

0205. Coolie Sangha Formalisation Application to Icco

Second 3 year application submitted to Icco. Contains a Special Progress Report on developments in the 3 Extension taluks/areas and a commentary on recent changes in the Indian economy – liberalisation and structural adjustment.

1. APPLICANT ORGANISATION

DAIRY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (DDS)

ADATS Campus,
Bagepalli 561 207,
India.

2. LEGAL STATUS

Reg. No: 64/84-85 under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act, 1960.

UHM No: "094570002" under the Foreign Contributions (Regulations) Act, 1976.

3. BANKERS

A/c No: 3331 with Canara Bank, Bagepalli branch.

4. PROJECT TITLE

ADATS/DDS EXTENSION PROGRAMMES – II PHASE

(Coolie Sangha Formalisation)

5. LONG TERM OBJECTIVE

- To build up 3 taluk level mass organisations so that poor peasants struggling for their development can continually take stock of wider societal changes and make the necessary adjustments to survive with dignity and security in a rapidly changing political economy.
- To create the physical and socio-political milieu capable of supporting and furthering a positive entrepreneurship in the coolies.
- To oppose gender discrimination, sexual exploitation and strengthen the position of coolie women so that they can contribute as equals to all further developments in the Coolie Sangha.

6. SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES

- To immediately withdraw ADATS/DDS appointed Community Workers from the central villages of the 4¹ Extension Programme areas.
- To admit the 3,486 coolies as full fledged and accredited members of their respective (taluk) Coolie Sanghas, conduct organisational elections and start monthly 2 day (taluk) Coolie Sangha Meetings at Chintamani, Chickballapur and Siddalaghata.
- To introduce the time proven ADATS/DDS organogram and strengthen the staff structure in the 4 Extension Programmes.

¹ Though the formal DDS-Icco project says 3 Extension Programmes, we will deliberately refer to them as 4. This is because the Siddalaghata area actually lies in 2 geographic blocks - Julapalya of Bagepalli taluk, and Siddalaghata of that taluk.

- To strengthen coolie women by starting the *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu* scheme for them to run their own small credit system without male interference.
- To decentralise the community and referral health budget so that it is managed by Mahila Meetings.
- To start children's education classes as an every day activity for school dropouts and coolie youth in each and every village.
- To enhance the credit absorption capacity and social control of the CSUs and increase the capital of their CCFs by an additional Rs 2,000 per member coolie family.
- To intensify the campaign wherein the coolies save for the posterity of their mass organisation by contributing 10% of their earnings to their respective Sangha Funds with a clear self financing objective.
- To introduce, through intensified cadre training, meetings and debates, a richer diversity in the CSUs with the total and grass-root participation of all the member coolies in this managing and furthering process.
- To attempt to develop the coolies as an effective minority through a larger unification of an enlarged poor; to positively influence village society by projecting values that are particular to the coolies class, through their entry into local level civic bodies, and re-define concepts of power and leadership.
- To withdraw the 148 VLWs by mid 1995 so that there are no ADATS/DDS paid workers in the villages.
- To introduce responsible programme monitoring practices.

7. A REPORT ON THE ONGOING ICCO PROJECT NO: 893105

7.1. The discipline provided by procedures within a definite structure, the Coolie Sangha

The 4 Extension Programmes where ADATS/DDS started building Coolie Sangha Units in mid 1989 are nearly 3 years old. Functioning CSUs have been built in 148 villages comprising 30 Clusters.

These 148 CSUs have a total membership of 3,486 coolie families which represents 45% of the total population of these villages. The numbers are bound to increase in the coming months.

Each village has a local coolie youth who works as a Village Level Worker (VLW) and a Village Health Worker (VHW) selected from among their ranks by coolie women. They work full time to build the CSU and implement various ADATS/DDS programmes and projects activities in their own villages. About 5 village CSUs together form a Cluster where an ADATS/DDS appointed Community Worker co-ordinates all Coolie Sangha formation activities.

Very definite and formal systems which include admission, suspension and cancellation procedures, membership lists, weekly CSU Meetings and weekly Cluster Meets, minutes fully recorded, periodic review meets, grass-root planning practices, annual election of 3 Representatives from each CSU, and procedures to recall these elected Representatives even before the expiry of their terms, were introduced.

The discipline that these procedures provided within a definite structure, which is the Coolie Sangha, has contributed to killing apathy and resignation in the member coolies. Narrow caste identities are being questioned and have begun to be replaced with a broader constructive one of a united and enlarged poor which the Coolie Sangha promotes. Each and every

coolie has begun to aspire in a deep and personal way. They have glimpsed in the Coolie Sangha a community capable of supporting their striving for betterment.

7.2. The human infrastructure and its relation with the BCS

The creation of a vast human infrastructure of VLWs, VHWS and CSU Representatives in so short a time is a clearly visible achievement of ADATS/DDS. And more so is the special relationship of fraternity and support which we have obtained for them with so large and effective a mass organisation as the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha. The concerns, affection, strength and wisdom of thousands of organised coolies of Bagepalli has, in some ways, seeped into these 148 villages.

7.3. Training

Training can be singled out as the most impressive activity which took place in the 4 Extension Programmes. Just about everybody at ADATS and the BCS pitched in with the DDS staff in a massive 2 year effort to build up a human infrastructure of VLWs, VHWS and CSU Representatives in these villages. They included the senior and experienced ADATS staff, the BCS President, functionaries, and a horde of specialists brought in for the explicit purpose of enhancing the knowledge and skills of the coolies.

VLWs were imparted with skills to conduct ALP classes, sing songs, write proper minute books, frame applications and draft complaints through innumerable formal sessions. In-field training was given on practical techniques to conduct ALP classes. This was done by specialised executive Field Workers from Bagepalli spending 1-2 weeks at each and every Cluster, actually conducting the classes along with them and demonstrating the subtle knack needed to teach adults. The VLWs were given para legal training on the Mandal Panchayat Act and various other government regulations regarding land sanctions.

VHWS were trained to deepen their knowledge on community health and hygiene. Special sessions were held for them to understand how community health related activities and Mahila Meetings could be used to strengthen the overall position of coolie women. And throughout the past 2 years, VHWS were sent in pairs to the CSI Hospital at Chickballapur for practical exposure in conducting safe deliveries.

Special 3 day sessions were held for groups of 25 women from 5 villages at a time on societal institutions like marriage, caste and religion. Many of these women came without male chaperons for the very first time in their lives. Though they discussed matters ranging from pure theory to practical day to day problems like domestic chores and bedroom violence, they also enjoyed themselves thoroughly. Some described the experience of attending meetings as going to their *Puttina Inlu* – the houses where they were born.

The most memorable training fora were the weekly Area Staff Meetings where we shared concerns at a deep and intimate level. The Project Director attended most of them and covered an exhaustive syllabus on the personal ramifications of caste, religion and gender biases. A broader perspective for the Coolie Sangha as a whole began to emerge from these sessions. The Cluster Meets and CSU Meetings reflected on what happened at these weekly Staff Meetings and a tremendous maturing of their socio-political and economic aspirations took place.

The BCS President and other senior BCS functionaries held many rounds of special sessions where past Bagepalli experiences with activities like the CCF, Children's Programme, Mahila Meetings, decentralised health budgets and the dry land development project were frankly shared with the coolies. Mistakes made in Bagepalli were deliberately highlighted and detailed discussions were held on how these could be avoided.

Review meetings were regularly held for the VLWs and VHWS to make honest self appraisals of their own performances and of particular programme activities. Each and every suggested solution was immediately and seriously implemented. Most worked, some did not.

Many almost insurmountable logistical problems were encountered. All the training sessions for the Chintamani staff, for example, had to be held in Bagepalli since we did not have an office or facility at Chintamani. As a result, attendance at the training sessions suffered with people coming late and leaving early to catch the last bus. But in spite of many problems, there was no let anywhere, as far as training was concerned.

7.4. Adult literacy

A very serious Adult Literacy Programme was implemented in this 1st phase of Coolie Sangha building. Though the final figures will be available only in June 1992 when the activity will be stopped and evaluated, early indications point to thousands of coolies in the age group of 25 to 40 years being equipped with basic literacy skills.

