

0212. 5th Progress Report on the Extensions (Aug 1994)

For the period April 1993 to August 1994; Icco Project No: 923333

Contains a General Overview of the 3 Extension Programmes, information on Membership & Coverage, Meetings & Reviews, Issues & Struggles, CCFs, Coolie Women, and Sangha Funds.

Also contains facts and figures on the Coolies' performance in the Gram Panchayat '93 elections, and the 1st Report on the DLDP in the Extension Taluks/Areas

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

This Progress Report, which has been delayed by almost 5 months in its writing due to various reasons, covers an eventful period of 17 months during which many happenings have contributed to the village CSUs coming to age with a felt presence in the 4 Extension Areas. It was also a time when ADATS/DDS further matured as an organisation.

A probing self examination took place in each and every CSU, wherein our position with regard to the environment was hammered out through an unsparingly critical and constructive dialogue we had with ICCO on sustainable land use and poverty alleviation. Many experts and knowledgeable well wishers got involved in this debate and ADATS/DDS as well as the Coolies immensely profited.

In December 1993 Coolies in the Extensions decided to contest the Gram Panchayat Elections by fielding their own candidates. This struggle, which occupied most of November and December, did a lot to establish the Coolie Sangha as a body with political teeth and presence in the Extension taluks.

In the latter half of 1993 a new partnership relationship was forged between ADATS/DDS and our northern partners – ICCO, NOVIB and EZE. A Consortium was formed to continue Coolie Sangha building work in northern Kolar district for the next 10 years. Each and every CSU was involved in the intense discussions on implications and possibilities which led to this momentous decision.

And most important of all, Coolies in the Extensions were participant observers at developments in Bagepalli where more than 100 CSUs made serious preparations for the withdrawal of the NGO by March 1995. ADATS itself went through some very intense self reflection to discover the post-intervention role that we would have to play. This was a rare opportunity which Coolie Sangha functionaries and ADATS/DDS staff alike grabbed to the fullest to enrich themselves and develop further conceptual clarity on the Coolie Sangha Model of Development and the subtle nuances that guide the 2 Organisations policy.

This report is heavily interspersed with 42 brief examples in order to convey the mood behind the happenings.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND COVERAGE

3,331 families in 132 village CSUs stand as Normal in the rolls of the Coolie Sangha. 60% of these families belong to the lower castes, 16% to middle and 24% to upper castes. 22% of these memberships stand in the names of Coolie women who head their households. 37% of the population of the 4 Extension Areas is presently covered.

Siddalaghatta and Chintamani have seen sharp rises in membership during the past 17 months. 2 Clusters lying in Siddalaghatta taluk but under the administrative jurisdiction of the Chintamani Extension were transferred. This resulted in an increase of 8 villages and almost 200 families for the Siddalaghatta Extension programme. At Chintamani, in spite of the loss

of these 8 and 2 more villages which dropped out, membership figures stayed constant with a whole lot of cancelled families coming back. This trend of more Coolie families joining (back) the properly functioning CSUs has been witnessed in Chickballapur also.

Women membership is highest in Chickballapur and lowest in Julapalya. So too is the number of upper caste Coolies who have been attracted to join the CSUs. We have not been able to determine if there is a correlation in this or whether it is a mere coincidence.

Resume of the 4 ADATS/DDS Extension Programmes as on 16 August 1994
(last report's figures are given in parenthesis)

Total	Chickballapur		Chintamani		S'ghatta		Julapalya	
Area details								
31	(30)	Clusters	11	(11)	6	(8)	7	(5)
132	(139)	Functioning CSUs	45	(50)	33	(43)	28	(20)
37%	(36%)	Population covered	43%	(37%)	36%	(29%)	39%	(42%)
Membership details								
3,331	(3,001)	Normal Members	1,161	(1,007)	814	(837)	742	(553)
206	(313)	Suspended Members	29	(128)	113	(164)	20	(18)
2,113	(1,696)	Cancelled Members	645	(636)	510	(486)	380	(311)
60%	(61%)	Lower castes	56%	(59%)	61%	(61%)	65%	(60%)
16%	(15%)	Middle castes	14%	(11%)	17%	(18%)	15%	(17%)
24%	(22%)	Upper castes	30%	(28%)	22%	(21%)	20%	(23%)
22%	(21%)	Women Membership	26%	(24%)	21%	(21%)	20%	(16%)

3. MEETINGS & REVIEWS

3.1. CSU Meetings & Cluster Meets

Weekly CSU Meetings continue with an unflinching regularity in most of the 132 villages. Only 4 CSUs in Chickballapur and 3 in Chintamani were slightly irregular. A definite maturing was observed during this reporting period with topics not being directly ADATS/DDS related, but more problem oriented. They would, for example, discuss the particular situation being faced by an individual Member *and then* examine how a CCF loan or legal aid or whatever could solve her problem. As a result, they did not consider only services and solutions offered by the NGO in their inventory of resources but took into account all other governmental interventions which could be tapped.

When discussing a malarial epidemic in 2 Clusters, the CSUs planned strategies to represent and pressurise the district health authorities to act. The only material assistance from ADATS/DDS side that they almost took for granted was "*our* vehicles to go to Kolar".

Cluster Meets also continued with terrific punctuality and efficiency throughout this reporting period. These weekly fora of elected CSU Representatives and village workers are conducted in business like fashions with CSU and Mahila Minutes being read out and decisions taken at the village level (regarding CCFs, referral health, legal aid, aid distress, major membership fluctuations, etc.) ratified. Each Cluster Meet takes approximately 3-4 hours to conduct the business of the week. But in spite of the tedious work involved, there never was a Cluster Meet which did not sit for an extra hour or so and demand that the Field Workers explain what had been discussed in the preceding Monday's Monitoring and Situation Meetings. As a result, Cluster Meets have become the most important fora for imparting education/training at all 4 Extensions.

ADATS/DDS Field Staff continue to leave their Extension headquarters at 1 p.m. every afternoon to attend Cluster Meets in the central villages. Their contribution during these working meets is more as resource persons offering information and citing examples of how others

had solved similar problems in different Clusters. After finishing at about 5-6 p.m. they go on to attend a CSU or Mahila Meeting later in the evening and return to the campus well after 11 p.m. The Field Assistant, Executive and Accounts/Admn staff, and other Field Workers who similarly return after a day full of meetings wait with hot cups of coffee. Since they can immediately discuss the day's events with concerned colleagues and reflect on trends and happenings, every single day is filled with rich learning which constantly deepens their understanding of their respective Areas.

What has impressed us the most is that most CSU and Cluster Meets have been held with a stunning regularity even in villages facing severe problems like CCF overdue or cross-voting in GP'93 Elections or whatever. Errant Members who plan to leave the Coolie Sangha attend to explain why. Truant functionaries who are summarily summoned to be blasted by the rest meekly sit in. And when the Field Workers and Mahila Trainers go to impart some information regarding the capitalisation of agriculture or feminisation of poverty, it is most common to find suspended and cancelled Members patiently listening to hours of discourse and discussions. In fact it is only by their verbal non-participation that one can suspect that they are not currently on the rolls of the Coolie Sangha. And a physical review of CSU and Cluster Minutes Books at all 4 Extensions shows that an average of 45 meetings have been conducted every year, taking the regularity rate to 87%.

- Ammagarahalli CSU had dropped out about 2 years back. Quite unexpectedly they began attending Valasalahalli Cluster Meets and said they would simply sit in without expecting any benefits whatsoever. They just wanted their CSU to be declared as Normal.
- At Badaganahalli CSU 2 ex-Members literally begged the Representatives for re-admission...
- Nanjamma of Ankanagondhi CSU got involved in a serious hassle with the village Ryots and landed in the Chickballapur Police Station. There she unexpectedly met the CCS Secretary and requested his support to negotiate with the Inspector. When it was pointed out by her detractors that she was not in the Coolie Sangha she retorted, "Of course I am in the Sangha. My *Suspended* number is 022."
- Koothapanahalli CSU had dropped out quite some time back. But when they successfully contested the GP'93 Election with their own candidate, he was considered a CSU Candidate by all the political parties even though the Coolie Sangha did not recognise him as such.
- At Rasapalli CSU, non-Members requested ADATS/DDS Staff to please solve a complicated husband wife quarrel which did not really involve the Coolie Sangha.

It is almost as if, to varying extent, the Coolie Sangha has become an inescapable part of their lives and the normative definition of every day behaviour is measured in terms of their current position to the CSUs in their villages.

3.2. Area Staff Meetings

All the VLWs and VHWs continue to meet once a month at their Extension Headquarters for a full day of sharing and review. These Area Staff Meetings are conducted by the Projects Assistants at each Extension headquarters.

