

0417. 15th Progress Report on the SCNZ Programme (Sep 2004)

1. MEMBERSHIP & COVERAGE

1.1. Coolie Sangha Consolidation

1.1.1. THE THIRD 3 YEAR PHASE OF COOLIE SANGHA BUILDING

9 years back, in a paper titled “Coolie Sangha Consolidation & Withdrawal” we mused on an emerging policy and articulated the concept of *NGO role transformation*. We clarified that ADATS *withdrawal* was not a mere washing of hands of all responsibility and commitment. We were not *going away* anywhere. Ours was not a time bound project intervention. We had a continuing role to play. We viewed withdrawal as the necessary “next phase” of ADATS involvement where we continued to relate to independent CSUs.

The Coolie Sangha went further to state that authentic development takes place only *after* the withdrawal of ADATS, when programmes and activities are carried out by Member Coolie families themselves, on their own and based on a free choice, with neither the compulsions of debilitating poverty, nor the constant persuasion of the NGO.

Please download the paper at <http://www.adats.com/documents/book5/books/0511>.

After 7½ years of involvement in Gudibanda Taluk (and considerably longer in Mittermari *Hobli*, even if punctuated with intermittent gaps) the ADATS/SCNZ region as a whole¹ has finally entered the third and final 3 year Consolidation phase of Coolie Sangha building. This is the time when Member Coolie families need to seriously consider their independent continuity, continued relevance, sustainable permanence, *et al* far and beyond ADATS’ direct intervention.

Sentiments expressed in that paper, written in August 1994, pretty accurately reflect the thought/ questioning process we underwent just before and during this 6 month reporting period. The actual events that triggered this shift are certainly sad. It is probable that, in years to come, we will look back on recent developments and term them propitious. But that does not deny the fact that they are, at this point in time, acutely painful. However, our commitment to process documentation compels us to record what happened, as fully and critically as we can.

1.1.2. SOCIO-POLITICAL STRUGGLE

This reporting period started with a record high of 4,523 Tax paid Members, 41% population coverage of the entire ADATS/SCNZ region, an even higher coverage of 45% in villages with functioning CSUs, and an enviable socio-political presence of 64%.

Trusting this strength, the Coolie Sangha spearheaded an ambitious socio-political agenda to combat communalism and corruption in favour of secular, grassroots democracy. Had they succeeded, citizens would have been able to decide and implement development activities at the village level, in a totally transparent manner. An intense 6 week long campaign was undertaken to thwart *Ryot* designs to bring back the old order through violence, intimidation and putting the poor “back in their place”.

¹ Individual village CSUs in Mittermari are considerably older when viewed from the purely technical point of when they started. An age-wise break-up of CSUs in the ADATS/SCNZ region shows that 8 are in still in the first 3 year the Formation phase, 30 in the second 3 year Formalisation phase, 43 in third 3 year Consolidation phase and 61 in the post-intervention Independent phase.

They had impressive successes in Chintamani, Siddalaghatta and Chickballapur taluks. But results went awry in many parts of Bagepalli and Gudibanda, largely due to duplicity and deceit by allies as well as turncoat CSU Members. Fair weather friends secretly capitulated to lures by *Ryots*, betraying carefully nurtured alliances in a vile and underhand manner. Senseless caste loyalties surfaced, with no apparent gain for anyone. Hard earned positions of vantage vanished. Bargaining power disappeared. The power balance in village society shifted for the worse. Access to state resources got curtailed. We, on our part, were overwhelmed by a sense of defeat and betrayal.

1.1.3. SUSPENSIONS – TIGHTENING OF CSU MEMBERSHIP

The July 2004 Gudibanda Coolie Sangha (GCS) Meeting took the lead to analyse what had gone wrong. They refused to take a defeatist stand and blame it on an external locus of control.² Instead they decided on a mature, even if painful, strategy of internal rectification. They suspected that there was much loose and opportunistic membership in the CSUs. While numeric strength may have increased over the years and contributed to a myth of influence, real clout had evidently dwindled. While village CSUs may have enhanced their functional unity and efficiency in programme implementation, ideology had taken a back seat. Purpose was largely forgotten and the Coolie Sangha no longer represented a holistic lifestyle choice for fostering a positive individualism with community support.

After a month long follow-up discussions in all the villages, the GCS Meeting gave a free hand to village CSUs to identify and suspend Member families who refused to follow collective decisions, deliberately defied the dictum of the Coolie Sangha, showed a mocking disdain for socio-cultural decisions and lifestyle choices³, and generally treated the CSU as a convenient vehicle to grab benefits from ADATS. Suspension was conceived as a drastic pruning measure. Suspended Members, they declared, would never again be given membership.⁴ The only *caveat* was that each village CSU alone should suspend its respective Members, uninfluenced by either the Cluster Meet or ADATS Staff.

As with any cleanup operation, ugly scenes followed with counter accusations and acrimonious arguments. ADATS adamantly refused to interfere. But we did insist that, once started, the process should be completed, especially in some villages in Mittermari *Hobli* where they wavered with the pretence that a stern warning was more than enough...