A well designed cadre training syllabus was incorporated into the content and syllabus of this Adult Literacy Programme. The ability of the learners to critically analyse society was enhanced by the ALP classes.

We have not had uniform success with the ALP in all the areas. While the achievement has been truly phenomenal in Chickballapur, they are not so encouraging at Chintamani. At the latter place ALP classes served little more than an every day activity to gather the coolies together. Siddalaghatta got off to a very encouraging start and then things petered out. At Jula-palya, ALP results have been bad.

But the implementation of this programme provided opportunities which no other activity could have. Already mentioned are the value in the course content and in having an every day activity. A far more subtle achievement was the work ethos and achievement discipline that the planning and implementation of a fairly complex activity like the ALP brought about in the main actors - the Field Workers, Community Workers and VLWs. What Chickballapur has gained in this respect is a definite loss for the other 3 areas.

During the past 3 years, coolie children attended ALP classes in most villages. Most of them were school drop outs grazing cattle, and a few were still attending government schools. In most of the villages their presence caused such a disturbance to the adults that the VLWs were forced to conduct special 1 hour classes for children and send them away before the commencement of ALP classes. Now with the completion of the ALP in June 1992 these children will not have the opportunity to continue their studies.

7.5. Issues and struggle

Social and economic issues relating to land, wages, sexist and caste discrimination and cases of corruption and cheating were taken up in each and every village. Besides solving concrete problems, these struggles contributed to uniting them across narrow and parochial caste lines and enhanced the organisational strength of the CSUs.

Many of these issues demanded big sacrifices and personal bravery. The strength of the Coolie Sangha alone cannot account for the determination with which the VLWs, VHWS and even ordinary member coolies risked very real threats to their lives and styles of living.

Concrete benefits accrued to the coolies through these struggles. If carefully monetised, these benefits far exceed all that ADATS/DDS directly gave out to the coolies in this 3 year phase. Lands unjustly lost were redeemed. Civic facilities reached the poorer sections of villages. Bank loans were obtained without middle men knocking off commissions. Disputes were re-

solved outside police stations and courts of law. Bonded labourers were released. Even *Ryot* women were supported to free themselves from their men folks' tyranny.

ADATS/DDS helped the coolies with legal aid, aid distress and other nonmaterial support to follow these struggles through.

7.6. Unification across caste lines

59% of member coolies belong to the lower castes, 20% to middle castes, and 21% to the upper castes. This roughly corresponds to the caste break-up of the poor peasantry in these villages. But to say that we have already achieved a unification across the caste lines in villages where our involvement is hardly 3 years old is not true. Village society has to be closely examined before making any such claim.

The existence of parallel comities in the form of caste groupings, electoral factions, and criminal gangs is not an accident or aberration in “normal” village society. In the societal reality of semi-feudalism, these groupings play a vital role. They give identity to their members, vent to suppressed frustrations, and support to shrewd survival strategies that the poor have evolved to cope with the oppressive brutalities of patron-client relationships.

These groupings will have their natural death in a changed social order when they fail to fulfil their function. Which is what we portend. The implicit message of the Coolie Sangha is that these are pseudo comities giving pseudo identities; that earlier survival strategies, even if admirably conceived with a keen perception of then contemporary situations, will no longer work in a changed societal reality; that they will no longer give the poor an opportunity to even survive, let alone grow and prosper. Caste is dubbed as the strongest such pseudo grouping.

In the early stages of Coolie Sangha building it was possible for member coolies to belong to both, their CSUs as well as other traditional groupings and retain double identities like Harijana-Coolie and Congress-Coolie. These conflicting double identities surfaced during inter-coolie disputes.

It is only later, in the 2nd 3 year phase of Coolie Sangha Formalisation, that sober choices and mature decisions will be honestly made by individual coolie families.

7.7. Coolie Women

7.7.1. POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION IN FAVOUR OF COOLIE WOMEN

Positive discrimination was the result of a conscious ADATS/DDS policy adopted 3 years back. We decided that though the concerns of women were not a “*separate problem*” which needed “*special attention*”, it was necessary to focus attention on the fact that the general clubbing of women into social movements could easily degenerate into a liberal paying of lip sympathy, superficially claiming that institutions like the Coolie Sangha were gender-bias free.

The position and problems of coolie women, we believed, needed to be repeatedly and emphatically refocused over and over again till the gender-bias free characteristic of the Coolie Sangha naturally and openly projected itself in each and every field of even the coolies’ personal and private lives.

Though we could superficially claim that women and men had equal rights to represent their families as member coolies it was necessary to ourselves identify coolie families where women took more than an average burden of family management and invite them to be members in the place of their husbands. Similarly the reservation of 1 post for women from each CSU in the election of Representatives had to continue till more than 1 woman per CSU started getting elected.

7.7.2. THE CHANGED CLIMATE FOR WOMEN WITHIN ADATS/DDS

Unlike in the older CSUs of Bagepalli where a special and exclusive emphasis on coolie women was late in coming, a separate attention was given to their participation from the very beginning.

The start of the 4 Extension Programmes coincided with ADATS/DDS' decision to appoint women at a senior managerial level. As a result half the staff, at every level, were women. The management philosophy of ADATS/DDS was spelt out and it was clearly declared that the dominant male ideology would not be allowed to play a role in shaping our work practices and personal life styles as development workers. The office atmosphere changed and sharp divisions between work and living spaces began to erode. Team spirit replaced hierarchy, suspicion and petty competition. Even our vernacular started to change.

Simultaneously, the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha took some concrete steps to strengthen coolie women. Mahila Meetings were introduced as separate fora for coolie women in each CSU. Women's ratification was made mandatory before taking major CSU decisions. The health budget was totally decentralised and decision making powers handed over to the Mahila Meetings as unquestioned prerogatives.

A majority of coolie women actualised this positive discrimination in their favour and obtained real strength. The change in their contribution - not just in CSU related matters - is very visible and impressive. Some women lost out on the opportunities. The change in men - male staff as well as male functionaries - was more significant.

These direction changes in ADATS and the BCS was what influenced the decision to give a separate and special attention to coolie women in the 4 Extension Programmes from the very start².

VHVs were appointed and Mahila Meetings introduced from the very beginning without "*waiting for everything to stabilise and giving a chance for the men to reconcile themselves...*" as would have been our earlier presumptuous position. VHVs attended Area Staff Meetings along with the mostly male VLWs and contributed just as much or as little to the making of weekly assessments and building Coolie Sanghas in their respective taluks.

Mainly due to the fact that we opened our own eyes and shed prejudicial blinkers, we were able to destroy some of our hitherto unquestioned male prejudices regarding "*field realities*". Quite a few women were appointed to work as VLWs and they did just as well as men and ran into the same types of obstacles and faced the same types of problems as their male colleagues.

7.7.3. COMMUNITY AND REFERRAL HEALTH

Each CSU selected their own VHW. In most cases, they were coolie women selected due to their personal histories of involvement with fellow women. But in some CSUs the men played a major role in their selection since the post was interpreted as just a way by which health benefits could be got out of ADATS/DDS. As a result, they were not very highly motivated women.

After being trained, the VHVs were given basic medicine kits to cure minor ailments and give first aid. All the VHVs were taken in batches of 14 on tours to government hospitals in Bangalore and introduced to the persons where they would have to refer patients to.

Sick people approached the VHVs for medicines, home remedies, and sometimes to accompany them to the government hospitals where they are seen as being "well connected".

² The formal DDS-Icco project did not envisage the appointment of VHVs from the very beginning or the starting of Mahila Meetings.

Though the services of these VHWs was only for member coolie families, others too approach them during emergencies and for assistance in childbirth.

Separate VHW Meetings were held every month when their work was reviewed and the supply of basic medicines replenished. But these meetings did not confine themselves to just health questions. One of the outcomes of these meetings was their decision that though many of them had started off as puppets selected by the men, they needn't remain so. They could break their inhibitions, even if this meant some very real physical and emotional pain.

Many VHWs were an outspoken lot, and have been instrumental in mobilising coolie women to come out and participate in all CSU affairs. In many CSUs, as many women started to attend CSU Meetings and ALP classes as men. Though only about 5 % of the coolie families are women headed, as much as 20 % of CSU memberships got to be in the names of women. The credit for this has to go entirely to those VHWs authentically selected by their CSUs.

