

14. 4th Evaluation - Sociological Aspects - Anita Ravishankar (July 1999)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Goal, Objectives and Main Points of Attention

The goal of the economic stock taking exercise of the work of ADATS is to better understand the specific characteristics of the development model, i.e. how the model does work at village level, what the effects of the various activities is, how sustainable it is, etc.

The concrete objectives of the economic stock taking exercise are to assess :

1. the economic impact on individual families and the coolie Sangha at various levels, including the net additional income, cost savings, increase in assets (including land and equipment), access to government facilities and bank loans, etc. in the past 10 years;
2. the actual and/or potential self-reliance and sustainability of the coolie Sangha at the local, cluster and taluk level.

The main points of attention in this stock taking exercise are:

ECONOMIC IMPACT

1. the additional income coolie families have got from economic incentives like CCF, DLDP and vocational/skill training, differentiated according to gender,
2. the absorption capacities of coolie families and how those are increased;
3. the benefits, including costs saved, coolie families have got from social measures like the Adult Literacy Programme, the centralised health budget, children's education, etc.
4. the benefits that CSUs have got from Sangha funds/tax, including income, expenditure, speed of recovery, and management of funds, differentiated according to gender;
5. the local fund mobilisation from the government, banks, corporate sectors and other sources due to the Coolie Sangha, differentiated according to gender;
6. the actual and possible income from Coolie Sangha assets like the BCS farm, godown in Bagepalli campus, and guest house in Bangalore;

SELF-RELIANCE/SUSTAINABILITY OF COOLIE SANGHA

1. organisational capacities of coolie Sangha at various levels, including the actual functioning of the established planning, implementation and monitoring systems, decision making mechanisms and structure, leadership capacities at local, cluster and taluk level, conflict resolution mechanisms, gender equity, dependency of ADATS, etc..
2. financial sustainability of the coolie Sangha including asset building and investments, cost/benefit analysis, control and management of portfolio, results and impact of income generating activities, fund flow management, maintenance of real value, donor dependence and consequences for replicability of model etc.;
3. sustainability of credit fund, including incentives for internal fund generation/savings, strategies for capitalisation of credit fund (i.e., role of donor money vis-à-vis other sources of fund), strategies for creating and enhancing ownership and stake holding of coolie families at various levels, control of funds, portfolio and fund flow management, mechanisms to maintain real value, credit absorption capacities, rotation borrowing versus capital fund, repayment/default, gender effects etc.;

4. institutional self reliance, including formal registration, by laws and rules and regulations, decision making power, full control over resources, linkages and synergy of the different funds at various levels, reality of two organisations policy at village level, recognition by outsiders, role of men and women etc.;
5. dignity / assertiveness, including sense of identity, self confidence, awareness of own potential and resources, defence of claim and right versus others, negotiation skills, concrete demands to authorities and power groups etc. differentiated according to gender;
6. linkage to and participation in apex organisations/networks including identification of external expertise and alliances, initiation of new contacts, etc.

The last issues will only be studied as far as they are related to economic activities.

PART II : SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This part of the Report of the economic stocktaking exercise, commissioned by ICCO and EZE, attempts a sociological critique of the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha Building programme from a number of angles – how the project was organised, who participated, the quality of the participation and the nature of its impact. This part of the report foregrounds the perceptions of the coolies themselves regarding the social processes involved.

The field study was done in the taluks of Bagepalli, Chickballapur, Chintamani, and Sidalaghatta. The methodology consisted of in-depth interviews based on open-ended questionnaire, observation, focus group discussions and case studies.

Organisation of the Report

The Report is organised in two parts. The first section makes an attempt at understanding the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha as a social movement. Although gender concerns are incorporated into this framework, there is a separate second part to analyse the organisation and its activities from a gender perspective.

Part One : The Bagepalli Coolie Sangha as a Social Movement

ADATS could be seen as an initiator of the emerging social movement called the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha (BCS). The Coolie Sangha building is a community – based grassroots movement which has a class base. This is an organisational movement where BCS has got institutionalised through rules and regulations and it operates through the group formed at village, cluster and taluk levels.

The organisation is strategically structured to elicit the participation of the poorest and the marginalized. Men and woman are organised into collectives have provided the much-needed space for the coolies. This space for participation is not only the medium *through* which they can collectively intervene in the development process, but also the space *to* which they can bring their everyday experiences, learn from each other and thus strengthen their capacities as problem solvers. Membership in the CSU has provided the coolies with economic, social and political support. Every CSU has ways through which individual coolie members become uncultured into the Coolie Sangha. When the enculturation process is weak, these CSUs become arenas of conflict. Reasons have ranged from non-repayment of the CCF to having functionaries who lack leadership qualities. ADATS should help the BCS in taking a policy towards the dropped out individuals and CSUs; otherwise this could affect the morale of the organisation itself.

At the village level, women are organised into collectives called the Mahila Meetings. It is commendable that BCS has allowed a distinct voice for woman. The Mahila Meeting could be seen as gender parallel structures as they function autonomously and take decisions with regard to the decentralised Health and Children's Budget. They could also be seen as a gender integrated structures as they are part of a larger group – the BCS – at the taluk level. Through the Mahila Meeting, ordinary women from a background of poverty have learnt to come out of the confines of their homes to discuss common problems, the wretchedness of their lives and, in some areas, even search for solutions. Coolie women seem to possess a

significant degree of awareness of gender oppression. This consciousness has to translate itself into group overt action. This is the only way through which ideological constructions of gender which are obstacles to development can be fought. One of the redeeming features of the ADATS experiment has been an attempt to change gender relations in a meaningful way. Separate spaces for woman is also not a long term strategy. In the evolutionary process of the movement, collaborative spaces have to be created where men and women can come together to look at gender issues.

Most of the interactions that take place in the CSU and the Mahila Meeting revolve around credit. Although the Coolie Credit Fund (CCF) has enhanced their economic status, ADATS and the BCS need to study the extent to which the CCF has benefited intra-household members, particularly the women.

The Dairy Development Programme has led to an increase in the crop output of the coolies, but there is a need to concentrate on horticulture and tie up with professional organisations for gradual upgradation of farming and to blend it with modern techniques.

The *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu* has been to facilitate the empowerment of women as it frees them from the sexual harassment of the landlords and from the dependency of their husbands.

The Adult Education Classes have been used as an entry point by ADATS. These fora have been used to discuss the socio-economic and political problems that confront the coolies. The songs that they used to sing in these classes contribute to the cohesiveness of the group. These classes should be continued with enthusiasm to make the people understand the power of literacy and education in dealing with everyday problems and to renew the feeling of belonging to a cohesive group.

The Women's Fund is a boon to the poor and deserted women of Chickballapur. The economic independence that they have got by having a plot of land registered in their names has increased their bargaining power within their families and has enhanced their status in their village.

