor, often low caste and women while the village government is controlled by rich men, often belonging to the upper castes. The needs of poor mothers are unlikely to be a priority for the village leaders, so getting a decent building and later a toilet could be major objective at this stage, rather than regular financial support.

Significantly, villages which have large Dalit communities and Sarpanches belonging to lower caste or Dalit groups have been most supportive and helpful to SEWA. Here too the picture is likely to change dramatically in the future. The constitutional amendments related to the Panchayati Raj Act (1992) place responsibility for women and child development programmes on local authorities, who will have to seek or generate the necessary funding. At the same time the Act provides that 30% of the seats on local bodies shall be reserved for women. Taken together these two new elements provide a unique opportunity to obtain more funding as well as support from local authorities in the coming years.

Philanthropy: Another possibility is local philanthropy, private trusts and social organisations, service clubs etc. There are many such, though many of them have their own regular "tied" projects for funding and have little to spare. However, there is a lot of untapped potential here. Constant effort and a public relations campaign would be required, and often the return may be in kind (in the form of used clothes and toys, for example), than cash. SEWA has already made a start with a collection of waste paper from offices.

Self-Supporting

Trying up the funding of welfare services with some income-generating ventures, both direct and indirect, is yet another often mooted idea. In SEWA's case, parents are already making modest contributions to the creche programme and this may be expected to increase slowly over time. Other schemes are being planned.

Government: A major source for alternative funding would appear to be Government, at both the Central and State levels. To tap Government as a source of regular ongoing funding requires efforts at various levels, recognition of the inherent constraints, and skill in managing the conditions. To begin with, a lot of work has to be done to create awareness at various levels about the present experiment, its costs and benefits, the problems encountered and possible solutions; further, acceptable cost figures have to be presented. Next schemes have to be prepared which can be implemented not only by SEWA itself but by other agencies as well, since Government will not take up schemes which only one agency can implement. Third, influence has to be brought to bear at the highest political and bureaucratic levels and for this diverse measures have to be adopted. This issue is considered in the next chapter.

Efforts Towards Sustainability

SEWA has been making efforts to build up contributions from other sources. Taking the period from the inception of the project up to the end of the first quarter of 1993, an amount of 2.6 lakhs (representing 14% of the total expenditure of 19 lakhs for this period) was found from other sources. SEWA's own contribution, mostly towards administration, was another

2.5 lakhs. Thus the total contribution from other sources was a substantial 27% for the entire period. (Annexure IV)

Though clearly this level has been arrived at gradually over four years, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the rate of growth, especially as creches in different villages have been opened at different times during this period. But much progress has been made in terms of local participation.

Looked at in another way these figures yield several meanings. The biggest chunk of 1.95 lakhs (75% of the total) comes from local Panchayats' contributions towards space and equipment (such as fans and lights) while the second biggest chunk of 40,000 (16%) comes from mothers' contributions, which are deliberately kept at a nominal level. The employers' contribution of 12,800 is a mere 5%, within which there are several ups and downs. Only a few owners have made contributions at all, and some of them discontinued after militant union action in 1991 and are yet to resume payments. An attempt to get free milk from the local milk cooperative has been tried out only in one village so far, where it has run into some difficulties. Contributions from service clubs are insignificant, while the free services of the medical consultant are not a direct input into the creche programme. What has been achieved so far, however, can be useful in suggesting what strategies would yield best results in the future.

Funding Strategies

A potentiality useful device to seek funding is to break down, for purposes of presentation, the various components of

cost per child day. Thus a cost of Rs.10/- per child per day may be shown as Rs.5/- on food, Rs.3/- on salaries, Re.1/- on medicines and supplies and Re.1/- on administration etc. These figures could then be used to induce different agencies/persons to pay for different elements. For instance, village leaders and the more affluent members of the village community may like to donate food for one day, on special or specified days of the calendar, for religious and spiritual reasons; while the same religious motivation could be touched upon to get larger contributions towards food (in cash or kind) from tobacco factory owners, philanthropists, trusts, etc. The National Dairy Development Board or Amul Dairy may like to donate milk.

Central and State Governments, and especially the proposed National Child Care Fund and the existing creche scheme of the Central Social Welfare Board could be approached to bear the salary component. Other funds, such as the Bidi and Tobacco Workers Welfare Fund, as well as welfare funds available with local authorities could be tapped for specific purposes.

SEWA has formulated plans to link up some of its other schemes, such as the SEWA bank, credit societies and cooperatives with the creches, drawing on the profits generated by these income-producing activities. An innovative proposal is to set up a capital fund with the help of a donor agency, repayable after ten years. Wisely inverted, the income from such a fund would pay for the existing services as well as replenishing the capital for repayment, and later on take care of expansion of services also.