7.7.4. MAHILA MEETINGS

Within a year of starting the 4 Extension Programmes, Mahila Meetings were introduced as officially recognised fora of the Coolie Sangha. All the women from member coolie households began to meet separately without the presence of men to discuss their affairs.

By and large, there was no resistance to this from the menfolk. Wherever a few odd husbands did create problems for their wives, the CSUs and Cluster Meets were quick to act firmly. Today the strength of these 148 Mahila Meetings varies depending on the interest and initiative of the women themselves. While in most villages the results are quite exciting, some Mahila Meetings are still weak and give the appearance of a formality they go through simply in order to meet a general requirement.

7.7.5. VOKKAKU SANCHI DUDDU³

In the July 1990 BCS Meeting, women took the floor and presented their case as to how the CCFs had miserably failed to live up to the objective of providing timely credit to strengthen coolie women. They described how they had to subject themselves to sexual exploitation even to obtain small hand loans in domestic emergencies.

The men were shocked to hear of torments and harassment which a chauvinistic etiquette had hitherto kept unsaid. We at ADATS were filled with a deep sense of shame for our gender insensitivity.

The women described the informal credit system which they operated. Each woman dug into her *Vokkaku Sanchi*⁴ and came up with some loose change and odd notes. 4 or 5 of them were sometimes able to together solve the pressing needs of a lucky woman. But most were not so lucky.

The BCS Meeting decided that Rs 1,000 from each village CCF would immediately be given out to the Mahila Meetings. No formal accounts would be maintained as to how the moneys were used and men would not ask them to report on its status. Subsequently the grants to many *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu* were increased to Rs 5,000 per Mahila Meeting and most of them are serving their purpose very well.

This same small credit scheme for coolie women has been discussed threadbare in all the Mahila Meetings. It has already been introduced in a few of the villages on an experimental basis.

³ *Vokkaku* = beetle leaves; *Sanchi* = Bag; *Duddu* = Money

This is the name the coolies gave the petty credit scheme that women operate to solve their pressing day to day needs.

⁴ The cloth bag containing beetle leaves, nuts, loose change, the house key, etc. which rural women tuck into their saris at the waist

7.8. Coolie Credit Funds (CCFs)

A total of Rs 1,019,764 has been given out as CCF Grants to the CSUs in the 4 Extension Programme areas. But only half this money was given out by their respective CSUs to individual borrowers. Each CSU initially gave only Rs 2,000 as loans to a few of their members. When these first loans were promptly returned, they doubled the availability to Rs 4,000 per CSU.

Now they have decided that when all the outstanding loans come back in January and February 1992, CSUs which fared well in utilisation and repayment will utilise the entire CCF capital available with them to give out fresh CCF loans.

Overall fund status of the CCFs in 4 ADATS/DDS Extensions as on 27 December 1991

Total CCF Capital	Rs 1,019,764	100%
Good Loans	133,225	13%
1-6 months Overdue	92,180	9%
7-12 months Overdue	18,050	2%
Over 1 year Overdue	2,900	
CCF Bank Balances	773,409	76%

The sum total of CCF loans taken by 1,303 member coolies stood at Rs 500,675. The average borrowing worked out to Rs 384. These were taken for various purposes including crop loans, cattle rearing, repair and thatch huts, petty trade, consumption, etc. But except at Chickballapur, the main borrowing was for crop loans. At the time of writing this report, 12% of the CCF Capital were overdue with the borrowers, and 68% was in their Bank Accounts.

The main reason for this relatively high overdue rate⁵ was because borrowers had not planned their repayment schedules properly when taking loans. Many had blindly agreed to unrealistic repayment dates imposed by their CSUs. Promises to repay in instalments of Rs 50 every month for 6 months, for example, have hardly ever been kept in even the older CSUs of Bagepalli.

But we had not interfered with counsels of wisdom since there was a learning value in the coolies themselves running their CCFs. This value far outweighed the direct economic advantage which the CCFs provided at this early stage when the amounts involved were so small.

Another reason for overdue was the non availability of an effective management information system at the Extension Programmes. In Bagepalli, the running of the CCFs was fully computerised with hardly any room for subjectivity in the taking of loans, monitoring utilisation or keeping track of repayment schedules.

All the Field and Executive Staff of ADATS and even most BCS functionaries down to Cluster Secretary⁶ level had been thoroughly trained in the usage of this computerised MIS system. Moreover they had all, over the years, contributed to the designing and development of the software which helped monitor not just the CCFs, but all other aspects of Coolie Sangha building.

This OnLine computerised system was not fully used by the staff and coolies of 3 of the 4 Extension Programmes due to the distances involved. As a result, information was not readily available with them when they had to process a CCF loan or when they simply wished to have a look at how things were going on. Instead they periodically came to Bagepalli and en-

⁵ The overdue figure at this initial stage of CCF build-up in Bagepalli hardly ever crossed 2%

⁶ The elected member coolie who takes over to look after a cluster of 5-7 village CSUs once the ADATS Community Workers are withdrawn at the end of 3 years of our involvement.

tered a bundle of CCF payment vouchers or receipts *after the event*. Thereby the information generated by the computer only helped in post-mortem analysis.

ADATS is seriously examining the feasibility of linking our central computer system to 3 of the 4 Extension Programmes headquarters⁷ through dedicated lines provided by the government postal department.

7.9. Grassroots plans

Towards the end of 1991, all the 148 CSUs were encouraged to make grass root plans as to what they would like to see done in the next 3 year Coolie Sangha Formalisation phase. We asked them not to have any budget constraints in mind, and to plan for both material as well as non material inputs. This document, including many of the deeper glimpses it takes into the why and whereof of situations, is largely a result of the planning exercise in the villages and reflections made on the process in our weekly Situation Meetings.

These grass root plans covered organisational, socio-political, cultural and economic aspects of their aspirations. The decision to form (taluk) Coolie Sanghas, for example, was theirs; so too was the determination to contest local body elections and put pressure on civic bodies with their particular world view; they were the ones who wanted the *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu* scheme to be introduced in all the Mahila Meetings and decentralise the health budget.

Much of what they aspired for was subconsciously determined by what the older CSUs of Bagepalli had already achieved. But this was only to be expected. Yet the discussions were very deep and thorough. Their appreciation of individual issues had increased, even though they were not always able to link it all together into a holistic strategy where the different concerns of the Coolie Sangha flowed into one single agenda.

It was only when making individual plans for their economic development that they faltered. One got the impression that they tackled problem after problem in a narrow managerial manner. Their plans were very ambitious, and the coolies did not show a full understanding of the role of community control over individual members.

We had a very definite purpose in asking the coolies to make their plans. We wanted that they should find a recognition of themselves and the articulation of their aspirations in all that we were going to do in the 2nd 3 year phase of our involvement. This would give them a stake in the implementation of programmes which we would together monitor and review, in a spirit of partnership.

7.10. Staffing

In the ADATS organogram Field, Executive and Accounts/Admn are kept as clearly separate wings. The staff of each wing is independent of the other and they have different line responsibilities, roles to perform, schedules and targets. The point of working contact for these different staff are the Cluster Meets, and they co-ordinate with each other in weekly Staff Meetings.

At the village level, for staff as well as functionaries, these divisions into Field, Executive and Accounts/Admn naturally do not apply. This is a differentiation made exclusively for us to better manage our work and deliver goods efficiently and on time.

This ADATS organogram was not strictly implemented in the 4 Extension Programmes since the main emphasis was on Coolie Sangha building (Field) activities. The Field Assistants, for example, looked after the implementation of ALP classes, running the CCFs, building Community Halls, etc. besides doing their normal work of conducting meetings, training sessions

⁷ Julapalya, being part of Bagepalli taluk, does not have a separate headquarters.

and supporting issues. Desk Workers operated from out of Bagepalli since there was not sufficient finance work to justify the setting up of Accounts Admn branches at the Extension Programme headquarters.

Perhaps because of an over burdening of the Field staff with diverse responsibilities, or maybe due to other reasons which we do not fully understand, there was a large turnover in the number of Field Assistants. Chickballapur saw 5 Field Assistants come and go. Chintamani saw 2 and Siddalaghatta 2.

