

## 0109. 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report on the Dairy Development Project (May 1984)

*Reports on the very first economic project undertaken by ADATS. We also speak about the setting up Collectives, at the Cluster level, in order to provide income for the Coolie Sangha.*

A Dairy Development project to be implemented in 10 villages of Bagepalli taluk was sanctioned by NOVIB, the Netherlands, in January 1984.

This DDP was to be implemented through the CSUs, who would select 10 beneficiaries each from among their primary members, based on the individual's seriousness and ability to manage cross-bred cows. Canara Bank agreed to participate in this DDP by advancing Rs 5,000 each to the 100 Loanees selected by the Coolies themselves.

ADATS would give preliminary training, promote the project, set up a veterinary extension service, and generally assist the CSUs to set up and implement the projects.

The need to undertake such a project aimed at increasing the daily income of the Coolies by a few rupees was felt during an in-depth evaluation of ADATS conducted in March 1983, when it was released that the absolute poverty of the Coolies was itself a chief impediment to the building up of the CSUs and the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha. (for more details of the planned DDP, we have circulated copies of the original proposal made to NOVIB in 1983.)

This Progress Report covers the first months of the Dairy Development Projects.

### THE FIRST COWS

All of us, including the VLWs, took one year's salaries and stipends in advance, and borrowed the remaining amount to buy cross-bred cows, as part of our self sufficiency plan. As a result, 27 cross-bred cows were introduced into the taluk in March and April 1984 (not as part of the DDP) our Extension Workers and the Veterinarian went through living hell! They were continually called out for very silly reasons pertaining to management, which could have overcome by applying just sound common sense. The job of the Extension Workers and the Veterinarian turned out to be not the treatment of diseases but the teaching of the very fundamentals of management. None of us had expected the level of technology to be so miserably low in ourselves and in the taluk

As a result, it was only in legality that the cows belonged to their individual owners. In all other aspects of their management, it was the central office at Bagepalli that kept track of, supervised, and very often actually did the job.

Though most of these cows have more or less settled in those past two months, we have a very real fear. We just do not know if the people can manage these high yielding cows properly, in spite of the many support structures and extension services we have created. Capitalisation of agriculture has still not occurred in this taluk, and only a handful of rich peasants have a slightly scientific temper when it comes to agricultural investment and management. As a result, the Coolies lack not only skills, but even a certain self-discipline which labourers in more capitalised agrarian societies possess. Our Coolies are not as hard working and perseverant as agricultural workers just 40 kilometres south of us. To attempt the introduction of modern farming ventures through Coolies is, to say the least, very challenging.

We now realise that it will take one full lactation year for the cows to properly settle to their new environment, and more important, for the owner to settle to their cows. A lot of harmful management practices have to be weeded out, and the people have to be coaxed to reinvest on the animals.

This first lactation year is going to be a very tough now for all of us. A lot will depend on whether we can instil patience in the Loanees, and whether we can keep their morale and aspirations high enough to overcome initial hurdles and setback which can last for over a full year.

## INCENTIVES

With the incentives amount of Rs 500 per Loanee that we received from NOVIB, we have bought 100 feeding buckets, milk cans and cow chains. Each loanee has been given about Rs 200 for building his simple but improved cow shed. Miscellaneous expenses like their taking passport size photographs, initial deposits to open Savings Bank Account, share capitals for membership in the KDDC milk collections societies in their villages, etc, have also been met from out of this incentive grant. The balance of about Rs 150 each will be used to buy them feed-concentrates so that they can manage the animal till they get their first incomes from milk. All the CSU members were adamant that the Loanees should not be given any cash in their hands from out of this grant, and we whole heartedly supported this decision.

## TRAINING

All our Villages Level Workers have been trained at the Government Training Centre at Hassaraghatta. Bangalore, for one month, and 20 of them have had additional training at our Central Dairy at Bagepalli for a fortnight on advanced management techniques. Our Group members will be going in pairs to the National Dairy Research Institute, Bangalore for intensive 4 month training from the end of this year, and arrangements for the same have already been finalized.