What has eventually ensued at this time of reporting is an end to defeatism and renewed confidence to continue in the cause of the Coolie caste-class. As has happened many times in our 27 year history, the Coolies themselves showed the way forward and once again demonstrated a veracity to move on.

1.1.4. WHO GOT SUSPENDED?

By the end of August 2004, a total of 498 Coolie families (an alarming 11% of the tax paid membership) were suspended by 71 village CSUs. Below is their profile:

- Mittermari *Hobli* stays true to its reputation of never quite deciding as to whether they want the structure and discipline of the Coolie Sangha, or merely grab benefits that flow from ADATS.

² Locus of Control refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them. Individuals with a high internal locus of control believe that events result primarily from their own behaviour and actions. Those with a high external locus of control believe that powerful others, fate, or chance primarily determine events.

³ E.g. Opposing wife beating and early marriage, property rights for women, positive discrimination towards the girl child, consciously encouraging inter-caste eating, etc.

⁴ Native usage of terms are sometimes confusing. Contrary to popular usage “Cancellation”, in Coolie Sangha parlance, is the mere discontinuing of membership for a particular year when the family does not pay Sangha Tax. “Normal” and “Cancelled” should therefore be read as “Currently Active” and “Currently Inactive”.

Only 94 families (19%) from 22 village CSUs in Gudibanda have got suspended, while 404 (81%) are from 49 villages in Mittemari *Hobli*.

Even to embark upon this internal rectification measure, the older village CSUs of Mittemari *Hobli* were, quite disappointingly, reluctant followers.

- In terms of membership age, suspended members vary widely. Longer tenure in the Coolie Sangha does not necessarily translate into a higher degree of faith or compliance to CSU discipline.
220 suspended families (44%; 94 in Gudibanda and 126 in Mittemari) are relatively new to the Coolie Sangha, having paid Sangha Tax for only 1-2 years. 103 (20%; all in Mittemari) for 3-4 years. But 175 (35%; all in Mittemari) are really old, having paid up for 5-10 years!
- Male headed families have the propensity to exhibit a negative and chauvinistic individualism, defy collective CSU decisions, and display an overt self centeredness markedly more than women. This is far more pronounced in Gudibanda than Mittemari. 363 suspended families (73%; 77 in Gudibanda and 286 in Mittemari) are male headed, while the remaining 135 (27%; 17 Gudibanda and 118 Mittemari) are women.
If we were to consider that some of these women memberships may actually be “token” in nature, sex disaggregation becomes even more pronounced.
- The clinching indicator on male chauvinism is the Women’s Fund, even if the activity has been implemented only in the older villages of Mittemari *Hobli*.
A mere 5 of the 80 Women’s Fund beneficiaries were suspended by their respective village CSUs.
- There doesn’t seem to be any caste bias when it comes to non serious CSU membership. Just as the Coolie Sangha has conclusively demonstrated that the poor can unite across narrow and parochial caste lines, so too does a “Smart Alec” behaviour spread across all castes and communities.
192 suspended families (39%; 30 in Gudibanda and 162 in Mittemari) belong to Scheduled Castes/Tribes, 107 (21%; 20 Gudibanda and 87 Mittemari) to Middle Castes, and 199 (40%; 44 Gudibanda and 155 Mittemari) to Upper Castes.
- Similarly the pattern of land holding, an indicator for class, does not seem to be a factor influencing bad behaviour.
127 suspended families (26%; 32 in Gudibanda and 95 in Mittemari) are landless and land poor, 211 (42%; 44 Gudibanda and 167 Mittemari) own marginal lands between 2 to 4 acres, and 162 (33%; 18 Gudibanda and 144 Mittemari) own more than 4 acres each.
- We did some data mining and looked at caste and class together. We found that the 162 “richer” Coolies who got suspended belonged to all castes, with an understandable lean towards upper castes who own more land.
46 suspended families (28% of 162 2-4 acre owners) who own more than 4 acres of land belong to SC/ST, 30 (19%) to Middle Castes and 84 (52%) to Upper Castes.
- There was either no foul intention, or else the grassroots selection process and check/control mechanism of the Coolie Credit Funds are so good that defying CSU discipline does not stem from any devious design to avoid repaying loans.
312 suspended families (63%; 57 in Gudibanda and 255 in Mittemari) have no CCF overdue whatsoever, 179 (36%; 1 Gudibanda and 178 Mittemari) between Rs 2,000 and Rs 5,000 and only 7 (1%; 2 Gudibanda and 5 Mittemari) have overdue of more than Rs 5,000.
- It is shameful that 5 Village Health Workers (3 in Gudibanda and 2 in Mittemari) and 3 elected Cheque Signatories (1 Gudibanda and 2 Mittemari) are among those who got suspended, in spite of a status associated with serious community responsibility.

- As is often the case, the tragic and unintended victims of these well meant internal rectification measures are 342 school going children (*91 in Gudibanda and 251 in Mitemari*). ADATS is loathe to undermine such a vital and serious process within the Coolie Sangha. Yet we do believe that we have to play a proactive role in finding a balanced solution.
145 children (*42%*) are in Primary School, 91 (*27%*) in Middle School and 106 (*31%*) in High School.

1.2. Socio-political Presence

6 months back we reported a huge spurt in membership which resulted in a very high presence.