Each time someone left, senior ADATS staff and BCS functionaries shifted into crisis management gear and did their best to salvage the situation and not allow continuity be effected. But these staff changes did take their toll as far as our credibility was concerned, making it a little more difficult for the successor to fit in.

We were far more fortunate in our choice of Field Workers. Except for 1 person who had to leave under a cloud, there was a continuity insofar as Field Workers were concerned in all the 4 areas. The direct BCS control over them has contributed more than any other factor to their performance.

At present we are recruiting new staff to take up executive and desk responsibilities at the Extensions. And all the logistics like office buildings, training facilities, staff accommodation, etc. have been set up at Chintamani and Chickballapur.

7.11. Sangha Funds

The rather lofty call asking coolies to contribute 10% of their earnings, from whatever source, to the respective CSUs was given by ADATS in 1985. Besides being a very serious solution for their organisational posterity, it was also symbolic in nature. It was based on the principle of the indivisibility between the concepts of participation, self-confidence and sustainability on the one hand, with self-financing on the other.

At that time, in Bagepalli, the coolies had contributed only a 10th of their income which they received from ADATS as direct benefits. There was a general reluctance to similarly contribute from their private sources of income. Every year, after the harvest, they made a voluntary contribution which had no proportion or bearing to actual yields. And from higher daily wages earned as a result of ADATS inspired struggle, there was hardly any Sangha Fund contribution generated. Yet Sangha Fund collections to date are Rs 1,829,448 in the older CSUs of Bagepalli taluk.

But the enthusiasm with which this same call has been received by the coolies of the 4 Extension Programme areas astonishes us. It is one of the clearest indicators we have as to how seriously they are considering the Coolie Sangha to be the real solution. Sangha Fund collections through 10% contribution from ADATS/DDS benefits - salaries, CCF loans, etc. - total to Rs 163,701 in the 4 Extensions.

The coolies have, on their own, got pots and tins which they use as dumb boxes and started contributing a 10th of their earnings in nearly all the villages. These dumb boxes have not yet been opened and so we do not have exact figures to report.

8. THE WIDER SITUATION IN WHICH THE PROJECT EXISTS

For the very first time in nearly half a century, macro economic changes in India have a direct bearing on the micro realities of her citizen's day to day living. All of a sudden, the common woman and man cannot afford to miss the daily news or not read newspapers. Every single happening of the past few months have a direct bearing on the every day living of each and every one of us, women and men, in the cities and countryside.

8.1. Changes in the Indian economy

The economic situation in India has been undergoing very fundamental changes since mid 1991. The political economy is rapidly transforming from a pretence at socialism to a competitive market economy.

We share the common concerns regarding the many negative impacts which flow from fatalistically accepting the mainstream economy as an inevitable fallout of present trends of today. We are appalled, just as everyone else, and frightened that these mainstream developments will lead to an inhuman and continually de-humanising set of consequences. But we do not think it correct to therefore reject the predominant trends of capitalisation, close our eyes and wish it away.

When capitalism is being ushered in at such a rapid pace by forces beyond our control, we have a role in preparing the coolies to enter into it with dignity. Otherwise, in spite of all our empty curses and eloquent condemnations, they will be forced by circumstances to crawl into the new social order on their knees and land in the slums and pavements.

Because poor peasants eke their subsistence *outside* the market system. They will not derive any benefit from the increased commodity production which will result from structural adjustments in the Indian economy. Not even marginal benefits which the urban poor can hope for through the flourishing of an “informal sector”.

On the other hand, a reduction in State subsidies and schemes for their betterment will not only hit the poor peasants, but the peasantry as a whole in semi arid drought prone regions like ours. Middle peasants who supplement their uneconomical cultivation and paltry farm incomes with cuts and profits siphoned off from the implementation of anti poverty schemes will be as badly hit by the contemporary process as the poor who depend on them for their livelihood in a clientele status.

While increasing bargaining power and struggling for their rights remains vital for the coolies to survive with any measure of dignity, struggle alone will no longer assure them a security. Poor peasants in India have to adjust to the new reality without merely crying against the wind, even when the logic of the market economy is intrinsically against them.

8.2. Entrepreneurship

Readjustment to these changes cannot be simplistically understood as just the learning of new skills, shaking off a supposed lethargy, or working hard. It needs far more than the creation of physical infrastructure of technology transfer, credit, logistics and markets. Entrepreneurship has deeper requisites and certain societal preconditions have first to be fulfilled.

The State fulfils these, including the reshaping of normative values of the population and the making of socio-legal adjustments, for the advantage of only a select few. Liberal elements in capitalism, like democracy and human rights, sometimes makes us loose sight of the fact that the bourgeois State is class oriented, and not market oriented. It is an organ which works exclusively in the larger interests of a particular class. It possesses no idealism and has no special commitment to capitalism as such. All that is in the interest of promoting the market, per se, is not in the interest of either that class or the State.⁸

⁸ The earlier State, which made an almost 5 year preparation for this radical restructuring of the economy, had to make pretences at reaching out to everyone. The logic of new schemes they launched for the general population were attractively packaged. They reduced problems of poverty alleviation to easily solvable ones in environs of good management gilded with abundant good will and well meant intentions.

However, the catch in their plans was that there were 2 vital prerequisites for their success. The 1st was that the borrowers had to be prepared to enterprise, and the 2nd was that they had to understand a cash economy. Both these were alien to the coolies, and the socio-cultural norms of village society did not encourage the poor to enterprise. As a result, none of these “golden opportunities” were “utilised by the rural poor”.

The State very deliberately ignores the creation of a congenial climate for the vast majority to enterprise since this would go against the inherent logic of capitalist development - the development of a few and a trickle down effect for the remaining. Through their mass organisations, the coolies have to actualise spaces and improvise a milieu for themselves.

At a micro level, individual poor who have only just come out of semi-feudal stagnation will find it very difficult to grasp these prerequisites. Entrepreneurship is very different from hard labour. It requires specially developed managerial and conceptual skills which enable one to plan ahead and deal with market forces. The cash economy is cruel and unsparing, having none of the cushion which even the harshest of feudal realities had as safety nets for the poor in the webs of intricate patron-client structures.

Only a cohesively organised lot, capable of astute societal analysis, with the strength which comes from the large numbers that sustain serious efforts, the in-built discipline to instil confidence in its members to follow complicated strategies, can find the difficult paths and actualise spaces for themselves in the maze of subtle possibilities which capitalism unwittingly opens out for its victims.

Entrepreneurship requires this very special atmosphere wherein a knowledgeable and effective community responsibly strives to strike a balance between support, encouragement and control over its individual members on the one hand, and reshape the wider reality in its favour on the other. Only such an effective mass organisation will be able to deal with the dilemma of entrepreneurship; that in order to enterprise a favourable milieu has to be created, and only through enterprise can this milieu be created.

8.3. Rise in fundamentalism

Many are going to be the people who will be left out of the direct and indirect designs of capitalist development. Many are the ones who will attempt to enterprise without community support and lose their everything. Many are going to be marginalised with no hope of benefit from the new order. This is an obvious result inherent in courses that bet on the development of a few.

Capitalism in India is not going to follow the text book model of the bourgeois democratic revolution killing all feudal relations as under. Nor is it going to create a people who chase the pipe dream of permanent growth. Capitalism in India is going to follow the maxim of uneven development, leaving large tracts untouched by what it has to offer, except perhaps in negative implications.

The population of India is not going to be homogenised into a uniform proletariat. There are far too many of us for that to happen. And technology is too advanced for it to be necessary. Instead, periodic regrouping of the frustrated and marginalised into caste, ethnic, regional and religious formations will lead to orgies of violence and mayhem in different parts of the country from time to time.

Superficially these may appear to be popular protests against imperialism, but a mere scratch at their surface will reveal the ugly faces of fundamentalism, chauvinism and intolerance. Neither will they be stray and unconnected incidents. The danger of rightist rule in India is very live and real.

8.4. Consequences for the rural poor

It must be borne in mind that none of the negative consequences we list below as illustrations will be brought about in a politically unacceptable manner. They will all be pushed through using the “inevitability” argument. Bourgeois democracy has the astuteness to bring about

such changes in a very quiet and “acceptable” manner, manipulating the opinion of the urban middle class in a very dextrous manner.