VI. POLICY INTERVENTION

To break through from running a handful of creches to turning the issue into an insistent demand of women workers for support services as their right, involves entry into the arena of policy making. As a recent publication indicates, (Where Women Are Leaders. Kalima Rose) SEWA has well demonstrated in the past its clear understanding of the need to work at several levels, from the micro-level of grassroots work to the macro-level of national and international policymaking and legislation, and of the varying strategies needed at each level. SEWA's leader, Elaben Bhatt, in her own self demonstrates this ability to be simultaneously a grassroots worker and a participant in decision making at the highest levels. SEWA's skills in documentation, participation in various studies, committees and Commissions and other instrumentalities of policy making and its mastery over the tools and strategies needed at each level are also well known. These formidable powers so far used to battle for women's rights as workers, must now be brought into play on the issue of child care as a support for working women.

The question of how to influence policy, and of the mix of various strategies to be adopted, can safely be left to SEWA, which has considerable experience in the area. However, attention can be drawn to one significant issue. SEWA, considering

itself a non-political organisation, has so far steadfastly refused to be drawn into electoral politics. Yet many would hold the view that entry into electoral politics at both local and higher levels may be necessary to give poor working women a voice in decision making and the allocation of funds, as illustrated by a recent success story from SEWA itself at the local level. In the context of the recent Panchayati Raj Act (1992) which makes special provision for women's participation, SEWA may wish to reconsider its stand on the issue.

Policy Goals

SEWA has been involved to some extent in the national forum and campaign for child care since its inception in 1989, and will continue to give full support though unable to play a leading role. In relation to the unorganised sector, the basic goal should be to persuade Government to allot substantial funds for child care as a support service for working women. More specifically, the campaign must work to establish the National Child Care Fund built up from a cess on employers, tax-exempt corporate and individual donations, State contributions and insurance schemes, and also to develop guidelines for its utilisation.

The more immediate goal should be to pressurise Government to translate into reality its stated commitment (in the Eighth Plan) to convert 25% of anganwadis into creches by the year 2000.

In relation to the organised sector, the goal should be to introduce obligations regarding child care into the Shops and Establishments Act, and to make specific appropriate amendments in the Acts which already provide for such obligations, so as to put teeth into them and make them enforceable.

Only such legislation and policy charges can ensure the long-term future of SEWA's twenty or so creches for the children of women tobacco workers in Kheda district and offer an optimistic answer to the question - What next?

March 26, 1993

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR EVALUATION OF SEWA'S CHILD CARE PROGRAMME

A. The Objectives of the evaluation will be to :

- 1) Assess and document the achievements of the creche programme in relation to the original objectives and those which evolved over time. Assess SEWA's activities in relation to these objectives. Identify factors which facilitated or impeded achievements.
- 2) Examine the appropriateness and quality of services delivered to young children (0-3 years) including health, nutrition and child stimulation components of the programme, parental and community involvement and participation.
- 3) Assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the training provided to the staff at different levels. Compare this training with what is being offered by different organisations with similar objectives. Make recommendations for improvement in training activities and for staff development.
- 4) Study the appropriateness of the organisational and management structure and the effect of these on programme operations and effectiveness. Assess whether the current structures would be viable as the programme expands.
- 5) Assess the impact of the creche programme on : a) children; b) mothers; c) family; d) older siblings e) community; f) tobacco factory owners; g) Government; and h) SEWA.
- 6) Study the programme's linkages and support by the government at local, district and state levels, tobacco factory owners and its Association, local panchayat and with other NGOs.
- 7) Assess in the light of experiences, the social, financial and organisational sustainability of the programme and make recommendations for the future.
- 8) Assess the overall costs of the programme, including per capita costs and unit costs of specific programme activities, the extent of support from different sources including government, tobacco owners, parents and other local sources.
- 9) Assess SEWA's ability to influence policy on provision of child care services (including balwadis and anganwadis), factors leading to success or otherwise, as well as how SEWA's impact at policy level can be enhanced.
- 10) Identify elements of the programme which have potential for replication and under what circumstances.
- 11) Recommend an action plan of activities in child care that SEWA should pursue in the future which have a comparative advantage for the organisation.

ITINERARY OF EVALUATION TEAM

May 1 to May 8, 1993

Date	Programme
Sat. May 1	Discussion with Project Director and Project Coordinator (Ahmedabad) Meeting with Rural Labour Commissioner (Gandhinagar)
Sun. May 2	Informal discussion with Project Director (Ahmedabad)
Mon. May 3	EP: Visited Rasnol village to see SEWA union workers demonstration and negotiation with employer MS: Discussions with Mobile Creches trainers re. training of SEWA workers (Delhi)
Tues. May 4	Mng: Kunjrav village -- visit to tobacco factory, creche and health education class. Talks with mothers, teachers, health workers. Aft: Rahatlav village -- visit to creche talks with Sarpanch, mothers, teachers.
Wed. May 5	Mng: Chikodra -- meeting with SEWA union leader, visit creche, talk with mothers Aft: Verakhali -- visit to creche and health education class. Talks with mothers, teachers, health workers.
Thurs. May 6	Mng: Meeting with Chikodra Sarpanch and Secretary. Tobacco Merchants' Association Aft: Meeting with all creche teachers Meeting with paediatrician Dr. Joshi Rasnol Village -- visit to creche and nursery project, parents' meeting
Fri. May 7	Mng: Meeting with Asst. Labour Commissioner and Labour Officers Meeting with all SEWA Anand workers Meeting with Taluka Panchayat at President Aft: Discussion with Project Coordinator (Anand)
Sat. May 8	Discussions with Project Coordinator and Project Director (Ahmedabad)