Overall socio-political Presence has now dropped to 58% (*down 3% point from 31 March 2004*) and the projected potential has sobered down to 62% (*down 2% point from 31 March 2004*). Population coverage is now at 35% of the region's population (37% in functioning village CSUs).

Socio-political Presence Rating in SCNZ supported villages (30 September 2004)

Excellent	115 village CSUs (<i>115 in last report</i>)	77%
Very Good	16 village CSUs (<i>17 in last report</i>)	11%
Good	5 village CSUs (<i>2 in last report</i>)	3%
Not Good	14 village CSUs (<i>13 in last report</i>)	9%

1.3. Membership

Theoretically there should not have been any change in membership figures during this April to September reporting period since January is the month when Sangha Tax is paid and membership made/renewed. However, due to administrative reshuffling of villages and areas, membership rose to 4,523 families (*up 98 from 31 March 2004*) in 142 villages (*up 3 from 31 March 2004*).

The number of families who did not pay Sangha Tax has risen by 111, once again due to administrative reshuffling and the adding of 3 villages. Women memberships saw a slight increase to 35% (*up by 2% points from March 2004*).

But, as just explained, 498 tax paid Members were Suspended by their respective village CSUs. Therefore, for the very first time, there are actually less number of active Member Coolie families than those who paid up their Sangha Tax.

Due to this decrease in active membership, population coverage in villages with functioning CSUs dropped to 37% (*down 4% points from March 2004*) and overall population coverage in the entire region, including those villages without functioning Coolie Sangha Units, is at a sober 35% (*once again down by 4% points from March 2004*).

Coverage in SCNZ supported villages (30 September 2004)

	31 March 2004	This Report
Number of village CSUs	139	142
Tax Paid Member families	4,425	4,523
Suspended Members	-	498
Therefore Active Member families	4,425	4,025
Cancelled Member families (i.e. those who did NOT pay Sangha Tax)	1,002	1,113
Women Memberships	1,447 (33%)	1,393 (35%)
Population Coverage in functioning villages	41%	37%

There is an overall drop in the ethnic coverage figures. 44% of the SC/ST population are now in the Coolie Sangha and the figure for middle and upper castes have also dropped slightly to 28% and 32% respectively.

Caste Group Composition in SCNZ supported villages (30 September 2004)

Member Families	% in CSUs	Caste Group	Village Population	Ethnic Cover
2,208	55%	Scheduled Castes/Tribes	5,519	44%
669	17%	Middle Castes	2,387	28%
1,150	29%	Upper Castes	3,548	32%
4,025	100%		10,994	37%

1.4. Stories from the Field

Stories should be read with caution. On the one hand they are like the proverbial picture, worth a hundred words. They serve to showcase successes, boost morale and set a benchmark. But on the other hand, for every recorded case of community action, heroism, compassion, *et al*, there could be several other missed opportunities and un-wanton neglect. In a report of this kind, it would be much better to communicate Results in terms of numbers and percentages and then give illustrative examples of both, success as well as failure. This is an identified lacuna in our reporting style, and we are labouring hard to move away from rhetoric and develop an Effects Monitoring system for the whole of ADATS and the Coolie Sangha.

Having said this, we will now share some stories from the field to show how the Coolie Sangha put an end to feelings of despair and revitalised their confidence to continue undeterred in the cause of the Coolie caste-class.

- In Ullodu Milk Collection Society, CSU adversaries wanted to cash in on their victory by nominating members without holding elections. Of the 4 villages covered by the Society, 3 had active CSUs who refused to bow down. Though an overwhelming majority were non-CSU voters, the Cluster Secretary and Representatives protested. After much wrangling, they managed get 4 of the 13 seats.
- Fair Price Shops, run under the government's public distribution system, are supposed to sell 20 kgs of rice at Rs 3 per kg to BPL card holders. But only 18 kgs of rice was being given at Rs 3.50 per kg. Ganganpalli, Kadapalli, Yellodu and Ullodu Clusters got together and staged a protest.

This has, in the meanwhile, snowballed into a region wide struggle with the tacit sup-

port of respective *Tahsildars* (Taluk Magistrates) and government Food Inspectors. Corrupt Fair Price Shop dealers are under attack in all 5 taluks.

Though only 2 inter-caste marriages were conducted in the CSUs during this reporting period, and the Gudibanda Coolie Sangha decided to showcase an older instance as proof of inter-caste tolerance.

- Rajappa, a Harijan from Giddappanahalli CSU, married an upper caste *Vokkaliga* girl.
- Narayanaswamy, a stone cutter from Yellodu CSU married a *Kuruba (shepherd)* girl.
- A stone cutter (Scheduled Caste) family from Poovalamakapalli CSU has 4 brothers who have married according to their wishes, with their parents' consent. Basavaraj is married to an upper caste *Vokkaliga*, Ravi to a Christian, Kumar to a *Brahmin (priestly caste)*, and Muniyappa to a *Balijiga (merchant caste)*. They all live together, in perfect accord, as a joint family.

In spite of their being preoccupied with larger socio-political struggles, the Mahila Meetings were, at all times, active to intervene in settling domestic disturbances.