70 Loanees have had 3 day orientations on the DDP and functional training at sessions we conducted at Bagepalli they have also gone on excursion to meet with small peasants rearing cross-bred cows in our neighbouring Taluks to the south.

All 100 Loanees will be going to Hassaraghatta for another 10 day training, in the next months, in batches of 50.

Short, functional training have been conducted for CSU Economic Committee members on how to maintain stock registers and ledgers for the clinics, maintain bull accounts and bull Registers for the stations, etc.

Training will be an ongoing component throughout the 3 years life of the DDP.

## MILK COLLECTION SOCIETIES

Most of the infrastructure for the project has been set up in the DDP villages. Except in one centre where the KDDC will delay the setting up of a Milk Society for some more time, societies have been and are being established, and our Loanees are paid-up share holders with voting rights. Serious discussions are afoot so that suitable persons can be instated as Presidents and working Secretaries.

In that one centre where the KDDC will delay till the year end (Somnathpura covering 3 DDP villages) we have set up our own DDP Collection Centre where we will measure, test, and record the milk supplied by the Loanees, and transport the cans by bus to an existing KDDC society 20 kilometres away. This has put an unforeseen burden of over Rs 6,000 on the DDP budget.

The Coolies have themselves selected a person who will be in charge of the DDP Collection Centre, and he has already undergone a week's training on practical milk technology at a KDDC society. The cost of transporting the milk, at approximately 10 paise per litre, will be

worked out every fortnight and shared by all the Loanees in proportion to the milk supplied. This exercise will be carried out along with the members of the CSU Economic Committee. Bagepalli which had only a Chilling Centre capable of receiving 12,000 litres of mild daily on behalf of the Bangalore Dairy, has now been sanctioned a chilling plant with a capacity of 60,000 litres. This has been mainly due to the persistent representations and pressure applied by the Coolies.

### CANARA BANK

We have not made much progress with Canara Bank, and the first 30 loans will be sanctioned only by the end of May. The Bank has unnecessarily delayed the sanctions due to internal problems of their own, and are now starting to give the cows in the hottest months of the year! On the whole, we are beginning to feel that Canara Bank is dragging its feet, and are reluctant to put their money where their mouth is.

In the beginning, however, even with the Coolies, they projected a very progressive and liberal image, coming to the villages, sitting in the Harijanawadas, etc.

Officers from the Divisional Office, Canara Bank, were with us twice. They were very impressed with the CSU participation in the project, and admitted that they had a lot to learn with regard to mobilisation of the people to accept, implement, and continue to control a development project. They suggested that they would be willing to give the same loanee another cow each after about a year, when their first cows dry up in preparation for their next calving. Therefore, all the loan applications, loan documentation, and loan sanctions are for Rs 10,000 per head, though at the moment the loan releases will be for only Rs 5,000 each.

### DDP CLINICS

Clinics have been established in central villages, and we have given the initial medicine stocks to the CSUs as grants. The CSU Economic Committee members have been given short functional training on how to maintain their stock books and ledger, and we have impressed upon them the need to use these stocks in a revolving manner, to be dispersed against prescriptions and re-stocked with the proceeds once a fortnight when the Bank pays the loanee dues from out of their Saving Bank Accounts.

This is the first exercise in financial management and responsibility our project offers the people, and is a very important activity in building the maturity and seriousness of the Sangha. The management of the clinics by the CSUs and Guarantee of continuity even after we withdraw our participation and support is very important because the clinics offer not only drugs readily at cost prices, but also provides a built-in credit system which ensures that cows don't die for want of timely cash to buy medicines.

At first, we had planned that the veterinarian would visit the DDP villages once a week on a fixed time table. But it has now been decided that he visits each village daily. This is partly because of the greater care and attention we will have to centrally provide for the cows, and also for the practical consideration that for most diseases, once treatment is commenced, it has to be continued for 3 to 5 successive days. This will make daily visits necessary during treatment, and weekly visits impracticable.

### VETERINARY SERVICES

We have realised that even good veterinarians, unless they are experienced in cross-bred cow practice, are helpless in the face of some disease. And Veterinarians from this area have hardly ever seen cross-bred cows in their practice. Our DDP vet is no exception to this, and

he was selected mainly because he was the only one who applied, and also because of his adaptability as a person.