The effort of grouping the poor and marginalized into organisations and have activities built around them has definitely made a positive impact on the coolies. By being members of the Coolie Sangha, the coolies have access to resources like credit, subsidised health care, educational facilities, legal advice. They have enhanced their knowledge and awareness of their own situation, of their political rights, reproductive rights, etc. This has increased the ability of women to speak out against and act on oppressive practices and confront the violence against them. Women and men have begun to jointly address various forms of exploitation, by realising their rights to minimum wages, equal wages for men and women, female share in family property and the right to maintenance in the event of divorce, desertion or widowhood. A perceptible change in the coolies' self-image from subordination and subjugation to one of self-esteem, confidence and equality, has been a confidence and equality, has been a commendable achievement of the ADATS experiment.

Part Two: Gender Concerns

Gender concerns have been analysed at three levels – at the organisational level, the activity level and at the level of the household. ADATS has made an attempt to institutionalise and mainstream gender concerns at the **organisational level**. The organisational culture of ADATS is gender responsive. However, technical mainstreaming need to be done in terms of new staffing, budgeting, training programmes and guidelines. BCS has to incorporate both political and technical mainstreaming into its organisation. There is a shared vision in ADATS to make a collective effort at promoting gender equality, but the expertise for operationalising it is lacking in the members who are on the lower rungs of the organisational hier-

archy. At the lower levels of the field workers and the village-level workers, the perceptions on the gender issues itself are inadequate. This has affected the general capacity to plan and implement programmes on gender lines. There is a need to sensitise the functionaries of both ADATS and the BCS to gender concerns. While doing so, the training should concentrate on equipping them to be effective facilitators and impart to them the skills needed for promoting gender concerns at the field level.

At the **activity level**, there is a lack of gender disaggregated data on the actual roles of women and men and their contribution to development. ADATS, together with the BCS, should build up a good information base that would be the corner stone for gender analysis. This should involve the staff of both the organisations along with the coolies, using participatory methodology. Once the gender specific data is compiled, indicators should be developed to enable the measurement of the nature and extent of the benefits which have accrued to women and men under a particular programme. It should be mentioned that ADATS has made conscious and sincere efforts to meet the practical and strategic needs of coolie women.

At the **household level**, perceptible changes have taken place to change gender equations. In the poorer households, it was noticed that men and women shared household work, budgeting and financial decisions. Women have seem to have more freedom to decide the choice of crops and matters relating to cultivation. Amongst the rest of the households, it was seen that there is a significant decrease in the preference for male children over female children, a lessening of domestic violence and a greater awareness regarding rights, both reproductive and legal. Women have acquired a greater access and control to economic property than before.

Some Recommendations

1. The staff capacity has to built up to conduct needs assessment of the villages and to operationalise gender concerns into the various programmes.
2. Monitoring project measures needs to be done and indicators of change have to be developed and differentiated according to gender.
3. A policy on dropped out CSUs and individuals has to be adopted.
4. A Gender Committee should be formulated to discuss policy issues concerning the operationalising of gender concerns which would also be responsible for building a gender information database.
5. BCS has to mainstream, technically and politically, gender policies within its objectives and activities.

Conclusion

The stocktaking exercise has revealed certain fundamental strengths of the ADATS experiment, which must now be placed on a stronger and more sustain footing. The present reviewer whole-heartedly endorses the validity of the development model and recommends its continuity. ADATS should continue and reinforce its strong involvement in enabling BCS to develop vision of an alternative social order into a tangible reality.

PART II : SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS

INTRODUCTION

Prologue

This section of the Report forms part of the stocktaking exercise of the Coolie Sangha Building programme in Bagepalli, Chintamani, Siddalaghatta and Chickballapur taluks conducted during the April-May, 1999.

The exercise was commissioned by ICCO and EZE in order to “better understand the development model ...how the model works at the village level, what the various effects of the activities are and how sustainable it is” (TOR).

The Agricultural Development and Training Society (ADATS) can be described as an action group working at the micro levels in the localised setting of the five taluks of Kolar District, viz., Bagepalli, Chickballapur, Chintamani, Siddalaghatta and Gudibanda, with the poor, marginalized and the oppressed section, viz. the coolies. For the last 22 years, ADATS has been trying to educate conscientise and organise these coolies towards social action, aimed at transforming their lives qualitatively.

The **long-term objective** of the organisation is to build a taluk level organisation – the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha (BCS) – with which the coolies can identify and to enabled the organised labour class to identify with larger national movements.

The **short-term objectives** of the organisation aim, inter alia, to:

1. reinforce positive discrimination for coolie women; and
2. unify the coolies and to develop them into an effective minority.

ADATS can be seen as the initiator of the emerging social movement called the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha (BCS). Since the BCS has been institutionalised through rules and regulations, it operates through the group formed at the village, cluster and taluk levels, viz., the Coolie Sangha UNITS (CSU) and the taluk-level Coolie Sangha Organisations, viz., the Siddalaghatta Coolie Sangha (SCS), Chintamani Coolie Sangha (CCS), Chickballapur Coolie Sangha (CCS), and the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha (BCS). ADATS has acted and initiated the mobilisation of the coolies to build these taluk-level organisations. Conceptually, ADATS and these taluk-level organisations are inseparable, but empirically there exists a strong relationship between the two.

Stocktaking Design and Process

This part of the study has looked at the Coolie Sangha Building exercise from a number of angles: how the Project was organised, who participated in it, the quality of the participation and its impact, keeping in mind the objectives of ADATS. The study also attempts at providing recommendations which could help both ADATS and BCS (the term BCS would be used to refer to all the taluk-level organisations) to grow further. For this purpose, mere cost-benefit analysis and quantitative indicators alone were seen as insufficient. The focus had to be on the coolies, their perceptions, and definition of the situation. No pre-conceived hypotheses were formulated or tested. An attempt was made to unpack the different people who have participated in the Coolie Sangha Building Exercise, viz., ADATS staff, functionaries of the taluk-level organisations and, most importantly the coolies themselves. Importance has been given to get the perceptions of the men and women, and to the processes and benefits as defined by them.

Stocktaking Methodology

The basic principle of the methodology consisted in talking and listening to the concerned people. The exercise was done adopting more than one method. As a first step 53 CSUs were selected keeping in mind the various stages of the Coolie Sangha building. From each CSU, 4 households were selected, giving adequate representation to the caste and the economic criteria. In-depth interviews were conducted on the 212 coolie households with the help of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was deliberately made flexible, which would help garner information beyond that which can be recorded in pre-specified and closed categories. Hence, many questions were open ended, where much information was acquired through dialogue. Besides this, focus group discussions invoking key functionaries of ADATS, BCS and the coolies also were conducted. Observation was another important tool that was used to understand the lives of the coolies, their work and their interpretation of their status. Case studies, though not in depth, were also resorted to, so as to understand the ethos and dynamics at the household level.