- In Machapalli CSU Sathyappa always got drunk and beat up his wife Alivelamma. The fights started when she refused to sleep with him as she had been suffering from white discharge and prolapsed uterus. He threatened to marry another woman if she did not consent. Alivelamma brought up the issue in the Mahila Meeting. Coolie women warned Sathyappa of serious consequences if he continued in this manner. While no one is certain as to what exactly he was threatened with, he has stopped drinking. Alivelamma underwent surgery is now recovering.
- In Kempaiah Thanda CSU, Geetha Bai and her husband fought constantly over his drinking. In spite of Mahila Meeting intervention, he never gave up drinking and beat her every night. Geetha decided to leave home and go to her mother's village. The Mahila Meeting gave the husband an ultimatum to give up his drinking and get his wife back. He has consented and brought Geetha back home.
- In Cheruvumundarpalli CSU, Venkatappa abused his wife regularly after coming home drunk. Repeated warning from the Mahila Meeting fell on deaf ears. Coolie women asked him to sit with them and gave him an ultimate warning. When he did not heed their advice, they literally threw him out of the village. He has been ordered to come back home only when he is stone sober.

Some of the problems the Mahila Meetings solved were terribly complex, as this story shows:

- In Bapujinagar CSU (Gudibanda town), Rame Naik's wife Sugunamma, died while she was being operated upon for a tumour in the neck, leaving behind 3 daughters. After her death, Rame Naik started to drink heavily without caring for the children. The Mahila Meeting immediately took the children under their wings. In the meanwhile, Rame Naik went ahead and married a very young girl, left Gudibanda and started working in Bagepalli. Subashini, the eldest girl, planned to leave school and look after her siblings. The Mahila Meeting would not hear of it. They got all 3 children admitted in free government hostels. Subashini is being given an Aid Distress of Rs 500 every month to take care of the children's personal needs. The Mahila Meeting also decided to pay a token Sangha Tax in the name of the child-family in order to keep their membership active.

The problems of elderly people cannot be solved merely through the doling out of pensions. The Mahila Meetings are sensitive to the fact that they want respect and status.

- In Papnepalli CSU, Chowdamma has 2 grown up sons who are after her 3 acres of dry land. Though she is living with one of her sons, he and his wife do not look after her properly.

The Mahila Meeting got them all together and decided that Chowdamma should have the house and 1½ acres of land in her name and the rest will be given to her sons.

Coolie youth are gradually assuming responsibility and becoming functionaries in the CSUs. 2 factors are responsible. Firstly, the long drawn out strategic planning exercise which resulted in a widely publicised Log Frame for Coolie Youth. Secondly, the fact that 138 young Coolie women now work as *Balakendra* Teachers and exercise a visible presence and influence in the CSUs.

- In Poovalamakapalli CSU, Srinivas has been elected as a Representative and Zakir Husain as Cluster secretary.
- Manjunath has been elected Representative from Patrolapalli CSU.

In spite of not being in power, the Coolie Sangha is relentless in its zeal to get corruption-free resources from government welfare schemes.

- Narayanappa from Yellodu CSU was sanctioned Rs 10,000 to repair his house, Adilaxmamma got Rs 20,000 to build a new house, and Narasimhappa got free electricity connection.

Widows and single women refuse to be cowed down, whatever “tradition” has to say regarding their role in society.

- Anjinamma from Lakkepalli CSU, a widow with 2 children, has started a small business. She buys at Bagepalli and Gudibanda on the weekly market day, and goes from village to village selling vegetables. She has been making a profit of Rs 40 to 50 per day.
- Rukmini Bai from the same village sells flowers. She buys loose flowers from Bagepalli and Gudibanda, strings them in the evening, and sells in the neighbouring villages and at the weekly market. She too makes a profit of Rs 30 to 40 per day.
- Laxminarasamma, a widow, got her husband’s government job as Helper in the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation.

Other Coolie women too avail loans and start-up grants from government schemes to start petty businesses.

- In Koppukatepalli CSU, Nagamma, Muniyamma and Venkatalaxmamma invested their little savings together in rose saplings. Nagamma and Muniyamma have some water source to irrigate their little nursery. They sell these rose plants for Rs 12 each and each stalk of rose for Re 1. Their husbands help them on the land while the women sell the produce. They share profits according to their investments.
- In Yellodu CSU, Padma, Krishnamma and Parvathamma have availed loans from the government Stree Shakti programme for groundnut seeds. Jayamma from the same village has borrowed to run a petty shop.
- In the All-Women Milk Collection Society at Merupalli village, Anandamma works as a Milk Tester.

Though ADATS and the Coolie Sangha could not make any headway in the campaign to *en mass* transfer all properties into the names of women, mainly due to legal and bureaucratic hurdles placed by overwhelming patriarchy, Coolie women continued with individual struggles for property rights. It is heartening to note that husbands, brothers, and Coolie men in general support these struggles.