We have also learnt that in veterinary practice in these areas (including at the Government Veterinary Hospitals), positive diagnosis of diseases is hardly ever done. Only symptomatic treatment is resorted to. Ailments are, if at all, diagnosed based on reactions to drugs administered, and a process of alienation! This only enhances the importance of experience.

If at all the DDP fails, it is for these very technical reasons like lack of scientific temper in the loanees, faulty diagnosis and treatment, etc. and not just because of any socio-political factors.

Our Group decided, because of these problems, to explore the possibility of inviting volunteers to help us out. If there are any qualified Veterinarians wishing to expose themselves for some time to the Indian situation, they would be welcome to stay with us and work honorary in the DDP. This would help the project very much, specially in the initial stages.

### ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

The A.I. plans are in a bit of quandary. Liquid nitrogen cans are not made in the country, and we have placed orders with a leading dealer in Bangalore to have them imported. Insemination Guns and Catheters are available only in Delhi, and we have placed orders for these instruments also.

We will be making arrangements to buy frozen Semen Straws from the Central Semen Bank at Bangalore, and the Loanees have agreed to pay the cost of the Straws as and when their cows are inseminated. This will mean a small revolving fund to be put aside for this purpose – not budgeted for!

Finally, due to the precarious power situation in the State, with most factories working at less than 50% capacity due to power cuts, the supply position of Liquid Nitrogen has also been affected.

### BULL STATIONS

While A. I. certainly has a very vital place in serious dairy development, and has to be undertaken by us at any cost, we feel that we have been very properly advised on the setting up of the Bull Stations. This is a much simpler operation that the people can understand, appreciate, and handle by themselves (as opposed to A.I. where they will always be externally dependent).

We have made arrangements to buy 3 proven bulls and are also rearing 2 more very promising bull calves which will be ready for service in another year. These 3 mature bulls will be placed in other central villages and rotated every 2 years.

Immediately, the bulls will be maintained by the concerned Community Workers in the 3 central villages. But the CSU Economic Committees will have to take over these Stations and the animals as soon as they get the experience and confidence to manage them properly. Right from the start, they will be involved in the keeping of the Bull Accounts and the Bull Records at each Station.

While the NOVIB grant of Rs100 per bull per month will take care of some of its expenses, we will be charging Rs 25 for each cow covered, in order to meet the balance costs. The Loanees and also other *Ryots* of the area have agreed to pay this fee.

### REPAYMENT PROCEDURE

The mechanism for repayment worked out in the CSUs and accepted by the Bank is as follows:

Tripartite Agreements will be signed between the Loanees, the KDDC Milk Collection Societies, and the Canara Bank, whereby the entire proceeds of the milk supplied by the Loanees will be credited by the Societies into the Saving Bank Accounts of the individual Loanees every fortnight.

The concerned Community Worker and VLWs, along with the CSU Economic Committee members, will prepare and submit a certified statement to the bank giving the Loanees' dues to the Feed Supplier and to the DDP Clinic. They will also recommend to release the balance, in part, to the Loanees for their personal consumption; and the remaining amount will be adjusted to the Loanees' Agricultural loan Accounts as repayment.

Thus, there will be a very strong element of CSU control on individual Loanees who will be forced to follow a strict financial discipline.

This mechanism for repayment was not accepted by some of the Loanees with great joy, specially ones from CSUs where there is domination by a few. These dominating 'leaders' were, naturally, prospective Loanees.

In the preparatory discussions we held when planning the DDP these persons had viewed the preconditions on peoples' participation with secret amusement. They had equated the project with any other mass loan programme of the Government, and had embarked on the strategy of amusing us and playing along. They had treated the many CSU meetings on selection of Loanees as some sort of a joke. In the end, what mattered to them was the actual getting of their hands on the cows or cash, when they could squander, mismanage, and do as they pleased.

But when they saw the structures for participation, like the CSU Economic Committees, the DDP Clinics, the Repayment Procedure, etc. being built up, they balked! And when we insisted that the CSU Economic Committees not be dominated by Loanees alone, but also have a fair number of non-Loanees in them, they knew that their game was over.