The Process of Information Collection

The insights in the following pages are from an intensive field study undertaken for 40-day period in the taluks of Bagepalli, Chintamani, Chickballapur and Siddalaghatta. Besides, discussions were held with senior-level functionaries of ADATS and BCS. The stocktaking team also attended taluk-level and executive meetings and acted as “participant” observers at Mahila and CSU meetings. Discussions were also held with the people associated with ADATS and its mission over a long time, such as Dr. Nath and Mr. Ajit Mani.

PART ONE : THE BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

The Bagepalli Coolie Sangha (BCS) is a community based grassroots movement, which has a class base. The arena of the struggle is community. The Coolie Sangha Building exercise has empowered the poor coolies, who hitherto had been excluded from mainstream development processes, to participate in and effectively shape decisions related to development within their communities.

New Social Movement theorist like Klandermans and Tarrow (1988) have sought to define movements in terms of three characteristics: namely, new social actors; presence of radical forms of action; and terms of decentralisation. Here, the new social actors in Kolar district are ADATS and the BCS, who through the decentralised structures at the village, cluster, and taluk levels, have made perceptible changes in the lives of the coolies over the last twenty years. This is also an organisational movement where emphasis has been laid on uniting the target group into an organisation at the taluk level, at the intermediary (cluster) level and at the village level. The BCS as a social movement organisation fits into this understandings of social movements, where the coolies who have hitherto been left out of mainstream development activities have been engineered and capacitated by ADATS, the NGO, to fight for their rights.

Coolies, because of their culture, could be seen as forming a cultural area: the Coolie Sangha is a classification of a social group according to its cultural traits. The overt cultural traits that are shared by the coolies are subsistence farming, low level in the caste hierarchy, low entrepreneurship, low wages, low purchasing power, minimal access and control over resources, poor decision making powers, etc. As long as the coolies share this common culture, they can be termed as a homogeneous group. ADATS, therefore, has rightly restricted the membership of the Coolie Sangha to those who normally do not employ wage labour on their lands, so as to provide a cutting edge to this movement. Naturally, this social movement organisation has a caste/class base.

The organisation itself could be seen as one of the main dimensions of the social movement, since all social movements have varying degrees of social organisation. In the Coolie Sangha Building exercise, the BCS is the central force. The BCS gives credence to the role played by consciousness-raising in the evolution of the Coolie Sangha Building and to processes of learning as social and political identities get redefined.

Women have been empowered to play an active role in the movement and ADATS has integrated a gender policy that emphasises both organisational structure and learning processes. Gender is seen as a lens through which the approach to development is re-examined: the result has been the formulation of the Gender Policy in 1996. Women, as seen by ADATS, are agents of change and equal contributors to the development process.

The analysis of the Coolie Sangha Building as a social movement proceeds along two main lines: (a) analysing the organisation at its various levels and (b) analysing the different types of activities that go to sustain the movement.

The Organisation at the Village Level

COOLIE SANGHA UNITS

The organisation is structured to elicit the participation of the poorest and the marginalized. Men and women are organised into collectives, called CSU, at the village-level. These informal, loosely structured collectives constitute the primary unit of participation and decision-making at the village level. This decision-making process that goes on is informal and there is an element of flexibility and informality in their working, which is conducive to the coolies.

These collectives have provided the much-needed space for the coolies. This space for participation is not only the medium through which they can collectively intervene in development processes but also at the space to which they can bring their everyday experiences, learn from each other and thus strengthen their capacities as problem-solvers. By belonging to these collectives, the coolies benefit by receiving loans, through the Coolie Credit Fund (CCF), enter into labour-sharing or labour-exchange arrangements for agricultural work through the Dry Land Development Programme (DLDP), and receive help during life-cycle crises. The CSU at the village level can be termed as a community which is defined in terms of a shared identity based on a location, that is, the village.

The Resource Mobilisation School posits that movement-participants only participate in a movement if they have the material incentives to do so. This has been particularly noticed in the extension taluks of Siddalaghatta and Chickballapur, where some coolies have expressed the view that material incentives like the CCF, the decentralised Health and Children's Budget, and the advantages of the DLDP, were their reasons for joining the Sangha. In these Sangha, it was found that the individual coolie member is likely to co-operate with the coolie community in so far as it brings him/her economic, social and political gain. It is seen that membership of the CSU has sustained the coolies with much-needed support at various levels: economic support (CCF, DLDP, Health and Children's Budget), social support (solving domestic conflicts, support during marriages, illness and death) and/or political support (during conflict with other communities, standing for local-level elections, etc.).

The individual coolie members seem to be better able to survive economically and socially as part of the community than outside it. The BCS has laid down rules and regulations relating to membership, method of electing representatives, as well as the cancellation of the memberships. The economic sustenance of the Sangha is through the coolies' contribution to the *hundis* (in the formation stage) and through the 10% contributions of their CCF and DLDP, through which they become stake-holders. The Sangha tax could be seen as the Membership fee of the coolies. On the part of the BCS, the co-operation with an individual means that the BCS wants to retain the loyalty of its members, who constitute the human and the material resources of the community and also its political strength.

At the same time, the CSUs at the village level are also arenas of conflict. The types of inherent conflict between an individual and the coolie community have been identified:

1. conflicts over the sharing of economics resources which are held in common – who should get the CCF, the repayment logistics and frictions that arise regarding the non payment of CCF;
2. conflicts that arise with positions of power and decision-making authority. We did come across instances where CSU members did have friction with the elected functionaries like cluster secretaries and village representatives;
3. conflicts that arise over community norms that dictate social behaviour. For example, there have been case when a member wanted to marry for the second time and the community came down heavily on that person.

When such conflicts came to the fore, implicit or explicit bargaining takes place between the individual and the coolie community. The co-operation of an individual with the community could imply her/his (a) following the rules; (b) "bargaining" to change the rules by discussion and, sometimes, (c) even protest. Non co-operation would mean opting out of the community altogether. This is how individual coolie members ultimately dropout. The reasons have been range from disputes over social behaviour to non-repayment of CCF dues. In some problematic CSUs which have dropped out, particularly in Bagepalli, the issue has often been one of having the wrong functionaries at the village and cluster levels with a lack of leadership qualities, who together have tried to corner the resources.

It may be said here that, while it is understood that the individual Sangha members' feelings and idiosyncrasies can never be sacrificed at the cost of the organisation, care should be taken to soothe hurt feelings and instil a sense of identity among the community members. BCS functionaries should be sensitive to the large number of dropout cases, particularly in Bagepalli, as well as in dealing with the problem of members. Otherwise, this could affect the morale and solidarity of the organisation.

MAHILA MEETINGS

At the village level, women are organised into collectives. It is commendable that the BCS has allowed a distinct voice for women, in the form of separate organisational entities called the Mahila Meetings. Within the BCS, these women's collectives form part of a larger community-based organisation – the CSU – which has both male and female members. By the very location of the movement within the community, women are more easily able to participate in them. Whenever the meetings are conducted, the attendance of the women is regular. In Chinnaganapalli, however, where we attended a Mahila Meeting, it was found that the meetings were irregular, the reasons for which ranged from electrical blackouts to monsoons and the harvest. It is recommended that the concerned field worker should check out on these irregularities so that the cohesion and solidarity of the group is maintained.