- When Krishnamma's husband's family got divided, Narasimhappa got 3 acres as his share of property. Influenced by the Coolie Sangha's call, he immediately transferred the entire 3 acres to Krishnamma's name.
- In Pillagutta CSU, Sakamma's mother-in-law started ill treating her as all the 6 acres of landed property was in her son's name and he, Narayanappa, was willing to heed the Coolie Sangha call and transfer it all to Sakamma's name. Not able to bear the violence at home, she complained in the Mahila Meeting. The Mahila Meeting asked Naryanappa to divide the property equally between both the women. He has done accordingly.
- Adilaxmamma from Varadaigariapalli CSU has 2 sons. After their marriage, both of them wanted to go their separate ways and wanted the property to be divided. The CSU decided to give 3 acres each to the 2 sons and Adilaxmamma has retained 3 acres in her name.
- In the same village, Bheemanna got 2 acres of land registered in his wife Venkatalaxmamma's name, while retaining 1 acre in his own name.
- In another incident, Laxminarasamma's brother refused to share their father's property with her. The CSU meeting asked Laxminarasamma's brother to settle then and there rather than go to the Court. He conceded and transferred 5 acres of land in Laxminarasamma's name.
- Earamma from Poolkuntapalli CSU was not able to have children, and her husband married a second time. The 2nd wife has 2 children from him. When he died recently, the 2nd wife started ill-treating Earamma. She complained to the Mahila Meeting and a very long process of formalities ensued. Earamma has finally got property rights for 2 acres of wet land and 3 acres dry land in her name.
- In the same village, Subbamma's husband deserted her and ran off with another woman. Subbamma got her children married and now lives with her son and daughter-in-law. Both of them have been neglecting Subbamma. When she informed the Mahila Meeting, they got her husband's property transferred in her name instead of her children. She now has 2½ acres dry land and ½ acre wet land and literally "earns" the respect of her son and daughter-in-law.

Many years back, Coolie women coined the term that ADATS and the Coolie Sangha were their "*Puttina Inlu*" – their "house of birth" where they could, theoretically, go back to in dire emergencies.⁵ This sentiment is a fine example of how, given half a chance, the poor build new survival mechanisms when traditional support systems break-down.

- After Village Level Worker Babu's murder in Bodikaridepalli 5 years back, the CSU encouraged his widow Narasamma to continue living in her father-in-laws' house, rather than go back to her parent's village where she may not get support. Recently when the father-in-law died, 3 acres of his dry land was registered to Narasamma. During DLDP works another 4 acres of government waste land was cleared and a temporary title deed was obtained for that land too.

⁵ The break-down of this traditional support mechanism, with the seeping of patriarchy into the lower caste-class strata of village society, is the single largest contributor to Coolie women's insecurity and angst. Please see our paper at <http://www.adats.com/documents/book7/books/07025> where we have described how brothers no longer support widowed sisters, and fathers repent when it is too late...

2. CUSTOMER DEMANDS & SATISFACTION (CD&S) SURVEYS

Elections to the Karnataka State Legislative Assembly gave an uncertain verdict on 14 May 2004. It took weeks of wrangling to set up an uneasy coalition. 6 months on, to this day, a full fledged Cabinet is yet to be sworn in. Government runs at the behest of bureaucrats and long standing administrative practices. While routine functions of revenue, health, education, etc. continue to be performed, policies regarding development, investment, etc. are still on hold. Rural development, and especially activities like drought relief works, housing, water supply, social security, etc. are worst hit due to the state of limbo that prevails.

Under these circumstances, the village CSUs saw little point in making their Summer Agenda 2004. However, by August, patience was running thin. Most taluks decided to go ahead and record the pressing needs of Member Coolie families and create the Monsoon Agenda 2004. Since this Agenda has only just been finalised, we will give just the number of demands and report more fully in the next Progress Report.

CD&S Survey – Monsoon Agenda 2004

CATEGORY <i>(Life Process Description)</i>	DEMANDS
CULTIVATION <i>Poor Crops & Barren Lands to Food Crops & Food Security)</i>	103
CHILD REARING <i>Neglected Childhood & Perfunctory Schooling to Cared for Childhood</i>	41
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES <i>Precarious single income sources to Diversified Incomes from many activities</i>	40
JUSTICE <i>Blatant discrimination to Citizen Rights</i>	35
OLD AGE <i>Neglect & Discard to Respect & Care</i>	74
HEALTH	234
WOMEN IN FAMILIES <i>Lack of Identity, Dignity & Status to Decision Making Authority</i>	52
CIVIC BENEFITS <i>Benefits through Influence, Middlemen and Bribes to Rights Based Approach</i>	485
SAFETY NET	313
TOTAL DEMANDS	1,377

3. CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME

3.1. The Numbers

- 5,104 children (*up 690 from 31 March 2004*) are supported by the ADATS/SCNZ programme.
- Since the increase in Primary School, resulting from fresh admission during the year is only 213, the balance of 477 must surely be dropped out children who have been brought back into the programme.
These could either be children who actually stopped going to school and were then re-admitted, or else they could belong to Cancelled families who returned to the fold of the Coolie Sangha in January 2004.

- However, only 81% of school age children (*down 7% from 31 March 2004*) from Member Coolie families in the functioning CSUs are in school. The drop of 7 percentage points is worrisome and needs more village-wise examination.
- Compared to 11 months back, there is a steady increase in the number of children in Pre University, High School and Middle School, suggesting a good attrition rate.
- There has not been much change in the sex and caste ratio of supported children.