In 2 CSUs – Maravapalli Thanda and Aachepalli – they said that they did not want DDP in their villages. We agreed. In Lagumaddepalli, the CSU refused to recommend more than one person for the loan. In Nagarlu, they decided that they did not want ADATS involvement in the village at all. We backed out.

Now, it has been impressed on the Coolies that the DDP is a very serious effort with a cent percent objective of succeeding. And that the participation of the people in it is the greatest insurance for success that it has; and that this principle shall be a cardinal one to be flouted under threat or trick, or for purposes of expediency in implementation.

This opportunism in the Coolies is something recently created by the Government's mass loan programmes. These subsidised loans without security aim at narrow electoral advantages, and so one is expected to either utilise the amounts for the purposes they are sanctioned for, or to repay them.

As a result of this, a new breed of *tarale* agents and go betweens have sprung up in villages, who have to be countered with great intelligence and dexterity. Confronting them rashly can often result in the villages being black listed by the loaning bodies and agencies (whose plants and agents they are), and earning the wrath and ill will of the Coolies themselves, who argue, "with him we got at least a share of our dues, but now because of your scruples, we have got nothing".

These self-styled *tarale* leaders and "social workers" are quite often from small and poor peasant backgrounds themselves, and can easily be confused for more militant and emboldened persons of their class in new villages. Only a very close scrutiny of their history will reveal sudden, almost overnight spurts of compassion for "their" people and also a very well defined working relationship with some petty bureaucrat in the loan sanctioning circle. These

persons, locally known as Pudharis, are an indispensable part of the present corrupt system, and are tolerated by the Coolies as the inevitable grassroots representatives of the officialdom.

In 1981 and 1982, we had to wage a major campaign against *tarale* of a different sort – drunkards, rowdies, etc. now, it is the *tarale Pudharis* who have to be countered, and the CSUs, given the strength and confidence to neutralise them. Poor people from many villages not covered by our organisational work literally flock our Community Workers and VLWs every day in order to get their work done. We have to get loans, Janata houses, old age pensions sanctioned; land records have to be regularised, etc. just filling up their application forms and taking a step-motherly attitude does not help, because then these same people have to surrender their defiance and go back to the *Pudharis* once more.

But even in spite of our best efforts, when the *tarale Pudharis* are from their own Harijanawada or *Sugali Thanda*, it is very difficult for the Coolies to escape them. In the Nakalapalli CSU we reached a stalemate when the entire CSU unanimously voted for the local *Pudhari* to be given a cross-bred cow under the DDP. The people have begged us not to exercise any veto against their decision, claiming that it is wisdom that had guided their strange conclusion!

## DAIRY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

We have registered a new organisation, the Dairy Development Society (DDS) under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act, 1960. The DDS will be the agricultural labourers economic development organisation in Bagepalli taluk. All our Group members are in the Governing Body of the DDS, and each and every primary Member of the CSUs with economic programmes in them will be taken into the General Body of the DDS.<sup>1</sup>

The CSU Economic Committees will select 2 or 3 representatives to form the taluk level Executive Body of The DDS. This executive body will meet every month in order to evaluate and assess progress, take decisions, plan ahead, evolve policies, etc. these decisions will have to be ratified by the Governing Body, which will be a watchdog body to ensure checks and controls, before they get validity.

Quite naturally, the formation of the CSU Economic Committee will depend upon the taking up of the DDP in that village and the success of the DDS will depend on the success of the DDP in pure technical terms.

The DDS Executive Body will be the apex body of the CSU Economic Committees, and will therefore strive for consensus in decision making and attempt at being a representative grassroots body. It will not be a lobby for individual CSUs to outwit each other; but for individual and specific village level problems and opinions to be expressed and understood in a larger overall context. At both, the CSU Economic Committee level as well as the DDS Executive Body level, structures to ensure public accountability to counter corruptive forces will have to be evolved and introduced.

The DDS will be the economic organisation of the CSUs, just as the BCS will be the mass organisation. The DDS will manage their economic projects, while the BCS will give a structure to their class struggle and organisation.