They will hit the hardest in regions lacking grass root political processes and democratic practices are weak; where no authentic organisations of the poor exist. This is a fair description of vast tracts of rural India where the population will be dumb struck by events which take place at too fast a pace for them to contemplate.

8.4.1. EXTRA ECONOMIC COERCION

The unorganised and politically weak poor in the countryside - those without Coolie Sanghas, for example - will pay a heavy price for the mainly urban communal disturbances. Wherever strong and powerful coolie mass organisations do not exercise a decisive influence, a feudal like power structure will be allowed to emerge in rural pockets.

The State will, perhaps unwittingly, permit these new power centres to tackle law and order problems with an extra-economic coercion for as long as the population of these pockets are not needed in the mainstay of capitalist development. This will be a prescription for chaos. This new power structure will have none of the patron trappings that the earlier landlords had, and their rule will turn into a new form of tyranny, albeit with the indirect blessings of a bourgeois liberal polity.

8.4.2. OFFICIAL TYRANNY

Bourgeois democracy will set its cleansing machinery into operation. The gradual conversion of bureaucratic profit in the form of bribes and corruption into industrial profit has to be noted. With a lessening of government controls and red tape, official corruption will no longer be tolerated in places where a liberal middle class value begins to assert itself. This will, naturally, be in the cities and towns.

As a result all the losers - corrupt inefficient officials and demented policemen - are going to flock for transfers to the villages where their writ can still rule. This will only add to the agony of the rural population in general, and the poor peasantry in particular.

8.4.3. REDUCTION IN BASIC SERVICES

State attitudes towards the provision of basic services will also change, following the same principle of pocket development. Even the most basic of amenities like drinking water, electricity, roads and low cost houses will no longer be citizen rights that the population can demand and a conscious State has to at least pretend to satisfy in some measure.

Instead, expediency in providing an infrastructure for capitalist development and other considerations extraneous to people’s pressure will determine the taking up of even basic schemes like public transport, health, and primary education.

This will also effect the character of the NGO sector. Conditions will deteriorate to such dismal levels that development workers who relied on narrow determinism to analyse society will face an intellectual bankruptcy. They will be drawn by the “inevitability” logic into making sectoral interventions instead of helping the poor manoeuvre into more holistic positions of strength in the new order. A new form of charity will develop in our sector. The State has already hinted at development workers undertaking the creation of a safety net and will welcome this shift in NGO priorities.

8.4.4. The credit squeeze

Along with a drastic cut in subsidies and anti-poverty programmes there will also be a severe credit squeeze in the villages. Banks will no longer be compelled to treat rural lending as a priority sector and this will have an immediate impact on both, capital availability as well as interest rates. Even co-operative lending will be hit.

Once again many NGOs will move to sector intervention, believing rural credit to be the cornerstone for all other economic development. They will fail to grasp credit as an integral part of an overall socio-political agenda to strengthen the poor.

8.5. Creating a congenial milieu for coolies to enterprise

To understand it's response to current developments in the national panorama, we have to take a look at the past few years when there has been a steady coming of age in the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha (BCS). An intuitive and almost clairvoyant grasp of subtleties which has enabled it to travel beyond the retinue of pretended practices and reach to the core of democracy itself. A democracy without which enterprise is impossible.

The BCS seriously embarked on a course which can best be described as strategic adjustments to the modernisation process unleashed in wider society. It concentrated on internal rectification and has achieved far reaching results. It has, in a way, transmuted itself beyond a trade union function of enhancing the bargaining power of coolies and protecting their parochial rights. Without abandoning the path of struggle, it has at the same time allocated politics to the back seat.

It has emphasised that change has to begin with coolie attitudes towards caste, religion and women. It has ascertained that all other changes required to survive in an altered world will follow only when an enterprising people first break the shackles imposed by these institutions.

In the case of evidently wasteful expenses on social custom demanded by the practice of caste and religion, this is easy to understand. But the true accomplishment of the BCS has been in its ability to recognise macho behaviour as being self destructive for both, women and men.

8.6. Individuals and community

The BCS saw individual identity as not the same as laissez-faire's self centeredness. Nor as merely antithetical to communism's collective. The existence of an individual was recognised to be possible only in community and the relationship between the two was understood to be dialectical.

The individual was not seen as a fragment of this collective called community, but as a whole and complete person whose identity had to be protected and nurtured by the community. The community was seen as a body which protected individual personal rights to grow, express, ascertain and strive for betterment. In exchange, the community claimed the right to prevent individuals from developing macho traits and encroaching upon other's personal rights.

Consequently, the identity of an individual was redefined and the BCS came to see itself as a community which protected individual coolie identities. It is still grappling with many unresolved issues on this score.

8.7. Concrete responses by the BCS

Even if it were to be argued that these changes were at ADATS' behest and due to some sort of an intellectual input from our side, there are concrete indications to show that the BCS has internalised them and made a clear departure from convention.

It declared its concern for individual coolies in very concrete terms in 1990 with plans for the poorest of the poor. The interests of women headed households, the landless and the scheduled castes were placed before that of the remaining majority of relatively better off members. The latter decided to not avail any loans from their CCFs till each and every member coolie family had an assured minimum income of Rs 500 a month.

With this *Nirupeda*⁹ declaration of 1990, the BCS clearly placed itself apart from and above prevailing norms of village society. It earned an identity as humane and different in the perception of everyone in Bagepalli taluk. This at a time when the general crisis was driving people to seek pseudo identities in caste and ethnicity.

Recent events show that the socio-political credibility of the BCS has been greatly enhanced. It was able to provide a positive social leadership at a time when senselessness and mayhem ruled the day in late 1990, and political leadership a short while thereafter when it worked to defeat communal forces. Today it is widely acknowledged that only the structures and discipline of the Coolie Sangha will help the coolies escape an onslaught of economic destitution.

At the time of writing this document, a major economic project to promote entrepreneurship is being implemented by the BCS in the older CSUs of Bagepalli and the current slogan is to “make each and every member coolie rich within 2 years”.

9. ARGUMENTATION FOR THE NEED OF THE PROJECT

This section is a summation of efforts to be made in the next 3 years as a consequence of contemporary changes described in the preceding section. It is therefore, in large, a restatement of obvious inferences of observations already made.

9.1. The role of time in Coolie Sangha building

The 4 Extension Programmes have already proved that sets of tested and proven actions, neatly ordered and implemented with a zeal play a definite role in Coolie Sangha building. But in spite of all our impressive achievements of the last 3 years, and the assurance of a mature guidance and support from the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha, it is still not true to claim that the discipline and structures, which are the Coolie Sangha, have already established a high degree of political conscientisation in 3,486 member coolie families.

Contrary to popular understanding, such consciousness is not a product of reason and logic alone. It is a product of intellect combined with emotion. To be politically conscious demands bravery, and bravery exacts being sure.

It would be foolish to claim an effective presence in these 3 taluks wherein the Coolie Sangha influences all and every facet of life.

Today, what exists in these thousands of families is a tear between the old and the new. Where individual coolies waver with doubt and trepidation, without the courage to make hard choices between earlier paradigms of survival and a yet untested model.

For member coolies to abandon old survival strategies and place their entire trust in the Coolie Sangha takes a major decision to give up the proven, however compelling the arguments may sound. Only time can achieve this.

Coolie functionaries in the 4 Extensions know a prosaic form of struggle and think that they know it all. They have seen the fruit of past such struggle in Bagepalli, feel that unity, numbers and bargaining power alone have achieved these, and this has shaped their aspirations. These VLWs, VHWs and CSU Representatives have to be gently guided to grasp the subtleties of situations and arrive at holistic strategies for struggle. This too needs time.

In our intervention strategy, it was to give this time that Coolie Sangha building was planned to be a 9 year activity. Some of the socio-political interventions envisaged in the 2nd 3 year Formalisation phase appear to be a slow and intensified repetition of tasks already performed

⁹ poorest of the poor

in the previous 3 years. The cultural (normative) interventions appear new, but hazily conceived. And the economic interventions are substantially increased.