Gender Analysis of Children in School in SCNZ supported villages (30 September 2004)

	Total Children		Boys	Girls	SC/ST	Middle	Upper
Primary School (I to V)	2,177	43%	50%	50%	52%	18%	30%
Middle School (VI to VII)	1,208	24%	54%	46%	53%	17%	30%
High School (VIII to X)	1,309	26%	54%	46%	50%	17%	33%
PUC	327	6%	67%	33%	49%	13%	39%
Degree	72	1%	71%	29%	32%	17%	51%
Diploma/Other	10	0%	90%	10%	40%	20%	40%
NFE	1	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Total	5,104		53%	47%	52%	17%	31%

3.2. The new Trimester System

The government has introduced a new trimester system in schools. Emphasis will be on encouraging constant and continual learning and to create more interest in learning. The new system will assess children's learning abilities once every 3 months. The policy is aimed at bringing improvement in the field of education, framing syllabus that is suited for present times, improving exam system, and bridging the gap between education in cities and villages.

The trimester system is being introduced to promote joy in learning and to make classes more interesting. It is also in response to the constant complaint that children are carrying a heavy load of books to school. Another dimension to this issue is the academic load. There is an urgent need to reduce that too in order to pave the way for creative learning. This new system will make learning more meaningful, stress on constant learning throughout the year, do away with the fear of examinations, and do away with a system that tests only memory power.

- All the government and private schools in Karnataka, following the State syllabus, will have 3 trimesters of 3 months each between July and March.
- At the end of the each trimester, an internal evaluation of 90 minutes will held, where children will be graded. Instead of marks for individual subjects, only grades will be given.
- At the end of each year, the aggregate of the 3 semesters will be taken to promote a child to the next Std.
- Trimester system will reduce the heavy load of books that children are burdened with.

The policy to not fail any child till the IV Std. will continue. From V Std. to X Std. results will be based on student performance during the entire year. From this year onward, along with X Std. children, all other classes will also get a second chance to pass subjects in which they fail.

3.3. Scholarship Benefits

3.3.1. PROCUREMENT

Though the stated objective of the newly introduced trimester system is to decrease the burden of children carrying a heavy load of books to school, the number of books per child has actually increased! This time, even I Std. to IV Std. children needed three 200 page note books along with copywriting books and slates. 200 page notebooks for V Std. to VII Std. have doubled from 6 to 12, while the number of 100 page notebooks remains the same.

Taking into account all this, we calculated that children from V Std. to X Std. should be given six 100 page notebooks and twelve 200 page notebooks for the whole year, along with geometry boxes. We could not buy text books since the syllabus has changed and there is continuing uncertainty, to this day, as to which textbooks will eventually be used.

During *Balakendra* visits girls voiced their opinion that there should be a change in the type of clothes given to them under the programme. Subsequently, we asked the factory which tailors our children's attires to make samples. When these were ready, they were taken to try out sizes, colours and pattern in sample villages. Further changes were made and the children approved. Material selection was done, quality of the T-Shirts rechecked and then began the process of bargaining prices. Once we were satisfied with the quotes, orders were placed.

Children from Mitemari *Hobli* asked if they could get a sweater along with new clothes. Since it is almost 5 years since we have given them warm clothes, we readily agreed.

3.3.2. DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of scholarship benefits was not left unaffected by the village CSUs' internal rectification drive and flux in membership. There was much confusion in implementing an otherwise well established activity that normally proceeds with clockwork precision.

- The May 2004 Taluk Coolie Sangha Meetings of Gudibanda and Bagepalli decided that members with CCF Overdue should repay within a month. Otherwise scholarship benefits for their children would be held back.
- The August 2004 GCS Meeting decided that children from Suspended families would not be given benefits.

The long and short of it all is that books, slates, geometry box, guides, digests, clothes, sweaters and school fees were distributed sporadically, from mid July 2004 onward, for more than 6 weeks. Even to this date, only 2,738 of the 4,694 children in school have received their full scholarship benefits. 42% of supported children are yet to receive benefits.

- In 7 villages of Gudibanda and 11 in Mitemari, no *Balakendra* child could benefited as a majority of their families had CCF Overdue. Those who had no CCF Overdue voluntarily refused benefits till their village CSUs were set right.

It would be wrong to say that programme implementation was not adversely effected by the general confusion in the village CSUs.

- Due to sheer negligence on the part of some *Balakendra* Teachers who their respective village CSUs refuse to replace, children in 2 villages of Gudibanda taluk and 4 from Mitemari *Hobli* lost out on benefits.

Other problems that we were blissfully unaware of surfaced *because* of the state of flux. Once discovered, they could quickly be set right.

- During scholarship distribution, we found that a X Std. girl from Giripalli CSU had dropped out after attending school for just 2 months. All the children were sent back without giving anything. The VHW, Mahila Meeting and *Balakendra* teacher were given the responsibility to put her back to school and check on attendance every day for

a minimum of 4 months. Only when the Case Worker was satisfied did children from that village receive books and clothes.

- Children from Aachaganapalli, Kammadaka, Bandarlapalli and Kamanahalli were sent back when we found discrepancies in Names and Standards.