While we are very clear that the DDS must work under the leadership of, and serve the BCS, the danger of this getting reversed is very great. Our Group has an added theoretical role now,

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<sup>1</sup> In actual effect, in 1985, the DDS was finally used to overcome a technical requirement of Icco and Novib – that they could not both fund the same NGO. So Novib ended up with supporting ADATS, while Icco supported DDS, our sister organisation.

to be constantly vigilant and prevent the DDS from becoming a self-seeking and self-serving institution.

### THEORETICAL CONTRADICTIONS ARISING FROM THE DDP

We are certain that most of the Coolies understand what is at stake. They know that it is not only 100 cows that have to stay healthy and yield high; or 100 persons who have to manage efficiently and repay promptly. Most of them realise that this is a unique opportunity for them to try and control their own lives, independently.

At the same time, we are very careful in continually pointing out that this “liberation” cannot come about in isolation that the DDP, however much it succeeds will only result in an increase in their daily earnings; that societal relations, though dependant on economic realities, can only be altered through political actions; that this marginal increase in earning that the DDP promises should be used to increase their political strength.

But the Coolies are peasants –in their value system and also in their class character. Our Group has always maintained that a “rural proletariat” has not emerged in these regions, and that the Coolies are, in reality, small and poor peasants. Their peasant faith in “independent liberation” through an accumulation and growth of their own holding and possessions is very strong. The Coolies are severely alienated and look at the apparent “peasant independence” of the Middle Peasantry as the ideal they must aspire for. They fail to see that the Middle Peasantry opts for a lower standard of income in relation to their urban contemporaries, the factory workers, for the sake of this “independence” and also for want of choice.

This very same misguided political consciousness of the Coolies, which will make their struggle for true liberation meaningless unless corrected through political education will, ironically, contribute to making the DDP a success. Because the DDP offers, for the first time in their lives, a serious plan and effort to build up the private property they have always craved for.

Viewed in this light, the DDP can play a very destructive role in the building up of the Bagepalli Coolie Sangha.

In a way, our 6 years of political education in this taluk has had no proletarian impact. We have only made the Coolies feel that they have an identity, are not marginalized, and are a viable part of the peasant mass. This is apparent and obvious in each and every Coolies posture and general attitude.

Even the traditional Left (the CPs, the *Ryot* Sangha, their leaders and functionaries) realise this now, and treat the Coolies and CSUs as a reality; as a force to be reckoned with and understood when analysing peasant situation and reacting to them in this taluk, while we can be certain that Coolies have entered the mainstream of peasant politics and peasant struggle, we still cannot boast of having instilled a truly revolutionary aspiration.

Peasants are basically reformists, and their uprisings sporadic. While the Coolies in their CSUs are also reformist in nature, their vigilance seems to be more constant. In this second character, the Coolies seem to differ very much from their Middle Peasant adversary – contemporaries. Their new consciousness and recognition of strength is something that they want to celebrate at all times at each and every opportunity. This makes them much more active and vociferous in day to day politics of the villages, in many villages, we find them taking an upper hand, overshadowing the idle peasantry and it is this consistency of the Coolies that we must capitalize on building up the mass organisation.

## THE DDP AND OTHER WORK

The sheer efforts involved in establishing and making an economic project succeed exhaust us, leaving little time for anything else.

And the venture we have undertaken is not one that can be entrusted to experts and specialists because it is an economic programme with a difference. We want to establish it as one of the people, with a very high level of participation, and evolve structures, systems, and convictions that are efficient and at the same time simple enough for the people to understand, learn, and as soon as possible, take over. Our veterinarian for instance, takes time off when treating animals in the village, in order to explain the disease, drugs administered, possible side effects, etc. not because he wants to, or appreciates the need to; but because the Group insists that he does so.

Issues still come up, are discussed, the CSUs helped to analyse and deal with them, but not with the attention and interest they deserve. The weekly CSU meetings are being conducted regularly and minutes recorded – but discussions tend to gravitate sooner to cows than to political debates.

We know that things will improve once the cows settle and the DDP systems we have evolved start functioning smoothly and independent of us. But in the meantime we do get these bouts of depression...

## THE CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME

For the past few months, we have been feeling that we are not doing justice to the 450 children in the programme. This is an activity that deserves a lot of personal attention and care, and our Group members are neither equipped, nor have the time to actually teach in the Balakendras.