3.3. Taluk Coolie Sangha Meetings

The Chickballapur Taluk Coolie Sangha (CCS) Meetings have witnessed a steady maturing over the past 17 months. A rather complex and paradoxical characteristic at Chickballapur is that their monthly meetings are strict working meetings with little room for rambling philosophising which, at the same time, take far reaching political and economic decisions. So

much so that their efficiency was quickly recognised by taluk level government officials and politicians alike who realised that decisions taken in the CCS Meeting would be effective ones, quickly implemented. ADATS/DDS Field staff also recognised this growing maturity and are slowly withdrawing from day to day activities, contributing to capacity building. The 1994-95 CCS Secretary election was hotly contested and the new Secretary scraped through by just 3 votes. He is a young graduate who was working as a VLW in his native CSU.

Chintamani witnesses very good CCS Meetings, similar to the BCS Meetings at Bagepalli. From October 1994, another 180 CSU Representatives from the NOVIB supported Area will start attending along with their VLWs and VHWs. This will make the monthly 2 day affairs an important item in the taluk's agenda. Once 100 more CSUs –300 elected Representatives and 200 village workers- from the EZE supported Area join in mid 1996, CCS Meetings at Chintamani will be elevated to perhaps the most important forum in the taluk's polity. The logistics involved in handling such a large meeting for 2 days every month for eternity is going to be an unenviable task!

At Siddalaghatta, monthly Taluk Coolie Sangha (SCS) Meetings started much later, in October 1993, but without an elected SCS Secretary. Coolies soon found their coverage with just 28 CSUs in as many villages to be too inconsequential. They just could not bring themselves to talk about issues effecting the whole of Siddalaghatta taluk. The rather forced and put on enthusiasm which initially prevailed quickly waned when agendas became repetitive. The initiative to fix agendas had to be taken by ADATS/DDS Field Staff who honestly did not know which taluk issues could or should be discussed.

In May 1994 the BCS intervened and decided to pep up the political process at Siddalaghatta. The BCS President announced election to the post of SCS Secretary and 4 candidates contested. Here too a fairly effective Coolie youth who was working in his native CSU as VLW won. From June 1994, SCS Meetings began to turn around with the SCS Secretary taking the initiative to fix agendas. Apart from conducting regular business at the SCS Meetings, he has also initiated a larger discussion concerning wider society – the capitalisation of agriculture in the taluk, feminisation of poverty, and the DLDP as a combating mechanism.

CSU Representatives from Julapalya continue to attend BCS Meetings at Bagepalli. A marked difference between the Extensions and Bagepalli is that VLWs tend to get elected as Taluk Secretaries whereas in Bagepalli the post has almost always been won by a Field Worker with wider experience.

3.4. Executive Committee Meetings

Every fortnight, the elected Cluster Secretaries and Taluk Secretary at each Extension taluk meet to follow up on decisions taken in the Taluk Coolie Sangha Meetings. The BCS President tries to attend as many such meetings as possible to ensure that decisions taken in the larger body are actually implemented.

3.5. Monitoring & Situation Meetings

The ADATS core staff continues to meet with each Extension staff separately every Monday to hear the Field Workers read out their daily diaries and discuss matters of pertinence. Situation Meetings continue to be held every Monday evening from 6 p.m.

3.6. Review Meetings

At Chickballapur, the Taluk CCS Secretary conducted 5 Review Meetings covering 10 Clusters in early 1994. Each Review Meeting was for just 1 day, in a central village, and 5-6 Coolies per CSU participated. ADATS/DDS staff merely sat back to observe without participating. They went through their CSU and Cluster Minutes Books and discussed all that had

happened in the past 1 year. Their main conclusions were with regard to the CCF. They realised that proper utilisation and fiscal management was important to develop entrepreneurship; that Coolies would have to quickly learn to deal with credit in a responsible manner since credit –as opposed to gratis- was going to be an inevitable part of their lives for ever more.

At Siddalaghatta, Review Meetings were held for the very 1st time in 4 years. Each Cluster level Review Meeting was held for 3 days in the central village itself. ADATS/DDS staff were, if at all, only allowed to observe the meetings without participating in discussions. Most of the conclusions they came up with were general in nature – that CSUs built through issues and struggles had enhanced utilisation capacity to absorb projects and services offered by ADATS; that the systems introduced by ADATS/DDS played a vital role in bringing about unity and discipline. Members who had not joined their CSUs right in the beginning found these Review Meetings to be good opportunities to learn about the past in some detail. Now that the DLDP works are over for 1994, the Taluk Coolie Sangha Secretaries plan to hold special Review Meetings to examine experiences and learn lessons for next year.

4. ISSUES & STRUGGLES

There never was a dull moment during this reporting period. Though many issues could be analysed and struggles planned by the CSUs and their elected functionaries themselves, ADATS/DDS Field Staff were kept busy at all times with the handling of major issues and struggles.

Chintamani alone saw 52 issues during the past 17 months. Of them 11 were major ones, including the murder of a Mahila Member, 4 land problems, 2 against the forest department, 1 against a 2nd marriage, 1 regarding corruption in the Milk Collection Society and 2 regarding the release of bonded children. Though the rest of them were minor issues, these too involved giving police complaints and chasing for action, giving physical protection to victims, conducting inter-caste marriages, and finding ways to demonstrate against licensed arrack shops. Chickballapur did not witness any less.

- At Papanayakanahalli CSU, the local Ryot leader, with the MLA's support, encroached upon a graveyard and started cultivating it. There were some harrowing moments during the protracted struggle that followed till the Deputy Commissioner, Kolar, finally ordered the Assistant Commissioner at Chickballapur to settle the matter in his Revenue Court.
- At Chinna Narepalli CSU, a tamarind tree and the land surrounding it, right in the middle of the village, was granted by the Panchayat to the village Reddy. When the coolies fiercely objected, serious clashes followed, resulting in 2 false criminal cases against CSU Members. The surrounding Clusters quickly organised all their Members to *gherao* the police station and a prolonged stand off took place till the cases were withdrawn and the Sub Inspector summarily transferred.
- After a series of other incidents, all the Coolie Sangha functionaries and ADATS/DDS Field Staff complained to the Deputy Superintendent of Police against the general attitude of the Gudibanda Police Station – they were simply refusing to register a single complaint lodged by our Coolies, but actively encouraging the Ryots to file charges!

Siddalaghatta witnessed very many serious land and other struggles which all become *sub judice* in the local Courts of Law. So much so that we had to request our Lawyer to please visit Siddalaghatta on a regular basis every week in order handle all the cases. Julapalya was relatively peaceful with just 3 major issues.

- Hosahudya CSU Members stopped getting kerosene from the ration shop at Gajilakothapalli as a direct result of the GP'93 Elections. They persistently represented to the

officials for the past 7 months till a shop license was finally granted to one of their Members.

- At Sridharavarapalli CSU a widow who was being cheated out of all her lands got justice after a prolonged struggle.
- Vadigiri CSU Members, who had been struggling to get title deeds for government lands for many years, finally succeeded in proving that they and not the Pypalya Ryots were in possession of the lands. They finally got temporary title deeds from the government.

5. GRAM PANCHAYAT (GP'93) ELECTIONS

5.1. Other Documentation

Elsewhere, ADATS has extensively documented the Coolies' experiences with participating in the Gram Panchayat (GP'93) Elections held in December 1993 (please see our *2nd Progress Report on Coolie Sangha Consolidation – February 1994*). An earlier paper, *The Attempt Made by the Coolies of Bagepalli to Enter into the Mandal Panchayats – May 1987*, is also worth reading.

Here in this Progress Report, we will try to briefly highlight points that are particularly pertinent to the 4 Extension Areas.

5.2. Coolie Contest in the Extension Areas

112 CSUs in the 4 Extensions selected a total of 67 candidates from among themselves and 40 of them won. 4 more GP seats were lost by narrow margins of less than 10 votes. But the Coolie Sangha could completely capture only 3 out of the 14 Gram Panchayats where they contested in ICCO supported Areas. In most of the remaining 11 Gram Panchayats, the CSUs have just enough influence and representation to make Coolie opinion heard.

We had never expected that these newer and relatively inexperienced CSUs would be able to make such a serious bid to project a political identity in electoral terms at so early a time. Perhaps this was made possible because of the GP Act itself, where substantial reservations have been made for weaker castes and women. And perhaps also due to the credible wider reputation of the Coolie Sangha, Coolies in these 4 Extension Areas were quickly able to emulate the Bagepalli CSUs' electoral strategies with remarkable success.

GP'93 Results in the 4 lcco supported Areas

	Chickballapur	Chintamani	Siddalaghatta	Julapalya	Total
Number of Gram Panchayats	8	2	3	1	14
Number of CSUs involved	41	15	20	26	112
Seats directly contested by CSU Members	30	12	13	12	67
Seats won*	18	8	9	5	40
Seats contested by others with CSU support	NA	NA	4	9	13+
Seats won*	5	NA	3	5	13+
Rebel CSU Candidates	7	2	0	3	12
Seats won	1	1	0	0	2
Gram Panchayats captured by the Coolie Sangha	1	1	0	1	3

* Including unanimous seats won without contest NA = Information Not Available

Note: These figures pertain only to the so-called lcco Area and not the entire ADATS area of operation in these taluks.