Guida West and Rhoda Lois Blumberg (1990:22) distinguish between women's strategies for organising by focussing on two organisational structures. One they call *gender-integrated*, which includes women's group or auxiliaries, which are a part of the larger male-dominated organisations. The other is called *gender-parallel*, which are separate autonomous groups or organisations. At the village level, the Mahila Meeting are gender parallel structures as they function autonomously and take decisions with regard to the decentralised Health and Children's Budget. They could also be seen as gender-integrated structures at the village level, as they are a part of the larger organisation i.e., the BCS.

I see the Mahila Meeting as an intervention in trying to create a separate space for women which has empowered and emancipated them to the extent of giving them an opportunity to be *with* themselves, to build their confidence levels and develop skills, as a result of which they have emerged as a solidarity group. When talking to these women in Mahila Meeting, I found that this forum helped women to come out of their domestic environment and discuss common problems regarding the wretchedness of their lives and, in some cases, even to search for solutions. It is heartening to note that the efforts of these women who have come together have consequences which go well beyond the social and economic benefits visible on the surface. The process of coming together is itself the first step in empowerment.

Through the Mahila Meeting, ordinary women from a background of poverty, have learnt to come out of the confines of their homes. Some of the village health workers (VHW), women's committee members, and the two village level workers I came into contact with, have gone on to become taluk secretaries of the BCS and CCS. They have discovered their own leadership potential and have moved out into a world beyond their own cloistered existence. I did come across bold coolie women who have worked as motivators of the Coolie Sangha or who, with their new-found freedom as the members of the Sangha, had decided to desert their bigamous husbands. These women have faced individual isolation from their kin and village community.

Although it is heartening to note that women members face their isolation with a "don't care" attitude, it is also critical to recognise the limited effectiveness of such individual acts of resistance in changing the macro-context. While it confirms the fact that coolie women do possess a significant degree of awareness of gender oppression, care should be taken to not to romanticise such resistance ("We are now better off without our husbands" or "Virginity is not a premium to get married"). Rather, their present existing level of consciousness should

provide a basis for building a more organised group overt action. A shift to the group overt stage appears crucial to challenge the structures of inequality. This implies that there has to come about a group consciousness amongst women that the inequalities that they face at an individual level are in-fact the manifestation of a wider system of iniquities. This consciousness has to get realised through organised action. This is the only way through which the ideological construction of gender can be fought. Otherwise, Mahila Meeting could be relegated to the position of fora for sorting out the logistics and modalities of various benefits, particularly the CCFs.

At the same time, although the individual acts of resistance are rare, it is the group solidarity which has given the women the strength to challenge patriarchal attitudes. The Mahila Meeting have empowered them in a number of ways in negotiating better treatment within and outside the family, bringing about changes in how they are perceived by others, and how they perceive themselves and their capabilities. As one coolie woman put it, ‘Now nobody talks ill of us as we have formed a group. Today, we got out to town or to the local shandy; our husbands give us money to spend; and we get paid almost on par with men. This has made us feel good. Now others also want to join the group. We are strong as a group, but alone we are nothing.’”

ADATS has rightly recognised that in Indian society, women’s ability to bargain for a better deal within the community would be greater if they operate as a group rather than as individuals. An individual woman can be penalised for breaking cultural norms. This did happen in one coolie village, where an adolescent girl, belonging to a minority group, got herself pregnant before marriage. If the Coolie Sangha was not operative in that village, perhaps, the girl and her family would have been ostracised. But the Mahila Meeting decided to transgress the existing norms and rules when it decided to support the girl and her family to have the baby. In other words, in the context of gender relations, within a more or less homogeneous community, a woman’s bargaining power for getting a better deal from the community is likely to stem only partly from her individual economic and political position, as it happened in this case.

One of the redeeming features of the ADATS experiment has been an attempt to change gender relations in a meaningful way.

But giving *separate spaces* for women is not a long term strategy. In the evolutionary process of the movement there should be opportunities for *collaborative space* as well. To share joint spaces women should have experienced some measures of empowerment. This the Mahila Meeting has been able to do. The Mahila Meeting has made women develop confidence to a certain extent – of negotiating drunken husbands and domestic violence. Moreover, the confidence that coolie women have acquired through the separate spaces of the Mahila Meeting has stood those of them in good stead who have gone on to become members of the decentralised and collaborative political structures like the Panchayat Raj, particularly in the Bagepalli Taluk Panchayat. The stocktaking team noted with some satisfaction that the president here is a coolie woman.

I wish to emphasise that separate spaces are necessary during initial stages of women’s empowerment. But ultimately, preferably during the formalisation stage and onwards, the coolies will have to think of integrating by creating forums where men and women come together to look at gender issues- - like the sexual division of labour, values attached to different types of work, and attitudes towards each other. At least twice a month, there should be common forums of coolie men and women as integration is the only route for dealing with fundamental issues of exploitation and inequality. Gendered roles, values, domestic violence, giving access and control of resources to women are issues that cannot be discussed in sepa-

rate spaces for long. Collaborative spaces have to be created where men and women come together to address these issues.

The Programmes at the Village Level

The main activity at the CSU level is the disbursement of the Coolie Credit Fund (CCF). The CCF has encouraged many coolies to embark into the beginnings of entrepreneurship. The benefits accrued to the households are not elaborated here, as it has been taken up in another part of the Report (see Prof. Giriappa). Its observation of CSU meetings has convinced this stocktaking team that while taking CCF loans, the coolies display a tremendous amount of maturity. They do not take a loan just because money available, but only because they need it.

Non-repayment of loans is a major problem with certain CSUs. I see it as a problem of those CSUs, which are weak in enculturing, their members to the new coolie culture. Though the Coolie Sangha, new forms of behaviour are presented to him, largely involving cultural change – new economic and social behaviour, and new ideas diffused from outside his society. Only a strong Coolie Sangha can mould member response in imbibing the new culture. It will then be imperative that the individual coolie reorient himself to the new culture. A weak Coolie Sangha could cause the onset of complacency. Therefore, instead of allowing individuals/CSUs to drop out of the Coolie Sangha the BCS, helped by ADATS, should go into the non-repayment problem seriously.

It has been noticed that the new members joining the Sangha are doing so mainly for the benefits and incentives got from being a member of the Sangha. But CSUs have been very cautious in not giving any immediate benefits to the new members. This I see as an enculturation process in the infancy of the organisation, which will go a long way in making for organisational and cultural stability. In other words, new members of the CSU should be inducted into the enculturative disciplines essential for effective functioning as a member of the Coolie Sangha. This is what will contribute to the social stability and cultural continuity of the Sangha.