In November 1988, we brought out a paper attempting to clarify the complexities of this 2nd Coolie Sangha Formalisation phase. We argued that a higher degree of decentralised participation and positive pluralism will help individual coolie families reflect and make hard choices between the Coolie Sangha and all earlier survival strategies and groupings. As already mentioned, this document is annexed to this project application.

9.2. Spaces to manoeuvre

Feudalism in India was a deep rooted social system which, through thousands of years of stagnation, had its order clearly cut out by tradition. Oppressive institutions like caste were firmly entrenched to keep everybody and the order in place. Socialist alternatives, as was the case the world over, depended on narrow social engineering from start to finish and failed to offer viable alternatives.

Capitalism has no such great design. Though we sometimes refer to a schema in capitalist development, it is actually a social ordering which banks heavily on the greed of individuals and concerns itself solely with the economic question of profit alone. Whenever the presumption that all individuals are greedy and selfish is challenged, cracks and fissures appear in the capitalist logic and framework.

As a result, capitalism opens far more opportunities for people to manoeuvre and surprises even itself by its own tolerance - honest officials who refuse to be bent are still feared and respected by their masters; academic and development institutions which adopt mandates to expose and challenge the order are still supported; these are some of the manifestations of spaces which can be intelligently carved in bourgeois liberal society.

The rural poor in India had developed survival strategies to cope with harsh semi-feudal realities. It is not the *content* of these survival strategies which attract our respect and admiration (we know them to be obsolete), but the intuitive ingenuity with which these strategies were developed by a supposedly unintelligent and apathetic people.

We believe that a people who had the astuteness to develop very complex forms of existence for their self protection in a semi-feudal order still retain the ability to cope with the new reality of the changed political economy. When organised into cohesive bodies which look beyond immediate self interest, they can challenge the presumption on which capitalism banks and strive for the betterment of their individual members.

But the knowledge base of the rural poor on the new social order is practically nil. The poor are still in a state of stunned disbelief that protecting their interests has suddenly vanished from everyone's agenda. In these circumstances we have a role to jolt them into an exercise they have proved to be good at - the carving of new survival strategies for living with dignity in capitalism.

9.3. Supporting Coolies to enterprise

Entrepreneurship is the key to survival in capitalism. But they have to create the milieu to enterprise by themselves since the State is not going to do it for them. This milieu has to be both, physical as well as socio-cultural. It is equally important to learn new skills, organise infrastructure, arrange for credit and markets as it is to build the Coolie Sangha into a community capable of supporting individual coolies to enterprise and exercise a control over them at the same time.

New forms of enterprise have to be discovered since traditional activities may no longer pay - their lack of innovation has to be countered. Differences in pace between the semi-feudal and

capitalist economies have to be understood, and the increased rotation of capital has to be grasped. The rural poor cannot do all this by themselves. They need our responsible steerage and support.

What we can achieve in these coming 3 years is to build the utilisation capacities in the CCFs by gradually increasing our grants to targets of Rs 2,000 per member. The autonomy and pluralism we will introduce in their CSUs through encouraging debate and promoting a diversity will succeed in creating a socio-cultural milieu capable of inspiring the coolies to try. Their struggle to enter local bodies and influence village society will etch for them a place in the polity.

Perhaps it is only in the final 3 year phase of our involvement that the coolies can really begin to enterprise in any appreciable measure. But there is an urgent need to set our targets high and try hard.

9.4. Creating a safety net for Coolies

The breakdown of traditional support structures like the clientele protection they received, first from their patrons and then the State which they looked up to as inclined in their favour, has put the coolies in a position of great disadvantage to even survive. Under these circumstances, they will not be too inclined to go into matters of asset creation.

A vital and indispensable part of the milieu to enterprise is therefore a safety network. Industrialists, big business and organised labour concern themselves with an exit policy. For the coolies, it is an assurance of minimum. That their paltry assets, built at great personal risk with sweat and struggle will not disappear in the face of illness or some family crisis.

Programme activities like the *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu*, decentralised health and children's education will provide guarantees of these desperately needed basic minimum.

10. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This implementation plan has direct reference to the short term objectives listed in para 6. Where this plan is different from earlier ADATS/DDS project applications is that many of the activities cannot be placed on a clear time frame matrix even though they are time and target bound. Please read the enclosed paper on Coolie Sangha Formalisation where we have explained that our intervention in this 2nd phase of Coolie Sangha building is more in the form of a continuing thrust or emphasis than actions with clear beginnings and ends.

10.1. Withdrawal of Community Workers

19¹⁰ ADATS/DDS paid Community Workers in Chintamani, Chickballapur and Julapalya will be withdrawn on completion of their 3 year contract in June 1992. Some of them will be re-absorbed to work as CWs in fresh Clusters and some will be promoted to Field Workers. A few will be asked to leave.

The 5 CWs at Siddalaghatta will continue for 1 more year till mid 1993 since these 24 villages were started 1 year late.

10.2. Integration into the (taluk) Coolie Sanghas, organisational elections and (taluk)CS Meetings

960 members coolies of Chintamani will be admitted as full fledged and accredited members of the Chintamani Coolie Sanghas with full voting rights in mid 1992. Similarly 1,115 member coolies of Chickballapur will be admitted into the Chickballapur Coolie Sangha at the

¹⁰ 3 CWs from Chickballapur have already been withdrawn and replaced with Cluster Secretaries; there are 3 CW vacancies right now.

same time, 702 member coolies from Julapalya will be admitted into the 14 year old Bagepalli Coolie Sangha.

Fresh organisational elections will be held when each of these 124 CSUs will elect their 3 Representatives. 25 Cluster Secretaries will also be elected. These elections will be conducted under the supervision of the BCS President since all the (taluk) Coolie Sanghas built by ADATS/DDS are federated sister bodies under the common legal umbrella of the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha. For reasons already elaborated in the 1st ADATS/DDS project application, we will not permit the creation of separate mass organisations in the different taluks.

All the newly elected CSU Representatives of the Chintamani and Chickballapur (taluk) Coolie Sanghas will meet for the first time in January 1993 to elect their respective (taluk)CS Secretaries. After which, monthly 2 days (taluk)CS Meetings at their respective taluk headquarters will become regular features at both, Chintamani as well as Chickballapur.

The elected (taluk)CS Secretary and Cluster Secretaries of each (taluk) Coolie Sangha will form a committee which will handle day to day financial affairs like monitoring meeting costs to stay within the budget, Sangha Fund collection, etc.

The pattern will be slightly different in Julapalya, which is a part of Bagepalli taluk, since no new (taluk) Coolie Sangha has to be formed. From January 1992, all the elected CSU Representatives have already started attending the monthly BCS Meetings at Bagepalli. The 702 member coolies of Julapalya will be formally admitted with full voting powers in June 1992. After that, the BCS will directly handle organisational matters in these 29 CSUs.

Organisational elections in the 24 villages of Siddalaghatta will be conducted 1 year later in mid 1993 and the Siddalaghatta (taluk) Coolie Sangha will begin its monthly meetings only from January 1994.

10.3. Strengthening the staff

Not having a clear division of responsibilities may have worked, even if not too well, these past 3 years when it was necessary to concentrate only on the formation of new CSUs. But now with the taking on of larger economic programmes, this will not work any more. The time tested and proven ADATS organogram described in para 7.10. will be implemented in all the 4 Extension Programmes.

Field staff will concentrate exclusively on their subtle role of bringing about a pluralistic and decentralised coolie participation through cadre training, consciousness raising, support to issues and struggles, and conduct various village, cluster and taluk meetings. They also have a major task in introducing financial management skills in the coolies. The Mahila Meetings will be prepared to handle the decentralised health budgets. CSUs will run their children's education activity by themselves. And elected functionaries have to handle the budgets for meetings.

A strong Executive staff will be built up to concentrate on economic activities which will be taken up with a great seriousness in this 3 year phase. Experienced ADATS staff will be sent out to work as executive Field Workers in programmes like the CCF. All the Executive staff will have clear job descriptions. Subject matter specialists will be called in to assist the staff whenever necessary.

With a substantial increase in economic activities in this 3 year Formalisation phase, functioning branches of the Accounts Admn wing will be permanently set up in 3 Extension headquarters. Desk Workers stationed at the Extensions will have very clear entrustment and line control to the Accounts Assistant in Bagepalli and will be covered with fidelity insurance. Part of the Desk Workers' job description will be to help the coolies with book

keeping support and manage their various CCF, Sangha Fund and decentralised budget bank accounts.