Unlike in earlier years, it was not possible for village leaders to force artificial unanimity or select candidates of their choice. As should be the case in all free and fair elections, an equalisation of the big and powerful with the poor took place when the highest approached the lowest, in a spirit of at least pretended humility, to solicit votes. This resulted in a 3 way split into Coolies, Ryots and the neutral population. Such a clearly recognised and mutually accepted compartmentalisation of village populations contributed to accelerating the cultural intervention which form the mainstay of Coolie Sangha Formalisation efforts¹.

At Chintamani we had taken a conscious decision to lie low till coverage increased. But such a reasoned decision could not be fully implemented during the heat of moments. Along with the support of rebel CSU victors and due to reservations for the posts of *Adhyaksh*² and *Upa Adhyaksh*, 1 Gram Panchayat was captured by the Coolie Sangha.

The Siddalaghatta Coolies used the concept of effective minority to its fullest advantage and in spite of a very low coverage in the taluk, they put up a good showing. The alliance directly got their supporters only 3 of the 4 seats they contested. But this had a tremendous advantage. When their supporters captured 22 of the 26 Gram Panchayats in the taluk, Coolie Sangha influence also spread. And most important, because of seat adjustments with that particular party, communal forces could not get even 1 single seat in any Gram Panchayat! The other side of the coin is the dangerous visibility that the Coolie Sangha Model has obtained. It has made our allies sit up with worry and wonder what is going to happen when CSU coverage increases in the coming years...

5.3. Post Election Euphoria

After the polls there was a wild post-election euphoria that once civic bodies were in the hands of the poor they would automatically be able to deliver goods. This was a blatant exaggeration of facts. Unlike their more experienced counterparts in Bagepalli, Coolies in the Extensions failed to realise that however exhilarating electoral campaigns and post victory feelings may be, history has shown that pro-rich institutions do not change through a single hustle at the polls. Only prolonged struggles, embodied in empowerment processes which certainly also include electoral battles, change established power balances. ADATS/DDS Field Staff had to educate the Coolies on the absorption capacity of the system and how it co-opts just about every phenomenon into its mainstream.

Another post-election problem which has been elaborately detailed in the February 1994 document was Membership fluctuation and everything that followed, including disturbances at Mahila Meetings, temporary CCF overdue, et al. But we were quickly able to bring the situation back under control in most of the CSUs.

- 64 Members in Chickballapur got Suspended due to cross-voting but at the time of writing this Report, 60 of them have once again been re-admitted into the CSUs.
- At Gaggilaralahalli, the entire CSU stood suspended for putting up a rebel candidate against the official one selected by the CCS Meeting. They appealed to the BCS President, promised to never defy central strictures ever again, and returned to the fold.
- Siddalaghatta had a Membership drop of 20. But every single one of them has come back.
- At Julapalya, Polanayakanahalli Cluster with 4 CSUs dropped out. But they have all come back.

¹ Please see our paper on Coolie Sangha Formalisation dated November 1988

² Gram Panchayat Chairperson

5.4. Seat Reservations

Something else which had far reaching implications happened during the GP'93 Elections. Due to seat reservations³, given somewhat artificially⁴ and arbitrarily by the bureaucrats, traditional ethnic and caste groups got vertically split. Earlier, particular groupings were popularly considered to be the domains of particular political parties. This left the ethnic groups homogenous and gave them a semblance of unity and strength. Political parties would normally not try to infiltrate into the "captured vote banks" of each other unless it were to deflect the entire group, as a single block, into their area of influence. This rather well established electoral practice had the result of keeping the seeming, even if false and superficial, cohesion of the ethnic and caste based groupings intact. Whatever may be the deeper divisions within each such grouping, it did not surface during electoral battles, thereby preventing "outsiders" from infiltrating into their problems at a later stage.

This time, however, all the established political parties⁵ were forced to infiltrate into the rank and file of each and every ethnic and caste based group, simply in order to find candidates. No political party could afford to say, for example, that they would not field a tribal candidate just because they did not have a good standing in a tribal *Thanda*. Strange alliances emerged and political parties which were, till yesteryears, openly hostile to particular caste groups, fielded persons from those same castes as their candidates. The BJP fielded Muslim and Harijana candidates, the local JD/CPM combine, which had relentlessly opposed lower caste political aspirations, split the ranks of the local DSS, etc.

All this had serious implications for the poor who survived not only based on their real wherewithal, but also through carefully cultivated perceptions of strength. It was vital for them that the hollowness of such perceptions stayed unexposed. But this was not to be so.

An unnecessary land dispute has cropped up at Marihalli CSU, threatening to split the Harijana Colony into 2 camps. At Dodda Tekuhalli HC CSU, the apparent issue is drinking water.

5.5. GP'93 and Civic Services

Coolies contesting the GP'93 Elections certainly strengthened their bargaining capacity to get more basic needs satisfied through local civic bodies. The exceptionally high rate of success we have had in solving both, major as well as minor issues, was definitely a result of the fairly impressive showing that Coolies put up in the GP'93 Elections. Post election equations of power have persuaded Ryots to come to terms with the new strength of the Coolies and get on with it, rather than prolong litigious matters.

But as just mentioned, this will also open up a Pandora's box of new problems. The "enemy" may no longer be the heartless Ryots. It could very well be Coolie GP Members themselves who will now have to solve a range of insolvable problems with paltry and non-existent resources. This will give a perfect handle for the rich to drive wedges into hard earned Coolie unity.

³ It turned out in actual practice that 70% to 83% of the seats were reserved for various categories of people. A more detailed break-up is as follows:

28% for the Scheduled Castes (17% for Men and 11% for Women)

10% for the Scheduled Tribes (3% for Men and 7% for Women)

32% for Backward Castes & Minorities (17% for Men and 15% Women)

30% for the General category (17% for Men and 13% for Women)

⁴ Here meaning without and outside the basis of popular demand

⁵ Though these GP Elections were contested without party symbols, this was only a technicality. Every candidate had the backing of either the Coolie Sangha or a major political party.

An unexpected development was the sudden postponement of elections to the Taluk and Zilla Panchayats. It may well be a blessing in disguise that funds and other allocations are, for the time being, being made by the bureaucrats. This at least temporarily puts off the day of reckoning when the CSUs will have to confront their own elected GP Members with charges of corruption, nepotism and the rest.

5.6. Effective Coverage

At yet another level, the GP'93 Elections proved that in spite of temporary problems which came up during the actual granting of CSU Memberships, the neutral population and those who respect the Coolies' right to organise themselves separately have not been alienated. They still supported the Coolies' electoral struggles and allowed them their victory.

6. COOLIE CREDIT FUNDS (CCFs)

6.1. Status of the CCFS

All the CSUs continued to operate their village CCFs during these past 17 months. In August 1993, further grants were given out to the CSUs taking the per capita CCF capital to Rs 1,716.

To quote from a Review Meeting at Siddalaghatta, "...we feel that the CCFs have become the central point in our CSUs' affairs... it's role is very well understood by us... in adjusting to the emerging capitalistic political economy of our taluk... in a few more years we can relate to the banks and other market oriented bodies..."

CCF Grants given			Rs 5,523,398	
Interest earned in SB Accounts			Rs 195,417	
Total CCF Capital			Rs 5,718,815	(100%)
Good Loans			Rs 2,036,875	(36%)
Overdue Loans			Rs 367,490	(6%)
1 to 6 Months Late	Rs 118,130	(2%)		
7 to 12 Months Late	Rs 188,915	(3%)		
Over 1 Year Late	Rs 60,445	(1%)		
Balances in Bank			Rs 3,314,450	(58%)
Total Borrowing			Rs 5,026,015	
Number of Loans			4,326	
Average Borrowing			1,162	
Repayment Rate			92.7%	
Capital at Risk			6.4%	
Utilisation Pattern				
Purpose	Loan amount		Number of borrowing	
1. Crop Loans	Rs 2,074,450	41%	2,537	59%
2. Cattle	Rs 1,922,875	39%	880	20%
3. Trade	Rs 496,050	10%	376	9%
4. Agriculture	Rs 375,250	7%	219	5%
5. Consumption	Rs 157,390	3%	314	7%

6.2. CCF Utilisation

Crop loans given out in mid 1993 and mid 1994 became the biggest purpose for which Coolies borrowed, far surpassing cattle rearing. There was a 4 fold increase in borrowing for this purpose and Crop Loans accounted for 41% of the moneys borrowed and 58% of the total loans given out. Except under the Consumption & Other Miscellaneous heads, this period witnessed a doubling in borrowing for Cattle rearing, Trade & Entrepreneurship and for Agriculture.