Speaking of finances, there is perhaps a need to study the extent to which the CCF has contributed in increasing the intra-household income of the members. It is possible that the CCF has put more income in households, expecting that women also would benefit from it. It was not possible to further analyse the matter since gender-disaggregated data were not available with regard to the intra-household benefits.

The soil and water conservation as well as the bunding work undertaken under the DLDP has been responsible for an increase in crop output. The bunding work done has been one of the neatest that the team has seen. Keeping in mind the topography and the erratic rainfall of the region, concentration under this programme needs to be along the lines of encouraging the coolies to take up horticulture. However, there is a need for gradual upgradation of traditional economic activities like farming, and to blend it with modern techniques. All this needs the application of science and technology, where professional scientists, technicians, and planners have a vital role to play. Special care has to be taken to ensure that the technology transferred is easily assimilated by the users. There is a need to tie up with organisations like Development Alternatives, Delhi, and ICRISAT, Hyderabad, in the areas of appropriate technology, environment management and institutional design. Besides, the DLDP has been a great caste-leveller, as the DLDP works have led to a lot of social intercourse among different castes.

The *Vokkaku Sanchi Duddu(VSD)* has been an effective instrument for the empowerment of women in the Coolie Sangha households. All the women expressed the view that they had benefited from the VSD by making them free from the dependency of landlords and from

asking their husbands for money they might need for a private purpose. It is not only the amount of Rs 5,000 that is encouraging, but the very process by which the VSD gets operationalised that is empowering. For a woman, the concept of empowerment becomes more meaningful when it is applied to day-to-day affairs. To this extent, the VSD is empowering, as there is money for domestic purposes, whenever women needed it.

CSUs in the formation stages have used Adult Literacy Programme (ALP) as an entry point into the village. These ALP classes have been used as a forum to discuss socio-economic problems that confronted the coolies initially. The songs which the coolies sing in every CSU meeting is a great cohesive tool. But in certain cases, many coolies who were beneficiaries of the ALP classes, have forgotten to sign their names, while for others this has served a functional purpose in enabling them to sign their names. It is recommended that the Adult Education classes should be continued and sustained as part of the CSU and Mahila Meeting.

The Women's Fund is like a boon to the poor and the deserted/widowed women of Chickbalapur. Commendable attempts have been made to register plots of land in the names of these women and also to get houses built in these plots as part of the programme. This is definitely an empowering gesture. These women also seem to have internalised the confidence to deal with the commercial banks. This ability has given the women a lot of security. For these vulnerable women, ownership of land and economic independence which they have got through the Women's Fund have increased their bargaining power within the family and has enhanced their status within their village.

This organisational decentralisation, coupled with the various programmes at the village level, has made a visible change in the lives of the coolies. From the formalisation stage, most of the Coolie Sangha members seem to display a tremendous amount of maturity in solving their problems. Says a female Sangha member from a formalisation village: "As I did not have anyone to plough my one acre of dry land, I had let it out to another man (a non Sangha member) from the same village. The understanding was that I would be given half of the produce from the land. Last year, the man began quarrelling with me, and wanted to usurp my land. I discussed this problem in the CSU. All the members intervened and, through negotiation, prevented the man from taking away my land. The Coolie Sangha members were even prepared to go to court. This gave me a feeling of belonging and security. Now I have my land back and it is being cultivated by a Sangha member."

There are many such individual instances where the Coolie Sangha members have felt empowered to deal with day-to-day activities. In another incident, when the Health Budget was not sanctioned to a woman, the Sangha members pooled in their personal money to take her to Bangalore and Puttaparthi hospitals. These incidents are sufficient indicators of group cohesiveness. Take a case of Narayanamma who has one-and-a-half acres of land. She stays with one daughter and three grandchildren. Four-and-a-half years back, before the Sangha came into the village, she used to work for the landlord for five rupees a day. Now, after she joined the Sangha, she says that her life is looking much better. She has benefited from the decentralised Health and Children's Budgets. Two of her grandchildren are going to school as a result of this facility. She has availed of a CCF loan worth Rs 1,800 and invested in two sheep. Half the money has been repaid, and she is confident of repaying the other half also as the sheep is now pregnant. Meanwhile, she has learnt to break stones, and get around Rupees two hundred a week. Life is beginning to look up for Narayanamma. She wants to go in for another CCF loan to buy a milch cow. She will sell the milk to make enough money to repay the loan. She hopes to have enough money to educate her grandchildren further. This would definitely bring in economic benefits. The dream goes on...

Impact on the Coolies

A process self-empowerment has definitely been set in motion amongst the coolies of the Coolie Sangha. The coolies have begun to act to change existing power relationships with a range of activities from individual self-assertion to collective mobilisation. Listed below are some of the indicators of self empowerment identified by the coolies themselves:

1. Formation of cohesive groups of CSU and Mahila Meeting at the village level, which can unitedly engage in struggles against exploitation and oppression.
2. These groups have enabled individual coolies access resources like health, subsidised health care, educational facilities, skill training, legal advice, and so on.
3. Enhanced knowledge and awareness of their own situation, particularly that of women regarding political forces, reproductive rights, literacy skills, and so on. This has increased the ability of women to speak out and confront oppressive practices such as violence against women, both within and outside the family.
4. There has been a lessening of domestic violence – decrease in wife beating, dowry, child marriage, sexual harassment by the landlords, etc. Besides, there is a growing preference girl children.
5. Women and men have begun to collectively address various forms of exploitation such as rights to minimum wages, equal wages for men and women, women's share in the family property, and right to maintenance in the event of divorce/desertion/widowhood.
6. Change in the coolies' and particularly in that of women's self-image from one of sub-ordination and subjugation to one of self-esteem, confidence and equality, which has resulted in the confrontation of oppressive practices and customs.
7. Access to and control over credit facilities. This has enhanced earning capacities and has improved the health and nutritional status of the coolies. The enhanced earning capacities have made some of the coolies more credit worthy of the other government programmes.
8. Women, particularly from the lower income groups, enjoy greater participation in decision making within and outside home/family, particularly with regard to the cropping pattern.
9. Women have gained confidence and physical mobility, e.g., the right to attend meeting, training programmes, etc., which has come to be accepted in the household and in the community.
10. Literacy levels among the coolies have improved, as also enrolment and retention of girl children in schools due to the increased awareness of the value of education.

The Organisation at the Intermediary Level

Groups of CSUs are again clubbed together to form clusters by BCS Board of Trustees, on the advice of the Executive Committee. Representatives of the CSUs meet once a week. Proceedings of these meetings are recorded in the Minute book. At the apex level, we have the taluk-level Coolie Sangha, which is represented by the CSU representatives of that taluk. The taluk-level body meets every month, where larger issues are discussed. These meetings are also sites of learning, where discussions highlight the everyday problems faced by the community. The organisational structure provides ample opportunities for decentralised decision making. The decentralised organisational structures, with its systems and procedures to take care of issues like division of work, integration and co-ordination, accounting and reporting requirements and decision-making mechanisms, will go a long way in promoting organisa-

tional sustainability. The organisational efficiency of ADATS is enabling the Coolie Sangha to question issues which have so far be seen as “natural” and “traditional”, such as bonded labour, meagre wages, unequal wages for men and women, material instability and infidelity, and to bring such issues seen as “private” into a public debate, has been of a high order.