Note: The three supervisors accompanied the team during all field visits (Monday to Friday) and were present during all meetings and discussions at Anand excexcept the following:

1. Meeting with the Secretary of the Tobacco Merchants' Association
2. Closing meeting with the Project Coordinator

TABLE 20
Food Items given to Children

TOTAL MOTHERS (in SHAISHAV) 55						
YES/NO	BANANA		KHICHDI		GREEN VEGETABLES	
	No. of Women	%	No. of women	%	No. of women	%
Yes	53	96	54	98	50	91
No	1	2	-	0	1	2
Does not give because of young age	-	0	-	0	1	2
Does not give because too hot	-	0	-	0	2	4
Other reasons	1	2	1	2	1	2
Total	55	100	55	100	55	100

TABLE 21
Food Items given to Children

TOTAL MOTHERS (Not in SHAISHAV) 55						
YES/NO	BANANA %		KHICHDI %		GREEN VEGETABLES %	
Yes	35	65	47	87	38	70
No	14	26	6	11	5	9
Does not give because of young age	1	2	1	2	4	7
Does not give because too hot	-	0	-	0	6	11
Too heavy	4	7	-	0	1	2
Other reasons	1	2	1	2	1	2
Total	55	100	55	100	55	100

TABLE 16
Measures taken in case of Diarrhoea

TOTAL MOTHERS (in SHAISHAV) 55			TOTAL MOTHERS (Not SHAISHAV) 54	
Measures Taken	No. of Women	%	No. of Women	%
Visit to Doctor	-	0	18	33
Juice of Sugar & Salt	55	100	9	17
Banana	-	-	3	6
Medicines from workers	-	-	-	0
Grated peel of promegranates	-	-	11	20
Nutmeg	-	-	7	13

TABLE 17
Measures taken in case of fever

TOTAL MOTHERS (in SHAISHAV) 55			TOTAL MOTEHRS (not SHAISHAV 54	
Measures taken	No. of Women	%	No. of women	%
Visit to Doctor	7	13	38	70
Put cloth immersed in cold water	36	65	11	20
Tablets from Sewa worker	-	0	-	0
Put cloth immersed in salty water	14	25	2	4
"Baadha"	1	2	7	13
Home remedies	-	-	5	9
Medicines from Village shop	-	-	4	7
Other steps	-	-	7	13

* Multiple answers possible

** "Baadha" = religious observances

TABLE 18
Measures taken at the time of measles

TOTAL MOTHERS (in SHAISHAV) 55			TOTAL MOTHERS (not in SHAISHAV) 54	
Measures taken	No. of Women	%	No. of women	%
Visit to Doctor	30	55	2	4
"Baadha"	9	16	37	69
Precautionary measures as suggested by Sewa Workers	21	38	5	9
Not suffered measles	14	25	-	0
Not suffered measles/No response	-	-	16	30

TABLE 19
Measures taken in case of major illness

TOTAL MOTHERS (in SHAISHAV) 55 54			TOTAL MOTHERS (not in SHAISHAV)	
Measures taken	No. of Women	%	No. of Women	%
Takes Child to Govt. Hospital	7	13	25	46
Takes Child to Pvt. Hospital	9	16	29	54
Tables from Sewa Health Centres	40	73	-	0

* Multiple answers possible

TABLE 1
Differences in monthly income (in Rupees)

Total Women (in SHAISHAV) 55		
Difference in Income (Per month)	No. of Women	%
Below 50 Rs.	-	-
50 - 100 Rs.	31	56
101 - 200 Rs.	14	25
201 - 300 Rs.	6	11
Above 300 Rs.	-	-
No difference	1	2
No response	3	5

Table 22
Effect on schooling of elder Children

Total women (in SHAISHAV) 55		
Response	No. of Women	%
Started going to school	41	75
Still not attending school	—	0
No response	14	25

ANNEXURE IV

Total Contributions from Other Sources

Panchayat contributions towards space and equipment	1,95,350	75%
Owners' contributions towards food	12,800	5%
Milk - from milk co-operative	1,300	-
Medical consultant's contribution	6,200	-
Mothers' contributions	40,026	16%
Contributions from service clubs	4,000	-
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TOTAL	2,59,676	100%
SEWA's contribution	2,50,700	
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