As a result of the visible burst of CCF activities, the average borrowing rose from Rs 882 to Rs 1,162. Many 1st time borrowers have obtained the confidence to borrow a second time for bigger, more profitable ventures. Women who cautiously went in for buffaloes, for example, have now borrowed to maintain cross bred cows. Families who thought they would try their hand with a couple of sheep have now gone in for a flock of 8-10. Even the average crop loan has gone up from Rs 461 to Rs 818 indicating a current borrowing level of over Rs 1,000 per Member or about Rs 400 per acre.

- Shadadimma of Hale Peresandra CSU had taken Rs 200 as a consumption loan to buy Ragi and feed herself when the CCF first started. A year back she took Rs 550 to buy a second hand tailoring machine. Very recently, she has once again borrowed Rs 3,500 for a cross-bred cow.
- Venkatarayappa of Pallicherla MV CSU had taken Rs 400 to send his son for training in *Khadi* weaving. Now he has taken Rs 5,000 and his son has started their own weaving unit.
- Easwaramma of Lakkepalli CSU had taken Rs 1,200 to start a small sari weaving unit in partnership with an outsider. 2 years later, she has borrowed Rs 6,000 to start her own unit.
- Sreenivas of Kumbarahalli CSU had taken Rs 1,000 to try his hand out with just 4 *Chandrinka*. Now he has borrowed Rs 4,000 to set up a regular shop to rent out the bamboo trays to other silk worm rearers.
- Aswathamma of Gajalavaripalli CSU first borrowed Rs 500 to trade in bangles. After repaying this loan she has once again borrowed Rs 2,500 to expand her business.

These figures are still a far cry from those at Bagepalli where the Coolies have given themselves a slogan to “Become Rich in 3 Years!”. But when compared to just a couple of years back, Coolie families in the Extensions are engaged far more in direct economic activities in their villages.

6.3. CCF Overdue

But all this has not been without problems. The Overdue figure has doubled from 3% to 6% in the past 17 months. Though only two-third of this amount causes concern, being more than 7 months late, such a high risk factor is the price one has to pay when encouraging all the Coolies to enterprise.

Overdue and Repayment Rate in the 4 Extension Areas

	Chickballapur	Chintamani	Siddalaghatta	Julapalya
Total CCF Capital	1,826,851 (100%)	1,121,034 (100%)	1,312,984 (100%)	1,457,946 (100%)
Cumulative Loans	1,709,325	1,318,420	959,795	1,038,475
Overdue loans	47,735 (3%)	65,455 (6%)	63,495 (5%)	190,805 (13%)
1 to 6 Months OD	30,050 (2%)	28,050 (2%)	23,135 (2%)	36,895 (3%)
7 to 12 Months OD	9,550 (1%)	6,775 (1%)	29,680 (2%)	142,910 (9%)
Over 1 Year OD	8,135	30,630 (3%)	10,680 (1%)	11,000 (1%)
Repayment Rate	97.2%	95.0%	93.4%	81.6%

Overdue figures are particularly alarming at Julapalya where it has climbed to 13% with Repayment Rate falling to 81.6%. Poor feasibility planning at the family level combined with a breakdown of check and control systems in 7 CSUs have been the cause of this dismal performance at Julapalya. ADATS/DDS decided to let the Coolies sort out the problems by themselves. Our only reaction was that we would go strictly by the rules and the Executive Assistant refused to release fresh loans to CSUs with overdue. Many Members are now in the

process of settling dues since they realise that they have far too much to loose by defaulting on CCF loans.

At Chickballapur, Overdue is a mere 3% with hardly any wilful default and the Repayment Rate is very high at 97.2%. At Siddalaghatta CCF Overdue is 5% and Repayment Rate 93.4%. The Chintamani Overdue figure has stabilised at 6% with almost no hope for the recovery of half this amount from dropped out CSUs; consequently Chintamani's Repayment Rate is higher at 95%.

6.4. CCF Bank Balances

The combination of opportunities presented by the CCFs coupled with the Overdue problem has temporarily made everyone overtly cautious, lending out less than the available capital. We do realise that too much should not be read in the CCF Bank Balance figures since these are only spot reflections of particular moments. We also realise that ADATS/DDS Executive Staff too play a role in applying a brake on CCF loans till they are thoroughly convinced about utilisation and repayment. Yet these figures on bank balances do throw some light on the lending mood as well as the collective confidence of the Coolies.

CCF Bank Balances in the 4 Extension Areas

	Chickballapur	Chintamani	Siddalaghatta	Julapalya
Total CCF Capital	1,826,851 (100%)	1,121,034 (100%)	1,312,984 (100%)	1,457,946 (100%)
CCF Bank Balances	1,154,116 (63%)	529,379 (47%)	726,939 (55%)	904,015 (62%)

At Julapalya, shaken by their bad performance, the Coolies have kept back 62% of their capital as CCF bank balances till fiscal discipline improves. At Chickballapur also, 63% of the total CCF capital has been retained by the Coolies in their bank accounts (this is not very surprising, considering their behavioural pattern of anticipating problems and avoiding mistakes made at the other Extensions). The Siddalaghatta Coolies have been more brazen and kept back only 55% of the CCF capital in their village bank accounts. But at Chintamani the Coolies seem to feel that they have the situation under control, having declared 3% of the capital as "long overdue" and have retained only 47% of capital.

7. COOLIE WOMEN

7.1. Mahila Meetings

Mahila Meetings have become accepted fora within the Coolie Sangha. They are conducted very regularly and there is a marked change in the self confidence and capacity of Coolie women as we will discuss further on in this Progress Report. They do not just discuss physical problems of women like water and fire wood, but go on to try and understand fairly complicated phenomenon like the feminisation of poverty and how a de-sexing which is detrimental to women takes place in lumpen capitalistic developments.

In 43 of the 45 CSUs at Chickballapur, Mahila Meetings are regularly conducted every week. The veto power these fora of Coolie women exercise over CCF decisions taken in the mixed meetings has gradually grown into a general veto they exercise over each and every CSU decision. As a result, a fierce loyalty, born out of participation and contribution, has developed in Coolie women towards all decisions taken within the Coolie Sangha. This trait was highly visible during the GP'93 Elections. Almost identical developments are witnessed in Chintamani, Siddalaghatta and Julapalya also.

- Motappa of Ankanagondhi CSU got a CCF loan approved in the mixed meeting. But the Mahila Meeting used their veto powers to reject the loan because his daughter was irregular to the women's meetings and held them in disdain.
- The Marihalli CSU had selected Muniyappa as their candidate for the GP'93 Election. But the Mahila Meeting rejected the decision on the ground that he was an unreliable character and proposed Venkatarayappa, who the CSU accepted.
- The Valasalahalli CSU decided that Muni Chowdamma should not be supported when her husband decided to re-marry, on the ground that Muni Chowdamma's "character was not good". The Mahila Meeting mockingly said not a single one of them enjoyed good "character" and went ahead to support her with legal aid.
- The Papathimmanahalli CSU selected a woman candidate to contest the GP'93 Election. But the Mahila Meeting said that this was gross interference into their prerogatives and selected another candidate who was declared as official. Unfortunately she lost.
- Similarly, the Vadigiri CSU had selected Venkatalaxmamma. The Mahila Meeting objected and selected Laxmidevamma. They went on to make sure that she won and became the Adhyaksh of the Gram Panchayat!

7.2. Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu

In June 1994, *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu* grants were increased to Rs 2,000 per Mahila Meeting in villages where the Membership strength was more than 20. Male interference in the usage of these petty credit moneys is almost negligible. In the very few villages where there were such problems, the Mahila Trainers immediately put a stop to rotations and collected all the moneys back. The scheme was re-started only after all the Coolie women reflected on the problem and decided on concrete remedial measures.

Coolie women continue to use these amounts as short term borrowing of 10-20 days for health emergencies, buy rations, etc. and also to immediately help victims of sexual exploitation.

7.3. Women's struggles

Women's struggles, which were initially restricted to getting the village bore well repaired and irresponsible school teacher transferred, have taken a totally different turn since the GP'93 Elections. Now they have begun to protect deserted wives, prevent 2nd marriages, bring rape victims out in the open, protect against forced prostitution, negotiate divorces, etc.

- Janakamma of Sulakunte CSU was constantly getting beaten by her ex-husband who demanded that she part with her daily earnings to support his drinking. The Mahila Meeting dragged him to the police station, lodged a complaint, forced the police to act and built Janakamma a thatched hut to live right in the middle of the village where it was more secure.
- Thimakka of Ankanagondhi CSU was helped to get a proper divorce from her drunkard husband after he unsuccessfully tried – for the 3rd time – to set fire to her by pouring kerosene on her sari.
- The Gorladoddahalli VHW's husband started eyeing her own sister and tried to take her on as a 2nd wife. The Mahila Meeting intervened and put an end to the sordid affair.
- At Handijogihalli CSU, a non CSU Member duped his wife into signing some papers and divorced her. Her father, who is a CSU Member, appealed to the Mahila Meeting who immediately lodged a police complaint, prevented the man from getting re-married by getting him arrested during the so-called "wedding", and forced the matter to Court where it is presently under litigation.