PART TWO : GENDER CONCERNS

Today, the view that development has to be gender sensitive has gained fairly wide acceptance in development policies and processes. The term ‘gender relations’ refers to the relations of power between men and women as revealed in a range of practices, ideas, division of labour, roles and resources between women and men and ascribing to them different personality traits, behaviour patterns, abilities, attitudes, etc. Gender relations are both constituted by and help constitute these practices and ideologies in interaction with other structures of social hierarchy such as class, caste and race.

Therefore, gender is not an issue that can be dealt with in isolation. An attempt is made here to look at gender concerns on three levels, viz., the organisational level, the activity level and the household level.

Gender Concerns within the Organisation

ADATS has had an evolving policy on gender and rightly so, as it is important to understand the concerns of men and women within the development milieu. At the level of ADATS, the organisation is committed to promoting gender equity. ADATS has tried to institutionalise and mainstream gender concerns within the organisation. Mainstreaming is a very important strategy, for without transforming the organisation so as to reflect and represent women’s interest, the goal of gender equity cannot be achieved. Mainstreaming, as done at ADATS, has been a political process which has required a shift in the existing organisational culture. This is particularly evident in the ways of thinking by the staff, as well as in the setting of goals and formulation of structures.

One notes with a great deal of satisfaction that the organisational culture at ADATS is a gender responsive. However, this process needs to get hoed, particularly in agenda setting, policymaking, planning, implementation and evaluation. Mainstreaming has to become technical also. Instruments for technical mainstreaming should include new staff, budgets for training programmes, policy procedures and guidelines. The BCS as an organisation is committed and believes in gender equity; but mainstreaming, both technical and political, needs to be done.

ADATS’ concern with gender, of course, was always an unwritten agenda. With the shift in development thinking from WID to GAD, coupled with the writings of Kamala Bhasin and Correen Kumar, the Project Director, Mr. Ram Esteves, began to think of the effects of patriarchy. The decision to oppose gender inequality found commensurate response in the organisation, since the people in the organisation themselves opposed patriarchy. Other factors such as the atrocities on the Harijans and minorities, both in Bagepalli and at the state level, have also encouraged ADATS to pursue a policy of positive discrimination and marginalized people, and to weave gender into the wrap and woof of its developmental model.

The organisation has placed gender concerns and inequalities as major issues that must be faced squarely along with developmental issues. This is reflected in the objectives that ADATS’ gender policy has set for itself. Mr. Ram Esteves is convinced that gender policy is about beliefs and values that involve human processes to bring about a humane culture of gender practice in systems, structures, goals, objectives, ideology, activity, etc.

It must be noted that the integration of gender awareness is more likely to be achieved when gender objectives are accepted as a collective staff responsibility. When talking to the ADATS staff, it was found that there is a greater involvement of the programme staff in the various programmes, which has enhanced the sense of ownership in the programme and hence commitment to the policy. An example of this is that all the field staff of Chickballapur has adopted individual cases with the purpose of giving moral and physical support to the

beneficiaries of the Women's Fund. The implementation of the gender policy at the programme level is enhanced by fostering processes of information sharing and exchange every week (the Monday 'situation meeting') and by the close involvement of programme staff in all policy matters. This has created trust in the staff by involving more and more men and women through dialogue, sharing and experimental learning.

Taking the structure of the organisation into consideration, while the Executive Committee at the taluk level has as many women as men, there is a lesser proportion of women in the different hierarchical positions in both ADATS and BCS. This lacuna could be due to the unconventional nature of the job that attracts only a few women to the organisation. It must be noted, though, that the men and the women are given equal play in their respective positions at ADATS and are never discriminated against. In fact, both ADATS and the BCS (CCS, CCS, SCS) have been supportive of women functionaries by being responsive to their needs. There is openness within ADATS, which is very gender responsive.

There seems to be a shared vision within the organisation, which has made possible a collective effort to promote gender equity. This vision should be reinforced by the creation of appropriate expertise among the staff at various levels of the organisation, particularly at the lower levels of field workers and village level workers, whose perception of the gender issues tends to be weak. This tends to affect the gender capacity of the staff to plan and implement activities in the field. While the Project Director, and a couple of ADATS senior staff, are in a position to systematically integrate and operationalise gender into the activities of the organisation, there is a need for gender sensitisation programmes for staff so as to provide a cutting edge to ADATS' gender policies and programmes.

Within the BCS, there is a need to gender sensitise the senior functionaries at the taluk organisation along with the functionaries at the cluster and the village levels. It is necessary that the gender concerns along with the functionaries at the cluster and village levels. It is necessary that the gender concerns be incorporated within the aims and objectives of the Trust Deed of the BCS, which at present makes only a mention of women's development activities. The effort should not stop with incorporating gender concern, or with merely sensitising the functionaries, but should be beyond towards equipping these functionaries with the skills required to operationalise and promote gender concerns, while planning activities and programmes with the coolies. At the village level, the organisational structure that exists to address issues concerning coolie women are the Mahila Meetings. But mere structures alone are not sufficient. Much of gender responsiveness and gender sensitivity will take place only if there are good facilitators who can unleash learning processes by ensuring that participants take ownership of the processes and outcomes.

In trying to incorporate a gender sensitive strategy into the organisation, its policy and programmes, a practical measure that has proven to effectively contribute to the promotion of equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women is the avoidance of linguistic bias and gender stereotyping while referring to occupations, for example, in concepts like entrepreneur, organisation, etc.

Gender Concerns at the Activity Level

There is a lack of gender aggregated data and data concerning women's actual roles, work and contribution to development. As a result, women's work, roles and responsibilities, tend to be invisible. Therefore, a comparative analysis to see the changes effected in the lives of men and women as a result of the Project, as well as due to larger macro-level changes, becomes difficult. All the indicators of change that have been used to analyse here are given by the respondents themselves. Therefore, ADATS should help BCS in collecting gender disaggregated data regarding men and women, their work, their responsibilities, which would pro-

vide a good information base. The cornerstone of a gender analysis framework could be established by compiling an adequate database that should identify the following:

1. the division of labour between men and women, the reasons, the cultural practices, roles and responsibilities;
2. access and control of the various sources, according to sex and tax;
3. needs of men and women, and the reasons thereof; and
4. the constraints and opportunities that men and women face in the development process.