The OnLine computerised software package described in para 7.8. will be installed in all the Extensions. All the staff will be rigorously trained in computer usage. Communication between Bagepalli and the 3 Extensions will be improved with the real time connections we will get from the postal department.

Executive staff will use the computer to monitor the CCF and make feasible plans for coolie development. The Field staff will monitor all aspects of Coolie Sangha Formalisation including membership details, land holding, caste and gender composition in the members, functionaries and staff, etc. Desk Workers will manage programme finances, deal with staff requirements, maintain office correspondence, communicate with Bagepalli and generally support the Field and Executive staff with information and analysis.

Weekly Area Staff Meetings will continue to be an important forum for monitoring, review and decision making in this 3 year phase also. But the VLWs, VHWS and Cluster Secretaries will meet once a fortnight instead of weekly.

10.4. Cadre training for women and the *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu*

Groups of 25 women from 5 villages will be brought to the taluk headquarters for special 3 days participatory training sessions. They will thoroughly discuss societal institutions like marriage, religion and caste in the personal context of their own lives and experiences. They will also be exposed to problems and achievements in the older Mahila Meetings of Bagepalli taluk.

Special skills needed to peacefully conduct Mahila Meetings and recognise the often benignly couched male interference and politely ward it off will be imparted in these special sessions. Practical money management and monitoring skills will be imparted for the women to handle the decentralised health budget by themselves.

After that, each group of 5 women will be given an initial grant of Rs 1,000 to start the *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu* scheme in their villages.

After a year these same women will be brought together once again to review experiences, give further training on para legal matters concerning marriage, divorce, desertion and alimony. The *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu* will be enhanced to Rs 5,000 with additional grants of Rs 4,000 for each Mahila Meeting.

60 such sessions of 3 day training will be held in Chintamani, another 60 in Chickballapur, 30 in Julapalya and 30 in Siddalaghatta. The entire training emphasis in this 3 year phase will therefore be on women and gender issues. These training will be conducted by full time Mahila Trainers at each Extension headquarters with the support of senior women staff of ADATS and DDS.

10.5. Decentralising the health budget

Another major step we will take in this 3 year phase is to decentralise the community and referral health budget described in para 7.7.6. This will contribute in a big way to strengthening coolie women and give them a financial clout in the CSUs.

The moneys hitherto being spent by ADATS/DDS will be transferred to the Mahila Meetings. All the tasks hitherto being performed by ADATS/DDS - monitoring VHW performance, buying basic drugs, referring patients to hospitals - will be carried out by the Mahila Meetings. They will appoint their own VHWS, fix and pay their monthly salaries and buy basic drugs to replenish the medicine kits. They will also have a budget of Rs 2,000 per village per year to give medical aid and help individual member coolies meet their hospital expenses.

At the initial decision making stage, there will be no male interference. Later the Cluster Meets will ratify decisions taken by individual Mahila Meetings on the usage of the decentralised health budgets. The role of the Cluster Meets in this respect will be to ensure that the weaker Mahila Meetings are not bullied into making wrong decisions by the some men in their CSUs. We are fairly confident of the gender positive values instilled in most of the men-folk to believe that the Cluster Meets will be able to effectively play this role.

10.6. Children's classes

Most Mahila Meetings have requested that the children's classes, which were being conducted as part of the ALP, be continued and strengthened with material support for more coolie children to attend the government schools in their villages. We too believe that they will stand no chance in the rapidly changing political economy unless they have an elementary schooling till at least the 7th standard.

The CSUs and Mahila Meetings have agreed to monitor a simple children's education activity which involves the buying of school books, paying tuition fees, and conducting evening classes for them to learn and play. ADATS has the expertise in conducting such a children's programme and the VLWs will have sufficient time on their hands to conduct classes every evening. An average of 1 child per member coolie family will be supported in this activity.

These classes will provide an every day activity which will contribute to CSU building in all the 148 villages.

10.7. Coolie Credit Fund

ADATS/DDS will give out grants to gradually build up the village level CCFs to targets of Rs 2,000 per member coolie.

Each CSU will implement its own CCF at the village level. Some general procedures will be adhered to with regard to the taking of loans, utilisation and repayment. These general procedures, evolved through discussions at the various CSUs, will be laid down from time to time by the respective (taluk) Coolie Sanghas.

Individual borrowers will formally apply for interest-free loans from their respective CCFs. They will state how much of their new income they want to keep aside for personal expenses and propose a repayment schedule. A quorum of 2/3rd the CSU strength will deliberate on these requests and then decides.

The CSU decision will then be placed in the Cluster Meet where it will finally be approved. After that the borrowers will bring their authorised cheque signatory (1 of the 3 CSU Representatives) and Cluster Minutes Book to the Extension headquarters.

The Executive staff will use the computer to go through the loan histories of the borrowers, verify that the CSU and Cluster have approved, check to see that there are no overdue from the village and that all the other general procedures have been adhered to. They will then fill out their CCF Forms, write out their cheques and update all the records and books of accounts.

CCF loans are interest-free. But, in accordance with the BCS decision that everyone contributes 10% of their earnings to their *Sangha Funds* borrowers will contribute 10% of the amount they borrow to their respective village Sangha Fund. The Desk Workers will help them credit these contributions into their respective Sangha Funds.

All the member coolies of a CSU will play an active and effective role in supervising utilisation and repayment. Since proper utilisation and prompt repayment determine the continuation of the CCFs in their villages, a strong social control will be exercised over them by the

rest of the member coolies. It will be very difficult for individual borrowers to escape this social control.

It is the total and unreserved transparency with regard to the member coolies' financial privacy which permits the CCFs to function effectively. When a member coolie asks for a loan, she cannot hold anything back. Unless it is a full and frank sharing, the chances are that her application will be rejected. And after approval, all her fellow members continue to show an interest in utilisation and repayment.

Consequently, decisions as to who should get a loan, and whether it has been properly utilised, tend to get shaded by the particular perception and prioritisation of each CSU. Each village CCF will therefore develop a particular form and content which is an uninfluenced expression of their own political will.

We will closely monitor the CCFs in order to study trends, draw overall inferences, and follow the performance of individual borrowers. The OnLine computerisation of all Coolie Sangha building activities makes this very easily possible even when we are talking about thousands of different loans, each given out on different terms and conditions, for different purposes, and with different repayment schedules.

The CCF performance figures are stark and naked measures of utilisation, repayment, and loanee categorisation based on gender, caste and landholding. These are uncompromising figures which refuse to lend to any manipulation or interpretation of convenience. They become clear indicators of policy choices, prioritisation, and deeper developments within each CSU.

The Executive staff will, in addition to all their other work, perform 2 more specific functions. They will liaison with the insurance company to help the coolies avail the maximum possible risk coverage, and they will use the services of specialists and consultants to help find new forms of enterprise.

10.8. Sangha Funds

Sangha Fund mobilisation will be a serious activity in this 3 year phase. We will supply each CSU with a proper dumb box into which the coolies will start contributing 10% of their earnings from what ever source. These collections will be periodically credited into their respective CSU bank accounts.

As per the BCS rules, amounts credited into any CSU bank account will not be transferred under any circumstances to any other account of any other CSU. This is to assure the members that they will be contributing to their posterity in a very direct and recognisable way, and not to a large anonymity called a mass organisation.

We recognise that Sangha Fund collections may not be sufficient, at the end of this 3 year period, to give a complete financial independence to the CSUs. But we still feel, for the time being, that ADATS/DDS should not make any direct contribution to this Fund which is wholly the coolies'. But we will make a concession and pay the stipends of the elected Cluster Secretaries throughout this 3 year phase.

Desk Workers stationed at the Extension headquarters will help the coolies maintain the various bank accounts of their Sangha Funds and give out regular reports on collection status.

10.9. Diversity and the total involvement of members coolies through cadre training and debates

As already mentioned in para 7.9. most of what is envisaged to be done in this 3 year phase of our involvement has been thoroughly discussed in all the CSUs and Clusters. ADATS/DDS

and the member coolies will be equal and participating partners in the implementation of this programme.