- Gowamma of Nasathimmanahalli CSU was having an extra-marital affair with the village Reddy. The Mahila Meeting deliberated and decided on this issue in camera without recording any minutes.
- Laxamma of Chowdiredihalli CSU was denied a share in her property by her father-in-law when her husband died. But unfortunately she had no legal grounds whatsoever. The Mahila Meeting went and cajoled the old man into giving her something to live on.
- At Dodda Tekuhalli HC CSU, the Mahila Meeting raised a contribution and got Muniyamma, an orphan, married to a boy of her choice in the SCS Meeting.
- 13 year old Susheelamma's parents arranged for her to get married. The Valasalahalli Mahila Meeting threatened the "bridegroom" with dire consequences and prevented the child marriage from taking place.
- Newly married Nagarathamma of Busetihalli CSU explained to her Mahila Meeting that she was continually getting raped by her husband. Now he had threatened to re-marry if she did not consent and enjoy. All the Coolie women went and convinced the couple to enjoy a non congenital relationship for some time.
- Parvathamma's daughter from Kalakasandra CSU was engaged to be married to a boy from a neighbouring village. At the very last minute his parents tried to cancel the wedding, demanding a dowry. The Mahila Meeting intervened and got the couple married at the Registrar's office without any ceremony whatsoever.
- A girl from Dwarapalli CSU started getting harassed by her husband soon after their marriage. No amount of persuasion could solve the problem. The Mahila Meeting helped her to get divorced and is now seeking ways by which she can live her life on her own.

There was a particularly revealing issue which came up in the beginning of this reporting period.

- In the last week of April 1993, at Korlparthi CSU in Chintamani taluk, a middle aged coolie woman used her veto right to block a CCF loan for her own sister's son on the ground that he was a drunken waster. That night, while she was fast asleep, he killed her with a boulder. We were devastated.

The Chintamani Taluk Coolie Sangha Meeting of 15th and 16th May discussed nothing else. Though interspersed with a lot of anger, anguish was the main emotion which prevailed while woman after woman spoke about the dangers of building real and effective Mahila Meetings as different from the perfunctory Mahila Sabhas promoted by the block development office. There was one common and underlying message in each and every speaker's outburst. While advising other women to not join their Mahila Meetings if they were not aware of the real dangers involved, the speaker herself said that she would stay on. While suggesting that the CCS Meeting should pass a resolution that the Mahila Meeting was not a compulsory forum in the Coolie Sangha –that a CSU should not be strictured for not having a separate Mahila Meeting- every single speaker said that her CSU would continue with a Mahila Meeting even if with an attendance of just 1. Not a single man who spoke dismissed the crime as one committed by the individual culprit. They explicitly shouldered the blame on themselves and swore to the women that they would assist the police in the fullest to apprehend the murderer and depose against him when the case comes for trial.

17 months later, at the time of writing this Report, the hunt is still on for the murderer. But the feelings are still fresh, as if it all happened just yesterday.

Women had always felt that the ultimate insult was that any problem – not necessarily WOMEN'S problems – faced by them was simply ignored and not even recognised as such.

Water and fire wood were the most common examples of this kind of chauvinism with male responses always being, “Oh, she will *somehow* manage!”. The Mahila Meetings have become fora where such recognition is obtained and solutions found.

- Mariamma of Dasarapalli CSU had, out of compassion, adopted her late sister’s son when he was orphaned. After his marriage, which Mariamma herself conducted to the best of her means, her nephew and his wife started constant bickering and fights for a share in the property. The Mahila Meeting threw them out of Mariamma’s house and threatened dire consequences if they dared return.
- Bhagyamma of Chowdireddihalli CSU was feeling miserable and depressed. Her in-laws got fed up and sent her to her mother’s house. There too she was accused of simply “creating problems”, scolded and sent back to her husband’s house. This went on for many years till the Mahila Meeting said, “Hey, if she says she is not feeling okay, then let us do something about it!” They arranged to send her to NIMHANS⁶ where she now goes regularly to receive psychiatric help.

7.4. Gender Training – Initiatives: Women in Development

When speaking about topics like the feminisation of poverty and de-sexing processes, our Mahila Trainers felt a dearth of conceptual clarity and often even hard facts. When examining our personal attitudes at the NGO level, most of us felt that we need more gender sensitisation. We felt that the conceptual framework within which we could place the contribution of Coolie women was still very weak.

Through a happy coincidence, Initiatives: Women in Development, a Madras based NGO, approached us with an offer to undertake a participatory research programme from January 1995 in collaboration with the University of Sussex, U.K. We gratefully accepted. The early reading material they have sent us has already been carefully studied by all the staff.

7.5. Children's Programme

From the middle of May 1994 each and every Mahila Meeting began to approach their respective village school to collect marks cards and promotion certificates of supported children. There were very many confrontations with tardy primary school teachers and principals and on more than a dozen occasions all the women from a CSU had to *gherao* the government Assistant Education Officer at the taluk headquarters. But they finally got all the documentation and began to make fresh lists of passed children, temporarily dropping out the failed kids till they cleared the exams on their own. They then went on to scrutinise new applications for support.

Once these lists were ready, each Mahila Meeting had the gruelling task of examining the very many functioning and defunct government schemes. They had to find out, for example, whether a VI Std girl student whose parents had married inter-caste was eligible for concessions in the purchase of text books... They then went about assessing the families’ ability to support their own children’s education. After all that was over, they finally went about deciding how much they would support each child with (full/half/none) and for what purpose (fees/books/clothes/bus fares). This last was no less a task since till then perfectly reasonable and rational thinking mothers had the nasty tendency to suddenly turn sour when it was their own child’s allocation that was being questioned...

ADATS/DDS staff watched the entire process with undisguised awe and amazement. Except for harried Mahila Trainers who tried to settle disputes and invariably got entangled in intri-

⁶ The government’s National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences at Bangalore

cate webs of conspiracy and ire, none of us dared interfere. And we blessed our foresight in having decentralised the children's education budget and handing over total responsibilities to the Mahila Meetings!

In July 1994 we finally gave out the decentralised children's budget to the Mahila Meetings in accordance to current CSU Membership strengths. The year's allotment (Rs 720,001) was divided by the total strength (3,331 families) to arrive at the per capita figure (Rs 216.15) and then multiplied by the strength of each CSU. VHWs and women CSU Representatives actually accompanied their 31 Cluster Secretaries to the respective Extension headquarters to make sure that they received the crossed cheques and immediately credited them into the Coolie Sangha bank accounts!

To our incredible astonishment, except in 2 Clusters, each Mahila Meeting had planned child support expenditures well within their allotments! So much for the often aired fears that illiterate women would not be able to handle large sums of moneys efficiently.

Throughout the month of July, all the mothers and supported children started coming to the Extension headquarters, Cluster wise, to take their individual cheques and encash them. These were days of pure festivity and fun at our campuses with hundreds of well scrubbed children running around with buns and bananas and causing general havoc!

ADATS/DDS Staff then began to follow up to ensure that the scholarships were properly utilised. Once again it is a credit to the Mahila Meetings' maturity that none questioned the need for this kind of external check and control mechanism.

Resume of the Children's Programme

	This Year 1994-95		(Previous Year)	
Supported children:	3,665		2,431	
Dropped children:	1,520		35	
Villages:	152		129	
Primary school:	2,398	65%	1,802	(74%)
Middle school:	831	23%	426	(18%)
High school:	436	12%	203	(8%)
Girls:	1,513	41%	941	(39%)
Boys:	2,152	59%	1,490	(61%)

Academically, however, we cannot claim to have done too well. 2,719 fresh children have newly entered the programme. Of the 2,431 children supported in 1993-94, only 946 remain. Of the 1,485 dropped children, more than half are those who have failed in last year's final exams and therefore become ineligible for support till they clear the examinations. The other dropped children are from CSUs which have become defunct for one reason or the other. The decision to not support a child simply because she had failed was certainly not fair. But we realised that the Mahila Meetings had no choice but to put systemic pressure on parents and children to perform better since they knew of no other way.

But increases in the percentages of children in middle (18% to 23%) and high school (8% to 12%) does suggest that most of our problems are in primary classes where government school coaching alone is not enough for Coolie children to pull through. Based on our earlier 14 years experience in implementing children's programmes, we did not expect the figures to stabilise in just 1 year. Nevertheless, when each supported Coolie child is a person in her own rights with a name and face before us, performance figures are a trifle dispiriting.

We are, however, convinced that any further intensification of the programme with more coaching and support –and consequently a higher budgetary input- should not be at the ex-

pense of the tremendous strengthening process which has been initiated in favour of Coolie women. ADATS/DDS may well be once again confronted with the same old problem of matching enhanced technicity with empowerment and capacity building.

Now, for the rest of the academic year, the Mahila Meetings will monitor the supported children's school attendance, use their balance unspent moneys to buy play material for the children, pay for extra tuition for some, etc.