After the collection of such baseline data, ADATS and BCS have to put a great deal of individual and collective effort in setting up objectives identifying areas of intervention, accessing resources, and so on. For this exercise, both the staff and the coolies have to be involved. This activity is of prime importance, as this would also help to get a picture of gender change at the household level.

Once a gender specific baseline databank has been established, it is necessary to develop indicators to enable the measurement of the nature and extent of the benefits accruing to both women and men under the programmes of the CCF and DLDP. It is also necessary to develop indicators to enable the measurement of progress made under a programme like the CCF and the DLDP towards the promotion of equality and opportunity of treatment between coolie men and women.

ADATS has made sincere efforts at trying to meet the practical and strategic gender needs of coolie women. *Practical gender needs* as elaborated by Molyneux (1985) and Moser (1989) are the needs of basic subsistence such as food, healthcare, and water supply; to satisfy them does not challenge women's positions in the society. In contrast, *strategic gender needs* are those needs that would help overcome women's subordination, including the transformation of the gender division of labour, removing institutional forms of discrimination, such as the right to own and control property, and the right to political equality.

Some of the programmes like decentralised health care and children's educational programmes could be seen as couched in welfare terms, where the emphasises has been on the provision of basic goods and services to the economically disadvantaged coolies. While this is an appropriate intervention, these programmes should be decided in the mixed CSU meetings, where both men and women would be involved in the discussion of primary issues concerning health and education. At present, confining the discussion of women's issues and of Health and Children's Budget to Mahila Meetings can only promote gender stereotyping. But it should be maintained that these programmes are being delivered in a participatory manner involving dialogues with the people, especially the women in Mahila Meeting, on the definition of their needs are the best means of meeting those needs.

From the perspective of practice, the way it is seen amongst the coolies of Bagepalli taluk, practical needs and strategic gender interest do not come across as water-tight compartments. For example, in Chickballapur, ADATS' insistence that only deserted/widowed women be given the Women's Fund, and that they should have at least a piece of land from their father's or husband's property registered in their name, could be seen as having a strategic component as well as an efficiency component entitling poor coolie women with land is a necessary component for improving female nutrition and health status. Therefore, the strategy that has been adopted to help poor and marginalised women through the Women's Fund is very sound indeed. In a few cases in Bagepalli and Chintamani, steps to entitle women through title deeds of the extra land conferred by the DLDP programme has been commendable from the point of capacitating the marginalised.

However, a greater effort has to be made by ADATS and the BCS to give land rights to women as this can empower them in various ways. Apart from making a difference to coolie women's relationship with other family members, it ensures for the women a sense of security and better treatment from family members. It could also increase of power and could make them more credit worthy, both of the CCF as well as to the commercial bank. Control over land rights would definitely place coolie women in a bargainable position. In case of the coolie Sangha in all the four taluks, even meeting subsistence needs as meant challenging, existing politico-economic structure. A demand made to the land lords by the coolies to increase wages from Rs 10 to 25-30 is seen as a practical need that has improved their standards of living. It is also strategic in the sense that has challenged existing production relations and has often meant confronting the (violent) resistance of the land lords, particularly in Bagepalli.

Group of organisation is very often necessary, particularly for marginalised people like the coolies, to fulfil both strategic and practical needs. It is through the CSUs and Mahila Meeting at the village level and the BCS (CCS, CCS, SCS) at the taluk level that the poor coolies have been able to effectively fight for their wages increase, equal wages for men and women, and to confront domestic and gender violence.

Talking to the coolie men and women in all the taluks convinced this stocktaking that the collective action as announced their self confidence and ability and willingness to challenge oppression, but this should not stop here. What has been set in motion is a process of challenging gender inequality. This process should be carried forward to its logical conclusion.

Action is pursuit of practical needs as easily turned into action to meet strategic needs. This has happened in the case of all the CSU and Mahila Meeting, where these collectives, formed mainly around the better delivery of credit, have opened the doors, particularly to women, to raise questions about other aspects of their lives, such as gender violence both inside and outside their homes, and the presence of women in local level political institutions.

In order to understand the change, and the extent of change in the gender relations, there is a need to develop indicators, particularly with regard to women's control over economic resources, social and political institutions. But indicators by themselves can be only one aspect of analysing gender equity. The other and equally important aspect is the process by which that increase occurs, which has a critical bearing on gender relations. Getting those rights, whether to be free from bonded labour or to get a raise in wages or to become members of a group, has required struggles against different facets of gender iniquities, embedded in social norms and practices, gendered ideas, etc. Even to organise collectively has often required challenging existing norms, such as breaking the traditional bounds of caste/female seclusion. The process of struggle witnessed in Jelipigaripalli (Bagepalli taluk) by opposing traditional power structures to form CSUs has been an important step towards challenging gender iniquity.

The continued struggles of the coolies, particularly in Bagepalli, refusing to go for work without an increase in wages, starving for days together, standing together as a strong and cohesive group to secure for a widow the land which is rightfully hers, are examples of how every CSU/Mahila Meeting has struggled in the community and with the state machinery – processes and actions which have had a critical bearing on gender relations.

Gender Concerns at the House Level

There have been perceptible changes that can be seen in the roles and responsibilities within households. It was observed that in all the four taluks changes concerning gender roles were explicit among the poorer households, where people were either land less or in possession of under one acre of land. Men from those poorer households have been supportive of the activi-

ties of the BCS in terms of DLDP, attending Mahila Meeting, and so on. In these families, these empowerment processes have enabled women to bring the much-needed resources of credit (for crop and *abhivruddhi*), VSD, Health and Children's Budget, and so on. In such households, it was also seen that:

1. men took responsibility in helping women with household chores, in fetching water and fuel, and in caring for children;
2. women did have the freedom to decide on the choice of crops and the nature of cultivation; and
3. women and men had a shared involvement in household budgeting and financial matters.

These three features were not found among the upper castes respondents and among those respondents who owned more than three acres of land. Among the CSU households, in the formalisation, consolidation and independent stages, it was found that:

1. there was a significant visible decrease in the preference for male children over female children;
2. the coolies as a group believe and are convinced of the importance of education and employment opportunities for girls;
3. the VSD has decreased the dependency of poorer households on their landlords and of the women on men;
4. there has been a definite improvement in the health and nutritional status of women. All the respondents stated that, after the formation of the Sangha, the women members also sat and ate with the family. There also stated that they received health care in time. The decentralised health budget had been beneficial to them and the VHW was accessible to all those who needed medicine for basic health care. Besides, the referral health programme in association with the Kidwai Institute of Oncology, has offered women accessibility to specialised health care;
5. there has definitely been a drastic reduction in the number of bigamy cases due to the regular intervention and coercive nature of the CSUs and Mahila Meeting.
6. There has also been a reduction in the drinking habits of men, which has put more money in the hands of the family for household expenditure. Within the household, there is a great awareness of women's legal rights;
7. There has been a conscious attempt to give women access to and control of land. Five households belonging to the poorer economic group (in Chintamani and Sid-dalaghatta) have registered the excess land acquired through the DLDP in the names of the women of the house. Moreover, all the coolies have been emphatic in stating that they would support a daughter or a sister who could become deserted or widowed, by giving her a share in the family property. This is a very commendable effort, and one which would go a long way in improving gender relations.