Ryots and other CSU adversaries actually had the audacity to send totally different children, from families who had nothing to do with the Coolie Sangha, to claim benefits! Distribution was immediately stopped and everyone sent back to their respective villages.

Lists were rechecked, minor corrections made to the registers, and genuine programme children were called once again to receive benefits.

3.4. Board Exam Results

The government did away with the VII Std. board exam during the 2003-04 academic year. Children of this class were thrilled beyond belief. Class exams were conducted and those who failed to get the required marks were given a second chance in June to complete only those subjects in which they had failed, and were promoted to the next class.

Results for the X Std. Board Exams have significantly improved from last year's pathetic performance of 68%. Boys and girls have an almost identical pass percentage, with girls getting a 1% point edge over boys.

- 364 children took up their X Std. board examinations. 44 of them failed even after their 2nd attempt in June. 4 of them dropped out in the last minute, without taking the exams.
- The results of 20 children are in limbo at the time of writing this Progress Report. We haven't quite figured out whether this is our data problem and monitoring mistake.

X Std Exams (2003-2004)

	Girls		Boys		Total	
Appeared	158	100%	206	100%	364	100%
Passed	129	82%	167	81%	296	81%
Failed	19	12%	25	12%	44	12%
Dropped Out	3	2%	1	-	4	1%
No Results	7	4%	13	6%	20	5%

3.5. Stories from the Field ⁶

Sometimes, even when there is a major NGO programme being implemented, individual cases can slip through the system. If not for the constant vigil and proactive concern of the Mahila Meetings, this could result in irreparable damage.

- In Giripalli CSU, Sukanya, a 10th Std girl's parents were unable to pay her school admission fees. Every day her Class Teacher insulted her in front of all her classmates. Not able to bear the humiliation, Sukanya stopped going to school. Her parents threatened her that if she didn't attend school they would marry her off. When this was brought to Mahila Meeting's notice, they paid her fees and sent her back to school. This was later reimbursed under the ADATS/SCNZ Programme.

⁶ Please read the preamble we have given in para 1.4 of this Progress Report

Here are some typical cases of Mahila Meetings stopping girls from getting married off before the age of 18.

- In Patlopalli CSU, Sujatha a 17 year old could not complete her 10th Std. board exams since her parents wanted to marry her off. Arrangements were being made, when the Mahila Meeting interfered and called it off.
- In many other village CSUs of Gudibanda, Mahila Meetings have taken up this issue very seriously. They have put a stop to marriage preparations being made for young girls like Geetha in Chinnappali CSU, Gangarathna in Dhumkuntapalli CSU, and Adilaxmamma in Kambalapalli CSU.
- In Mitemari CSU, Varalaxmi had just finished her 10th Std. when her parents insisted that she get married. Varalaxmi immediately informed the ADATS Mahila Trainer. She mobilised the Mahila Meeting to stop arrangements and advised everyone about the ills of getting married and having children at an early age. Varalaxmi has now been admitted in college and is presently doing her 1st year Pre University Course.

3.6. Skill Training & Job Placement

With an increase in the number of garment factories in and around Bangalore, there is a sudden spurt in demand for tailors. There are persistent requests from 2 such factories to send them young girls who they themselves will train and employ.

But this clashes with an increasing desire by girls to go on to college after finishing their High School. Even those who fail in board examinations want to attend tuitions and complete.

Among those who did come forward, 9 girls got selected for a factory in Bangalore and 14 in Doddaballapur. Both these factories provide training without any charge. The Doddaballapur factory, moreover, pays its trainees a full salary even during training. Both factories calculate wages on daily basis but pay once a month. Wages for a beginner is Rs 84 per day for 25 days a month. This is doubled for every hour of overtime. The average earning per youth could vary from Rs 2,100 to Rs 3,500 per month.

Case Workers and Field workers who are in charge of each batch, found houses big enough to accommodate 10-15 girls in each building. Parents contributed Rs 500 towards their daughters' initial expenses and ADATS paid out another Rs 1,000. This went towards rent advance, which is normally 10 months rent. Rent advances in Bangalore area are 3 times more than in Doddaballapur, which is a small town hardly 20 kms from Bangalore. ADATS also provides each batch with a start-up kit consisting of a kerosene stove, buckets, mugs, cooking vessels and serving spoons. The girls share all running expenses, including rent, groceries, vegetables, meat, milk, etc. On an average they each spend Rs 500 per month.

3.7. Computer Training

- A total of 169 Coolie youth attended 5 IT Camps during this reporting period.
- Three were full fledged, month long camps, one was a 15 days refresher course for youth who had earlier attended IT Camps, and one other was a bit of a flop.
- 145 youth (76 boys & 69 girls) successfully completed their course.
- This takes the total number of Coolie youth trained in the past 18 months, from March 2003 to date, to 434. Of them, 391 (90%) have successfully completed the course.