7.6. Decentralised Health

The Mahila Meetings continued to utilise the health budget as described in the previous Progress Report. There is a marked improvement in the women's ability to handle the decentralised health budgets by themselves. But, for reasons mentioned in the previous Progress Report, they still prefer to retain Cluster control over these moneys rather than handle them at the individual CSU level.

In July 1994 another Rs 702,198 was given out to the CSUs as per the budget and the women immediately made calculations as to how much they would have to put aside to pay VHW stipends and buy essential first aid drugs every month. In this way they knew exactly how much moneys they had in each CSU to use for referral patients throughout the fiscal year 1994-95.

Referral assistance is no easy job and Coolie women know they have to take hard decisions which may not always be compassionate or even fully just.

- In Dodda Kattigenahalli HC CSU the women rejected a request of Rs 500 from a TB patient on the grounds that her husband was a drunkard and would not allow her to use the money for a better diet. But in Dasarapalli CSU, they spent Rs 2,000 on a socially messed up and medically complicated abortion.
- Narasamma's daughter-in-law Bhoolaxamma of Reddigollarahalli CSU developed an ugly breast tumour and spent Rs 2,500 at CSI Hospital, Chickballapur. The Mahila Meeting approved a reimbursement of Rs 1,750. The Cluster Secretary, who is also from the same village, spent a total of Rs 7,500 when his family got jinxed – his wife got typhoid and his son started bleeding from his nose and ears. But the Mahila Meeting refused to reimburse even a single rupee, saying that he owned a house worth about Rs 30,000.
- At Byreganahalli CSU the Mahila Meeting passed Rs 1,000 to their own VHW. Later her husband came and picked up a quarrel saying the amount was not at all enough. The Mahila Meeting not only cancelled the sanctioned amount but also dismissed the VHW for violating the sanctity of the Mahila Meeting (it was clear that men should, under no event, interfere in Mahila Meeting decisions).
- At Chowdireddihalli CSU the Mahila Meeting passed Rs 180 per month to be paid to the father of a child whose mother had died at childbirth.
- The Achaganapalli Cluster Secretary's request for Rs 1,500 to treat a skin rash was rejected by the Mahila Meeting, in spite of the appeal being properly routed through his wife, on the grounds that he had a regular income from the Coolie Sangha.

ADATS/DDS appointed 2 Nurses, 1 at Julapalya and another at Chintamani. Emulating an ADATS/Kidwai Memorial⁷ programme for the early detection and treatment of cervical cancer at Bagepalli taluk, they began to test all the women for early signs of cancer. At Bagepalli, the programme was already showing signs of great success with Kidwai gynaecologists actually catching patients in the very 1st stages when cancer was still curable with

⁷ Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology - the government's premier cancer institute at Bangalore

drugs and minor surgery. The Professor of Gynaecology had actually expressed her gratitude to the VHWs and Mahila Meetings at Bagepalli saying that, for the 1st time in her 24 years of service, she was going to have the satisfaction of treating patients who were actually going to live. Kidwai just did not have the experience of patients coming in for early detection and treatment. During Dr. Vallikad's entire service at Kidwai Memorial, she could not remember a single patient in the Out Patient Department who had lived on for the next 24 months and become her friend!

We had thought that the programme would not catch on in the Extensions since it required the women to be highly organised and willing to share very intimate personal information with each other. We were, quite frankly, not sure as to how developed the Mahila Meetings were and whether Coolie women in the Extensions would be totally forthcoming. To our pleasant surprise all our apprehensions were proved to be unfounded.

"If men can talk about their ailments in public, then what is wrong in our talking about suspicious white discharges?" they asked in the Mahila Meetings. "If such talk is impolite and repulsive, tough luck, because 70% of us have uncomfortable discharges for 70% of our lives, irrespective of caste or class⁸. And now we are going to TALK about it and DO something about it!"

ADATS/DDS is yet to finalise the extension of this programme into the 3 Extension taluks with Kidwai Memorial. This is very important considering the high cost of cancer treatment, but Kidwai is restricted by government and WHO red tape and it may be some time before the hundreds of women already identified in the Extensions will actually be able to walk through the doors of the premier hospital.

In the meantime, the Mahila Meetings are active in addressing other health problems also. At Siddalaghatta, for example, they took the initiative to force the district health authorities to act when malarial fevers ravaged 15 villages and the taluk hospital threw their hands up in helplessness.

8. SANGHA FUNDS

There was a quantum jump in *Hundi* collections during the past 17 months and the total for these 4 Extensions alone has touched Rs 1,650,249. This already represents 31.6% of the total Sangha Funds of the BCS which presently stands at a grand total of Rs 5,207,911 and gives these 132 CSUs a great clout when discussing matters pertaining to the BCS as a whole.

The reason for this upsurge in contributions to their Sangha Funds is because of a concern for the future. Having been participant observers at discussions in Bagepalli on the future after withdrawal of ADATS, Coolies in the 4 Extensions are determined that they should not be dependent on an Endowment Fund for the continuance of their CSUs. The Bagepalli CSUs have a per capita Sangha Fund accumulation of Rs 869 per Member family. This has turned out to be insufficient to face the future on their own. In the Extensions, the Coolies are determined to far surpass this figure.

We do realise that managerial reasons demand the fixing of targets to chase. And that feelings of ownership will be enhanced with Coolies considering the Sangha to be truly theirs. Once such feelings become strong, one will no longer witness the Membership fluctuations of today. These are all good things and we will therefore continue to encourage the CSUs in their endeavour to increase Sangha Funds.

But, at the same time, we also realise that such quantum definitions of monetary reserves alone will not convert the CSUs into lasting entities. Coolies will have to inculcate the *con-*

⁸ Statistics provided to them by Anne Ferrer's health programme at RDT, Anantapur

tinued practice of contributing a share of their income to the CSUs as a means to perpetually generate income and make expenditures in the running of the Coolie Sangha. This must be done then and there, become a vibrant and ongoing affair, and be reflected in annual statements of income and expenditure. Income from an external Endowment Fund, if any, should only *add on* to such a living resource mobilisation process. It is very different from the classical picture one conjures of fossilised Trustees handling moneys entrusted to them ages back by an all but forgotten benefactor for vague and unclear purposes that were then perhaps valid.

Coolies must also develop a SINGLE WINDOW approach to collective spending whereby a horde of ad-hoc collections are not haphazardly made to meet every emergent situation. Apart from preventing corruption and malpractice, such a single window approach for all collections and spending will INSTITUTIONALISE the practice of collecting moneys. Such institutionalising is what will lead to self-financing and self-reliance. These are far more difficult than to somehow build up a once-off reserve.

We will do our best to impart this subtle and nuance filled truism into the minds of the Coolies in the Extensions and are fairly confident of being able to convey the message across. ADATS/DDS will complete its intervention in these 4 Extension Areas by mid 1998 and it is still too early to ascertain that the CSUs will be self financed entities by that time. But if there is a quantitative or qualitative shortfall, it certainly will not be for want of any thinking or trying.

9. SIDDALAGHATTA CAMPUS CONSTRUCTION

In November 1993, ICCO sanctioned a supplementary grant (Project No: 934594) for us to build up our campus at Siddalaghatta town. Construction work on the building of an office block, 6 staff houses, and a training facility under the supervision of a technically competent person is proceeding as per schedule.

10. DRY LAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (DLDP)

10.1. Pre-project Phase

In January 1992 ADATS/DDS began discussing the possibility of implementing a DLDP, on lines similar to the programme already implemented in the NOVIB and EZE Areas of Bagepalli taluk, in all the CSUs of the 4 Extensions. On 26 November 1992 a project proposal was submitted to ICCO. On 10 March 1993 ICCO responded to this application with questions on the objectives of the DLDP. They wondered if there was a possible 'dualism' in the objectives wherein the short term gains may be offset by gradual reduction in soil fertility and make more extensive investments necessary in the future. This discussion on short term land improvement and poverty alleviation vis-à-vis long term economical benefits and environmental soundness went on for 11 months through a total of 5 letters written by ICCO and 6 by ADATS/DDS, a visit by an ICCO staff member and a full blown external evaluation. Finally, on 8 February 1994, ICCO commissioned Mr. Peter Laban of IAC, the Netherlands, to make a technical study of the DLDP and give his recommendations.

These letters have been widely shared with a larger audience and we will not go into the content of the debate in this Progress Report. Instead we will briefly comment on the process and outcome in terms of learning.

Each and every CSU in Bagepalli taluk as well as the Extensions was privy not just to the prolific correspondence between ADATS/DDS and ICCO, but also all the other documents, including the November 1992 application itself, the DLDP Completion Report written in December 1989, the external evaluation made in 1990, etc. In fact, the coolies of Bagepalli had

contributed tremendously to writing the very reflective and critical Report in the last days of 1989.