When we started the children's programme about 5 years back, the children were all in their first classes at school. Bundling them off to the Government School in the morning and conducting some games and extra-curricular activities in the evening was more than enough to keep them happy and the programme going.

But now, the children are growing older, and most of them are in Middle School and some are even in High School. They deserve a lot more creative attention and coaching. The age for having just pure fun alone in the evening Balakendras is over, and now even recreational activities must aim at having some solid educational value in them.

Finally, we decided to invite 2 qualified persons to join the Group as General Science Teachers (GSTs) in order to completely take over the Balakendra activities of the Children's programme. They are now independent to re-arrange and to re-organise the Balakendras and their aim will be to allocate all educational value from each and every activity of the Balakendras.

The scholarship part of the programme which includes the giving of text books, uniforms, school fees, etc. will continue to be handled centrally from Bagepalli. Also, since the GSTs have been invited into the group, compartmentalisation and departmentalisation of the Children's Programme from our total work has been avoided. The GSTs will, through our Saturday meeting, make their work a component of the total efforts.

## FUND RAISING AND COLLECTIVES

We have had a lot of discussions among ourselves and in the CSUs about fund raising in order to finance the Sangha.



There is now an agreement about setting up collectives where the profits will not be shared by the primary members of the CSUs, but used collectively. The CSU Economic Committees would meet every fortnight or month in order to decide on how the profits must be spent.

Tentatively, the discussion is on spending the profits on items like Medical Aid for a referral health programme, Aid Distress for fire victims, widows, orphans, destitute, etc. Legal Aid to support land, wage, discrimination and harassment cases, Cultural Activities like dramas, sports, competitions, training, study tours, meetings, etc. but it is decided that on no account will there be a straight sharing of profits among the members of the Economic Committees or the CSUs.

A lot of debate is going on whether consumption loans without interest should be given to Member Coolies who are not able to find work or who are ill and cannot go for Coolie, etc. but not for social and religious festivals. If this is financially and practically possible, then there would be no need to go to the Middle Peasants for their handouts...

In the past, in about half the villages where we were working, most of these above listed expenses were being met from out of the ADATS/AID Children's Programme funds. In these villages, the CSUs developed much faster and stronger since the Coolies did not have to prostrate themselves before the *Ryots* for each and every sickness and need. Now, with the AID funds considerably reduced, it is becoming increasingly difficult to diversify expenditures. Already we have had to restrict Medical Aid strictly for programme children, and not even for their parents or siblings.

After making a lot of enquiries and studies, we find that poultries would be the most suitable venture to undertake as Collectives. If built and maintained on scientific lines. They would give good returns. Also, the poultry technology in the country is fairly widespread in understanding and application.

We are planning to establish 6 poultries capable of making about Rs 1,500-2,000 each month as profits, and have a central system for managing and marketing.

These Collective Poultry's will be owned in title by the Dairy Development Society, managed by the concerned CSU Economic Committees, and controlled by the individual CSUs.

We will initially centralise the implementation till the constructions are finished, equipment installed, and birds brought. Then, the Coolies will be taught day to day management, marketing, etc. in the meantime, one person selected by the concerned CSU will be sent for extensive training in the field by actually working in a commercial poultry farm for half a year as soon as possible, the CSU Economic Committee will take over management, and the DDS Executive Body marketing, freeing us from the mundane, day to day responsibilities of feeding chicken!

The DDP Veterinarian will advise on management and treat the birds in addition to his other duties, and we will only have to appoint one full time Extension Worker for the venture, the Extension Workers role will be as political as technical, and he/she should have a very clear understanding in the concept behind the Collectives and be able to guide the Coolies on management and other decision making, planning, profit spending and re-investment, etc. besides being technically competent.

Just as The DDP aims at increasing the daily earnings of individual Coolies by a few rupees, so too the poultries will aim at giving the Sangha a small but assured monthly income. Neither the DDP nor the Poultries can solve the problems of the Coolies, which can be done only as a result of long, sustained class struggle. But both, the DDP and the poultries can play very vital and effective roles in supporting this struggle...