The above mentioned indicators are seen as indicators of progress towards equality, in terms of control of decisions affecting one's personal lives, one's family responsibility, awareness of one's situation, access to key economic resources and material welfare at the household level.

The state, to a large extent, has maintained a relatively gender progressive position with regard to policies and legislations, like the legislation for equal division of property, legislation against dowry, rape and so on. This should provide the scope to the Coolie Sangha to build organised resistance against specific gender retrogressive practices prevailing in the community/household, get property for women, promote widow remarriage, discourage dowry and

so on. The Coolie Sangha, as an organisation through advocacy, has placed itself in a unique position to discourage such ideological constructions of gender that are obstacles to gender equity.

LOOKING AHEAD : RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

While recommendations have followed the analysis of the issues discussed above, the most important of those recommendations are listed below so as to provide a key to the sustainability and continuance of the movement towards helping the coolies build for themselves an alternative social order.

1. For the sustainability of the movement, when women and men from the marginalised sections of the society are involved, resources have to be defined more broadly: not as resources that define economic production but as resources that affect reproduction functions of women and the day-to-day lives of the people. Access to resources could be defined as the capacity to have information on their existence, and on ways of acquiring and using them. Therefore, the resources have to get broadened keeping in mind the local environment of the taluks and the state. Resources could be better services in the communities, improved sanitation and transportation facilities, etc. The resources in a broad way should also include water, forests, and a well preserved environment. Attempts to avail the benefits of government programmes with regard to better services in their communities, leading to economic improvement, have been made with the help of the Coolie Sangha members who are also members of the Gram Panchayat and Taluk Panchayat. The relatively gender progressive position adopted by the state should provide the scope to the Coolie Sangha to build organised resistance against specific gender retrogressive practices prevailing in the community/household, and acquire property for women, promote widow remarriage, discourage dowry, and so on. Broadening out of political perspectives through having an effective membership in these decentralised structures is called for. More systematic efforts need to be made towards identifying the resources and the processes of acquiring them: the more the resources that are acquired, the more powerful the movement will be.
2. Attention should be given to the more informal structures of the CSUs and the Mahila Meeting at the grassroots so as to allow the sustained participation of the poorest in the village. It is also suggested that closer ties between members and leaders should be nurtured. This would allow the specific needs of the poorest members to be voiced out. Leadership has to be developed at the grassroots. More supervision by the staff needs to be done to capacitate the coolies. Training programmes have to be given to all the members of the Coolie Sangha and the Mahila Meeting in order to build their capacities so as to move from a position of marginality to one of centrality in decision making processes. Special emphasis has to be given to building their negotiation, communication, training and articulation skills, their capacity to co-operate, gather information and analyse it, develop their planning skills, run vocational/economic activities, undertake the various aspects of sustainable development and develop and exercise their decision-making capacities. ADATS also needs to increase its capacity to facilitate this process and strengthen many of the skills referred to above. Particular efforts should be made in the direction of building staff capacities to conduct needs assessment within the communities they work in, facilitate their expansion and increase their accountability to women's needs. Persons specified in Human Resource Development should be brought in from outside.
3. Detailed monitoring of project measures needs to be done and indicators of change have to be developed which could measure the socio-cultural and political change,

like the benefits accrued from CCF, DLDP, Health and Children's Budgets, according to gender.

4. An appropriate way of monitoring within the Coolie Sangha would be to have exchange visits by group representatives of CSUs, Clusters, and the taluk level organisations, to assess the performance of respective groups and to learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses.
5. Special efforts need to be made to integrate the people joining the Coolie Sangha at later stages with the mission and the ideology of the Coolie Sangha. This would promote cohesiveness of the organisation and lessen the potential and extent of subversive control exercised by the landlords.
6. ADATS should BCS formulate a policy for dropped-out CSUs and members which would decide the future course of action to be taken. Otherwise, an increasing dropout rate could affect the morale of the organisation.
7. There is a need for a gradual upgradation of traditional economic activities. This could be done by having a tie-up with organisations like Development Alternatives and ICRISAT, in the areas of appropriate technology, environment management and institutional design.
8. Adult Literary Classes have to be continued through all the stages and should be used as a tool for conscientisation.
9. BCS should enter into advocacy in a subtle way. This could influence public policy. Advocacy can take place in the villages and with officials in the taluk and district levels. One of the most important tools that could be used for advocacy is mass media, particularly the press, as they have a natural affinity with pressure groups. Tools that could be used are press releases, letters to the editor, press interviews, written articles on problems the coolies are facing or about general problems faced in the village like drinking water, bad roads, unequal wages, and so on.
10. A gender committee comprising of representatives from all the programme components should discuss and jointly formulate gender strategies.
11. The gender training programmes, to be given to all staff members of ADATS and BCS, should not only clarify concepts, but also provide this inexperienced staff with the skill and confidence to apply the tools in their work.
12. A gender information database need to be set up, involving the staff of the ADATS, BCS and the coolies, using participatory techniques.
13. Technical mainstreaming for incorporating gender in the organisation has to be done by ADATS in terms of new staffing, budgeting, training programmes, guidelines, etc. BCS has to do both technical and political mainstreaming of gender policies within its objectives and its organisations.
14. ADATS and BCS, in working for empowerment, must develop ways of enabling women themselves to decide what their gender interests are, and to bring about change.
15. Amongst the coolies, the rights in land could reduce women's own as well as the household's risk of poverty and destitution. The well-being of woman and her children could depend significantly on whether or not she has direct access to income and productive assets such as land, and not just access mediated through her husband and other male family members. Therefore, conscious efforts have to be made to campaign for women's rights in land through family property and through the DLDP and to register the same in their names.

16. Conscious effort should be made to identify and solicit the co-operation of all relevant government agencies and quasi-government agencies so as to ensure the necessary support and inputs for meeting the multi-faceted needs of women. Particular attention should be given to encourage collaboration with government programmes such as Mahila Mandals, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), and the integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
17. It is not enough only to confine to local situations. In the long run, BCS should engage in linking its micro level struggles for identify with broader macro-level (as already stated in the Objectives) and extend that consciousness in order to understand and explain local problems in the wider context of state and national systems of hegemony and exploitation. Therefore, the ultimate solution to problems at the local level should be visualised only in terms of systemic changes.

EPILOGUE

The stocktaking exercise has revealed certain fundamental strengths of the ADATS experiment, which must now be placed on a stronger and more sustained footing. The present reviewer has no hesitation in whole-heartedly endorsing the validity of the development model and in recommending its continuity. ADATS should continue and reinforce its strong involvement in enabling the BCS to develop its vision of an alternative social order into a tangible reality.

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