We also had the valuable input of opinions and suggestions from learned persons like Dr. Nath of FAIR, Mr. Anil Chaudhary of PRIA, Dr. M.K. Bhat of NOVIB/BCO, Dr. Vanaja Ramprasad and Mr. Panduranga Hegde from the Navdanya movement, Dr. Rajasekhar of ISEC, Dr. Dietz and Mr. Put from Amsterdam University, friends from the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, scientists from the Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore, and finally, most importantly, from Mr. Peter Laban of IAC himself.

As a result of this prolonged and in-depth debate, ADATS/DDS' and the Coolies' position with regard to the environment got clarified. At our level, the rather pig headed attitudes we held with the inherent arrogance of activists sobered into a mature appraisal of global realities. At the coolies' level, it resulted in an informed and reasoned determination. They developed a position on the importance of subsistence agriculture and realised how, through sustainable land use practices, they would have to depend upon this hitherto subsistence activity to provide themselves with food and wider security in the emerging market economy. This Coolie participation was not "gender-free". Coolie women made contributions which were substantially different from than made by men. It was they who set themselves the objective of "solving the fuel wood problem within 3 years".

By no means are we trying to give an impression of a uniform learning which took place through the concerned participation of all. There still were the occasional Coolie families who considered the DLDP as yet something else to grab from the NGO. We did have the few odd balls who, for example, gave details of bad lands they wished to develop and deliberately withheld information on small patches of good lands they owned. But we can confidently claim that such persons form only a microscopic minority.

10.2. DLDP Staff

In the last week of January we interviewed young post graduates from the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore, and appointed 4 young Agriculturists who joined us in February 1994. When we decided to undertake 2nd phase (restoration) works and follow up with advice on sustainable land use in Bagepalli taluk, we appointed 1 more Agriculturist in April 1994. 2 of them are Agronomists, 1 a Seed Technician, 1 a Horticulturist and the last a Soil Chemist. Of them, 2 are women and 3 men. In the last week of March, we also appointed 4 DLDP Field Workers to accompany the Agriculturists and make wage payments.

Each Agriculturist and Field Worker was assigned an Extension Area and the 5th pair was given responsibility for the whole of Bagepalli taluk –i.e. NOVIB and EZE supported Areas– since we were going to undertake maintenance and gap filling works only in stages, for 1 year at each village.

10.3. Peter Laban's Visit

As just mentioned, ICCO commissioned Peter Laban of IAC to visit Bagepalli and give a pre-project advice on technical aspects concerning the DLDP. Peter and Melitta were with us for 4 days from 14 to 17 March 1994. He made 4 field visits covering more than 10 villages in Bagepalli, Chickballapur, Siddalaghatta and Chintamani taluks. He also had extensive discussions with all the staff on Monday's Situation Meeting and a technical discussion with the Agriculturists. On the last day we shared his preliminary report with Peter Goedhart at Bangalore.

Peter Laban's main conclusions were that there was not much disparity between ICCO's concerns and the DLDP as earlier implemented by ADATS. At the same time he said that important technical improvements had to be made in the DLDP and expressed confidence that our

Agriculturists would be able to provide this input with support from institutions like the UAS, Bangalore. He then made a very important socio-political observation which the BCS functionaries showed great interest in. He suggested that mechanisms could be developed for the CSUs to negotiate with the richer down-slope Ryots who would be indirectly benefited by soil and water conservation (DLDP) measures undertaken by the Coolies up-slope. He finally suggested that DLDP 1st phase (stabilisation) works be immediately started in the ICCO supported Extension Areas so as to not lose the current season (i.e. summer of 1994) and that DLDP 2nd phase (restoration) works could be taken up in the NOVIB and EZE supported Areas of Bagepalli taluk in order to further gains already obtained through the implementation of 3-4 years of DLDP works in the 80's.

ICCO accepted these recommendation and asked us to go ahead with implementing the DLDP from April 1994. As on 24 August 1994, we have spent a total of Rs 3,468,508 from funds belonging to Project No: 923333 as pre-financing for this yet to be officially sanctioned project.

10.4. Making DLDP Plans

Immediately after our meeting with Peter Goedhart in Bangalore, we began to make 75 days DLDP Plans for April to June 1994 (but in actual implementation, these 75 days of DLDP works dragged on for an extra month, till July 1994, for a number of reasons). These highly complicated work plans, dividing each CSU's membership strength into manageable work gangs, allotting persondays to individual Member Coolies based on their land holding and also based on a point allocation system which would ensure that bigger landholders were not unduly rewarded for being richer, were generated by our computer using the enormous family and village data bank we have with us.

Each village's DLDP Plan was immediately taken back to the CSU to check out for mistakes caused by data error in Member status and land holding. After the CSUs had attested them to be okay, they were returned to the main office for final printing. On 31 March 1994, each and every CSU in the 4 Extension Areas as well as at Bagepalli taluk had officially sanctioned printed out DLDP Plans with them, making the allocations totally transparent. Works would be carried out based on these plans and the DLDP Field Workers would strictly adhere to them when making wage payments.

10.5. Tools & Implements

Simultaneously, we began buying tools and implements for distribution to Member Coolies. 4,000 sets of crowbars and iron pans were bought from Bangalore. Orders for as many spades placed with local blacksmiths. Each work gang was also given some common implements like heavy hammers and pickaxes. On 1 April 1994 all these implements reached the Coolies as per their official plans and the DLDP commenced. A total of Rs 735,794 has been spent under this head of account.

10.6. Agriculturists & Field Workers

The Agriculturists and DLDP Field Workers began to visit Coolie lands every single day, throughout the 4 month period. They carefully examined the topography of each and every single holding and gave individual advice as to how each Coolie should shape her holding, including the height and width of contour bunds. Some of the common problems they encountered were when the lie of the land demanded that a contour bund should cut across the holdings of 2 adjacent land holders. In such cases, it was sensible that they swapped the up-contour and down-contour plots to make contiguous plots for easy cultivation. To our happy

surprise, and perhaps because of the exhaustive pre-project phase, nowhere did the Agriculturists encounter any petty problems of bickering or resistance.

In addition to the above land management practices, strengthening and stabilisation of existing bunds (built under the DLDP in the '80s) was undertaken in 21 villages of Bagepalli taluk. Some gully plugging was also undertaken where necessary. There already was a noticeable improvement in the physical, chemical and biological condition of soil in these villages. Levelling of land had led to a degree of soil stabilisation. As a result, Coolies were often at a loss as to what exactly they should do in this 2nd (restoration) phase and the Agriculturist had to make many extra visits.

10.7. Starting Problems

Quite a few CSUs encountered starting problems of various types.

Many Coolie families had already migrated to distant places in search of labour to tide over the summer months and messengers had to go and bring them back. Sometimes, Member Coolies had already contracted certain works like the digging of wells, etc. with village Ryots and these contracts had to be properly terminated.

In 7 CSUs at Julapalya delays were because there were heavy CCF overdue and the BCS would not permit the starting of works till they showed at least some inclination to repay their debts.

In Chickballapur, there was some confusion on the respective roles of the Agriculturist and DLDP Field Worker. On the one hand, we had told the Field Workers that they must always accompany the Agriculturists and quickly learn para agricultural skills. This was conversely interpreted to mean that the Agriculturist must always accompany the Field Worker and waste time in administrative tasks like checking DLDP Minutes Books and making wage payments!

Sometimes the Agriculturists' giving of a master plan for an entire holding was misunderstood. The Member Coolie would insist on constructing small bunds on the topographical markings shown by the Agriculturist rather than prioritising and deciding to do just one-third or a quarter of the suggested works this year. As a result, one found strange stone markings throughout the holding, but nothing of substance to write home about!

A few CSUs in Siddalaghatta started sending more women than men to carry out DLDP works. One of the reasons for this was that Ryots paid wages of Rs 25 to Rs 40 whereas DLDP wages were only Rs 15. For similar reasons, in a few CSUs, we also observed children under the age of 15 coming for DLDP works. The Clusters quickly intervened to settle these problems by reminding them that the DLDP was not a wage earning proposition.⁹

But all these were quickly sorted out and by the middle of April 1994 DLDP works were in full swing in all the villages.

10.8. Actual Works Carried Out

From April to July 1994, DLDP works were implemented in a total of 143 villages, expending 173,382 persondays of labour. In line with Peter Laban's suggestions, 2 approaches were taken.

1st phase (stabilisation) works were started in 122 CSUs – 39 in Chickballapur, 29 in Chintamani, 26 in Siddalaghatta, 22 in Julapalya and in 6 newer CSUs of Bagepalli taluk where the

⁹ It was this problem which led to a rather intense discussion on de-sexing processes in emerging capitalist societies, mentioned earlier in this Progress Report.

DLDP had never before been conducted. The type of soil and water conservation works started on Coolie fields include contour bunding, boulder clearance and removing pebbles. 2nd phase (restoration) works were carried out only in 21 CSUs of the NOVIB and EZE supported Areas. This is because we decided to undertake maintenance works (of bunds constructed in the '80s) and gap filling (left over works, specially in the EZE supported Gulur Area) in all the 100 odd CSUs in a phased manner over the next 3-4 years.