A fuller involvement of the member coolies in day to day programme management will result in diversity. We have the wisdom to recognise diversity as separate from difference. The resultant fluidity in the CSUs is recognised as healthy and something to be preserved, instead of being trampled upon into a uniform conformity to abstract standards. The direction providing role which ADATS/DDS will play is to prevent this pluralism from degenerating into license for liberalism.

Such an active promotion of diversification in the structure and functioning of the mass organisation will demand a very difficult staff involvement in this coming 3 year phase. Our promotional and facilitating responses will have to be particular and peculiar to each village, and this will make the job of the Field staff very tedious and laborious. While the Executive staff, in pursuit of goals and targets will try to stick to common rules and procedures, the Field staff will situational interpret these same rules and argue for their bending to suit diverse village situations.

All this will demand a continued emphasis on cadre training and encouraging the coolies to debate on all aspects of Coolie Sangha building and functioning in various meeting fora. The Field Staff will, in this respect, play more of a promotional role than the monitoring of various activities.

10.10. The developing of an effective minority

This concept has been elaborated in our draft paper “Furthering the Coolie Sangha Model of Development.” It presupposes that though the rural poor are demographically an absolute majority in the village populations, not more than 40% of the coolies will organise themselves into mass organisations with serious consequence and clout. Therefore the mere extending of the model to neighbouring villages and taluks will not result in the coolies becoming a majority which wields determining power.

Yet, by their sheer numbers, a disciplined and organised lot can positively influence prevailing practice as well as the course of societal development. To arrive at a quantum definition of a geopolitically viable area coverage, it is necessary to keep on extending till this definition is obtained.

In other words, the coolies will become an effective minority in village society the moment they are capable of and thereby actually do re-shape the normative base of village society through a projection of their own values which are peculiar and particular to their class characteristic. These coolies values, they have demonstrated, are based on a recognition of the need to preserve justice and morality, even when the rest of society interprets such a pursuit as unrealistic and even naive.

It is not ADATS/DDS alone, even if with our northern partners, who have a role in effecting this geopolitical coverage. We believe that the organised coolies, without leaving their respective villages, can all put one foot forward. This will result in a great stride which will take us towards a larger area coverage.

Though not with Icco support and even if not within the limited parameter of this project proposal, it is pertinent to note that ADATS/DDS plans to expand into another 150 villages of these 4 areas in early 1992. This will alter the contextual situation of our ongoing work in these 148 villages since it will help the Coolies to give effective expression to what the Coolie Sangha really means.

That it is not just a self-centred strategy for coolie development alone, but a strengthening of the coolie class in order to redefine concepts of power, leadership, attitudes towards women,

minorities and contemporary political practices. Given the very real danger of the rise in fundamentalism, chauvinism and intolerance, this will be high on everyone's agenda in the next 3 year phase.

To do this, and also in so doing, they will strike alliances with other suffering and exploited sections in the villages, including Ryot women. Their strategy will involve the identification of more general issues demanding a larger struggle, the entering and influencing of local level civic bodies including the Mandal Panchayats, the Primary Land Development Bank, co-operative societies, etc.

This will involve both, the contesting of elections to civic bodies as well as pressurising these local bodies to act fairly and in strict adherence to the letter of the law.

10.11. Withdrawal of VLWs by mid 1995

By the end of this 3 year phase of Coolie Sangha Formalisation all the 148 VLWs will be withdrawn.

At which time, the elected CSU Representatives will take the place of the withdrawn VLWs in the same holistic sense as the elected Cluster Secretaries are now envisaged to replace the withdrawn Community Workers. We will also, at that time, bring out a paper on the next 3 year phase of Coolie Sangha Consolidation.

10.12. Programme monitoring

At a general level of assessment making, ADATS and the BCS use 4 indicators to measure the health of the CSUs.

- Regular CSU and Cluster meetings with minutes properly recorded
- Adherence to larger decisions taken in BCS Meetings
- Mahila Meetings with no male interference in the Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu
- Proper utilisation and prompt repayment of CCF loans

14 years of experience has taught us that it is better to make broad assessments with our fingers on the pulse of a few determining factors than concern ourselves with the last and final details.

This does not mean that all other aspects of the Coolie Sangha like land and wage issues, struggle, entry into civic bodies, tackling communalism, Sangha funds, education, health, etc. are unimportant or even secondary. It is just that we do not want to get lost in a labyrinth of detail which can give confusing and conflicting signals. In any case such a detailed monitoring in a decentralised structure will be the responsibility of the respective village and cluster functionaries of the Coolie Sangha.

As already mentioned, we use a specially designed computer software called the ravik. VPACK to monitor all our field, executive, finance and admn work. This software includes modules to manage and accompany mass organisations built with NGO support (*MASS*), a financial accounting system (*FAMS*), a Staff monitoring system, CCF system, Children's Education monitoring system, and a grass root Planning system.

The Field staff will use VPACK to enter new admissions, suspensions and cancellations based on decisions taken in CSU Meetings in order to generate up to date membership lists of all the CSUs at all times. They will enter details on age and gender of everyone in the members' household, their caste type, house type, land holding, list of assets and liabilities and any other vital information. They constantly update member status and histories by entering who the elected CSU Representatives and Cluster Secretaries are, whenever there is a change, etc.

They will also enter general information on the CSU as to when the meeting days are, the total population of the village along with their caste composition.

The Desk Worker will enter information on CSU and CCF bank accounts and who the authorised signatories are. The Executive staff will enter village information on each coolie child supported by the CSU.

The VPACK will generate up to date and OnLine Village Reports showing how many normal, suspended and cancelled members there are at any given point in time and membership lists. It will give instant information on the number of women members in each CSU. It will give the number of functionally literate coolies in the CSU, who the elected Representatives, authorised CSU and CCF signatories, VLW and VHW are, the number of children supported in primary, middle and high school,

The composition of membership in terms of adults and children and the percentage of the village's population covered by the CSU, and the caste break-up of the members with ethnic coverage in the village will also be generated. The total land holding of the members and pattern of landholding will also be immediately available.

Cluster, Area and Super Reports generated by the VPACK will give similar information and enable us to compare figures on performance.

The Desk Workers will use the VPACK to enter all their financial transactions and this will generate CCF, Sangha Fund and decentralised budget reports. VPACK will advise on budget compliance and generate 6 monthly financial reports for statutory authorities and Icco.

As is the established practice in ADATS/DDS the member coolies will continually be involved in monitoring and reviewing performance at all stages of programme implementation. Different fora and opportunities are used for this purpose. This document, for example, is a product of a series of such exercises held over 4-5 months in all 148 CSUs and 30 Clusters. It has been thoroughly discussed and understood in its final form by all the staff of the Extensions.

11. PROJECT BUDGET

11.1. Chintamani

1. Training, Meetings and Support	858,000
2. Decentralised Health Budget	840,000
3. Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu	250,000
4. Children's Education	600,000
5. Coolie Credit Fund	2,000,000
6. Stipends	864,000
7. Capital costs	225,000
8. Salaries	712,800
9. Running costs	972,000
	7,321,800

11.2. Chickballapur

1. Training, Meetings and Support	858,000
2. Decentralised Health Budget	840,000
3. Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu	250,000
4. Children's Education	720,000
5. Coolie Credit Fund	2,400,000
6. Stipends	864,000
7. Capital costs	225,000
8. Salaries	712,800
9. Running costs	972,000
	7,841,800

11.3. Julapalya

1.	Training, Meetings and Support	243,660
2.	Decentralised Health Budget	436,800
3.	Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu	130,000
4.	Children's Education	420,000
5.	Coolie Credit Fund	1,400,000
6.	Stipends	446,400
7.	Capital costs	310,000
8.	Salaries	432,000
9.	Running costs	378,000
		4,196,860

11.4. Siddalaghatta

1.	Training, Meetings and Support	347,340
2.	Decentralised Health Budget	403,200
3.	Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu	120,000
4.	Children's Education	420,000
5.	Coolie Credit Fund	1,400,000
6.	Stipends	393,600
7.	Capital costs	435,000
8.	Salaries	604,800
9.	Running costs	669,000
		4,792,940

Amount requested from Icco**Rs 24,153,400**