The actual works undertaken include:

- building of new stone bunds
- building of new mud bunds
- pebble and boulder clearance
- strengthening existing stone bunds
- strengthening existing mud bunds
- building marginal (field) bunds
- gully plugging
- shrub clearance
- land levelling

Resume of the 1994 DLDP

	Chickballapur	Chintamani	Siddalaghatta	Julapalya	Bagepalli	Total
No of villages where DLDP was conducted	39	29	26	22	27	143
Normal members	990	734	688	524	1,085	4,021
Acres owned	2,889	2,229	2,010	1,763	2,685	11,576
DLDP Wages paid (Rs)	653,970	421,305	438,660	299,355	787,440	2,600,730

An actual collation of works done has not yet been done by the Agriculturists since the works have only just got over. The figures we readily have with us have been extracted from the DLDP Minutes Books where the Coolies themselves have recorded the works done. Great caution must be exercised when reading these figures SINCE THEY DO NOT INDICATE COMPLETED WORKS, but works started in 1994. In 1995 they could well be working on the same bunds, raising and strengthening them. Moreover, each CSU would have used different yardsticks to determine which was a "New stone bund" and which a "Marginal bund". We even have to decide, for example, whether bunding should be measured in meters or acres or both. For these reasons, we have desisted from giving any tentative figures, which may be misleading, in this Progress Report.

10.9. DLDP Wage Payments

DLDP Meetings were conducted, at the work sites, after completing the allotted persondays of work on each Member's holding. They quickly discussed the works done, what was pending, verified the attendance registers, decided on attendance for genuine absentees –the sick, injured, aged, etc.- and precisely recorded all these in the DLDP Minutes Books.

Based on these Minutes Books, the DLDP Field Workers went around making wage payments once a week. Though the land holder signed the voucher, she did not get the entire amount in her hands. Instead, wages were directly paid to each and every Coolie as per the attendance register, in her presence.

After about 3 weeks, our moneys ran out. The Coolies then worked for the next 5 weeks without regular payments. ICCO then sent another remittance in July, greatly relieving our cash flow position, and DLDP payments were once more resumed and the backlog cleared. In

spite of a spate of dacoities and highway robberies in these parts, we have had an incident free experience this year. A total of Rs 2,600,730 has been paid out as DLDP wages in 1994.

10.10. Cropping Advice

By the month of June the choice and type of work had almost stabilised with the Coolies having a fair idea as to how they should work in a technically sound manner. The Agriculturists began giving very concrete suggestions on follow up actions like ploughing, cropping patterns, choice of seeds, etc. to individual Coolie landholders. They have also used various Coolie Sangha fora to explain the broader principles behind these recommendations to larger Coolie audiences. They explained that in addition to land and soil management practices, important agronomic inputs like deep ploughing, treating soils with gypsum, proper seed rate, spacing and treatment, and right dose, time and method of fertiliser application were vital to increase production.

They are also arranging formal training sessions for the DLDP Field Workers. The UAS Professor in charge of Extension visited us on 5 and 6 July to make a better appraisal of specific needs. We have also started building up a comprehensive library with books in Kannada.

The Agriculturists are fairly clear on the future line of work which has to be carried out at each Extension Area. Some of these can be done only when DLDP works are being implemented. Others will have to be carried out during the crop season. They include the planting of windbreaks on the bunds, the planting of vegetative barriers on bunds, bee keeping, promoting kitchen gardens, etc.

10.11. Crop Loans

June was also the month when the CSUs processed crop loans under their CCFs. The advice given to them by the Agriculturists were fairly expensive. This resulted in a surge in the amounts they borrowed as crop loans and, as already mentioned in this Progress Report, the average borrowing per acre was in the region of Rs 400. Even so, this is still only about one-third the working capital they need for profitable cultivation.

10.12. Identifying Common Works

The CSUs are, with the help of the Agriculturists, identifying common works like the checking of ravines and gullies, construction of stone walls and digging diversion trenches at the foot of hillocks, etc. These are works which are not on particular coolie holdings, but have to be taken up from next month —September 1994- if funds permit.

10.13. Allied Activities

The Agriculturists decided to introduce dozens of allied activities in the hope that some of them will catch on with some households, contributing to a more holistic and sustainable agriculture. Here are some of the more uncommon examples:

VERMICOMPOST

All the Agriculturists and DLDP Field Workers went for training to the UAS, Bangalore, on preparing manure from earthworms by re-cycling kitchen and farm waste, using a relatively new technology that the UAS is planning to release to the government's department of agriculture only from 1995. After their training they have built a dozen brick lined pits at strategic places, filled them with dead leaves and other decomposable material, and started breeding the special type of earthworms (which apparently do not eat mud!) for distribution to Coolie households. In the villages, many more Coolie families have already constructed their pits and are rotting their leaves to receive the earthworms. The technology is such that even

landless Coolies can prepare this vermicompost which, though still at an experimental stage, already has a ready market with vegetable growers since it's "power" has been proven to be that of half a bag of urea!

MUSHROOM REARING

160 Coolies from Julapalya and Bagepalli were given training, through 10 batches of 16 at a time, at a CSU where a Member Coolie is already rearing Mushrooms in his house. At Chickballapur, we have already demonstrated (not thorough training as yet) how to grow button mushrooms. Simultaneously, a very serious effort is on to identify a relatively safe and stable market for these mushrooms which will be produced mainly by elderly Coolies who find it difficult to work outside their homes.

SEEMA JALI

In July 1993, also as a result of the visit of Dr. Ramprasad and Mr. Hegde, the CSUs became positive in their determination to grow more fuel, fodder and fruit trees. That was about the time that Coolie women decided that they would, even if the DLDP were not to be sanctioned, make efforts to totally eradicate the fuel wood problem within 3 years. They decided to stick to their earlier plan of relying on *Seema jali* (*Prosopis juliflora*) and smokeless *chullas* to reach their objectives.

Our Horticulturist did a lot of searching to find the variety of *Seema jali* best suited for these villages and experimented on seed collection, treatment and germination. He finally perfected a technique which ensured over 70% germination in just 1 week. This was as opposed to the normal germination time of about 6 months!

Hundreds of kilograms of *Seema jali* seed were planted in July and August 1994 on just about every uncultivable patch of Coolie land in all the villages of Bagepalli and the 4 Extension taluks (not just in villages where DLDP works were carried out). Now many Coolies want to plant it on the boundaries of their lands since it would provide an excellent hedge cover and, if cut down to about 1 meter at the start of every cropping season, the shade would not interfere with their cultivation. Our Agriculturists are still not clear as to the toxicity of the leaf dropping and of root interference with cropping and so we are going slow on this front.

Scientists from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, have paid many visits to ADATS' area of operation to advice on the best form of smokeless *chullas*, appropriate to the needs of the Coolies as well as the type of fuel wood they will be using.

10.14. Nurseries

As just mentioned, Coolie concerns to grow more trees were articulated in mid 1993. That was also the time when positive entrepreneurship was being pushed in a big way at Bagepalli taluk. So the natural outcome was that the Extension CSUs decided that some of them would go in for raising nurseries on sound commercial footings, using the captive Coolie Sangha market to supply saplings to themselves. Each CSU immediately went about deciding exactly which types of fuel, fodder and fruit trees they would grow. But the lists came out to be artificial with the then prevalent popular whims about teak, for example, dominating most CSU lists.

They then decided that family wise surveys would be made of each Member household to see exactly what species the family needed and was able to grow. The VLWs and VHVs were entrusted with this gruelling task which took the best of 1½ months since only a very few families could be covered each day. On compilation, a world of difference was found between these realistic lists and the earlier fanciful ones. And these new lists became the market assessment figure for planning the setting up of Nurseries.

All the CSUs in the Extensions decided that these Nurseries should be owned and managed only by genuinely women headed households –i.e. not by a man in his wife's name- and the search started for the Mahila Meetings to identify not just land owning, water source available women headed households, but also women who had some basic business acumen and could develop the ventures into long lasting enterprises.

A total of 19 nurseries have been started thus far – 1 at Julapalya, 2 at Bagepalli, 5 at Chickballapur, 6 at Siddalaghatta and 5 at Chintamani. ADATS/DDS has, under the DLDP, provided these 19 women with small financial assistance to get red earth, sand and farm yard manure, buy plastic bags, procure seeds, etc. and given them a lot of technical assistance. The District Forest officials are also excited by this venture of coolie women and are offering every possible assistance. Now the Agriculturists are planning to take them to Mandya, Tip-tur, Hosur and other coconut growing areas to procure about 500 seed nuts per nursery since coconut is a guaranteed profit earner. After that, they will try their hands at roses, crotons, palms and other ornamental plants for the Bangalore market.

After about a year, some of these plants will be sold to our Member Coolies for planting on the bunds, around their homes, on waste lands, etc. ADATS/DDS may or may not, at that time, offer some subsidies to the purchasers.