Resume of Computer Training Camps held as on 30 September 2004

Batch	Start Date	End Date	Taluk/Area	Attended	Course Completed		Total Trained	
					Boys	Girls		
1 st	01-Mar-03	30-May-03	Gudibanda	38	12	24	36	95%
2 nd	5-Jun-03	18-Jul-03	Chintamani	33	16	16	32	97%
3 rd	21-Jun-03	20-Aug-03	Bagepalli	37	16	20	36	97%
4 th	27-Aug-03	28-Sep-03	Gudibanda & Mittermari	39	13	18	31	79%
5 th	06-Oct-03	06-Nov-03	Chintamani	35	11	17	28	80%
6 th	12-Nov-03	11-Dec-03	Siddalaghatta	38	20	18	38	100%
7 th	01-Jan-04	06-Feb-04	Bagepalli	22	11	11	22	100%
8 th	22-Feb-04	20-Mar-04	All Taluks	23	3	20	23	100%
9 th	06-Apr-04	05-May-04	All Taluks	39	19	20	39	100%
10 th	25-May-04	12-Jun-04	All Taluks	34	15	1	16	47%
11 th	23-Jun-04	22-Jul-04	All Taluks	22	9	13	22	100%
12 th	16-Aug-04	26-Aug-04	Refresher	42	15	22	37	88%
13 th	04-Sep-04	02-Oct-04	All Taluks	32	18	13	31	100%
TOTAL				434	178	213	391	90%

2 additional IT training sessions were held:

- Newly appointed Case Workers under the VASS Children's Programme underwent a 10 day training on MS Office from 1 to 7 August 2004.
- All ADATS Field Staff (Field Workers, Mahila Trainers and Case Workers) were trained for 3 days on internal email usage to improve their general efficiency from 4 to 6 October 2004, just after this reporting period.

In spite of it all, the spirit of the IT Camps has, if anything, improved with the activity becoming a focal point for rallying Coolie youth. The mood is still fresh and exciting with no letup in optimism over the past 18 months.

The May-June batch was the sole exception. Though 34 Coolie youth came on the first day, many dropped out after a few days and less than half stayed on. The Camp was wound up in just a fortnight. Area Field Workers were held responsible for not having properly informed the village CSUs. They had to pay dearly for irresponsible selection by contributing Rs 500 per absentee/dropout from their salaries. The Computer Training head of accounts actually saw a credit of Rs 9,000 that the ADATS Field Staff coughed up on behalf of 18 non-serious participants.

2 IT Instructors, Abid Pasha and Mukaem, continue to run the Camps. Our IT Professional, Raghu, spends all his free time at the Camps. The VASS Extension Worker for Bagepalli taluk, Chitharanjan Das, a qualified counsellor, is extremely good with Coolie youth. He too spends a lot of quality time at the IT Camps.

We made a feeble attempt to introduce 1 hour of spoken English into the syllabus. But this did not work since no one had any language teaching skills or know techniques.

Gaps in between IT Camps are used to review their own performance, update the timetable, meet with former attendees, repair/service equipment, and recover from the gruelling 18 hour a day schedule!

Azmath, a professional black-belt Karate Instructor from Bagepalli, offered to teach our youth. Since the Camps are basically life-skill learning sessions, we readily agreed. An hour of Karate practice was introduced into the timetable from the June 2004 batch onward. Warm-up exercises and basic defence techniques are taught. Youth are thrilled and girls learn/practice alongside boys. Each batch show off their skills on the last evening of the Camp in front of a spellbound audience comprising ADATS Staff and other friends.

To our knowledge, 10 Coolie youth have secured jobs after attending the IT Camp and some more are contemplating their own small businesses.

IT Trainees who got jobs

Trainee	Village CSU	Job
056 Sukanya	803 Patrolapalli	Data Entry Operator in Garment factory
039 N.B. Bhavani	535 Nadimpalli	Computer Instructor
043 K.N. Muniswami	768 Kanapanahalli	Computer Lab Assistant
026 N.M. Manju	962 Egava Nagarajahosahalli	Computerised Stocks Manager in factory
015 K.V. Mallika	984 Mallikapura	Data Entry Operator in Garment factory
019 Eashwar	022 Mekalavaripalli	Field Supervisor in agricultural company
078 S.A. Shankar	889 Sonaganahalli	Computer Lab Assistant
030 R.B. Geetha	830 Rappamalahalli	Data Entry Operator in Garment factory
019 Mamatha	882 Marlappannahalli	Accounts Assistant in Hospital
029 Marappa Reddy	544 Pedda Bandaraghatta	Data Entry Operator in Taluk office

3.8. Youth Groups

ADATS and the Coolie Sangha invested long months in drawing up a Strategic Plan with Log Frame for tackling the problems of Coolie youth. However, we have chosen to keep it a low key activity, without any budget provision, till April 2005.

16 villages in Gudibanda and 13 in Mittemari *Hobli* already have active Youth Groups. They meet informally once a week at the village level to discuss and find solutions for their own problems. Once a month, they meet at the Area level. Sex parity is maintained in membership and each Youth Groups has 2 Representatives – a boy and a girl.

2 orientation programmes have been held on the kinds of issues and topics that the Youth Groups would like to take up. Some of the concerns that are coming up are:

- Prevention of early marriages
- Fathers coming home drunk
- Young boys getting into bad habits like eating *Gutka* and *Pan Masala*
- Inter-caste, inter-religion and choice marriages
- Girls continuing to attend colleges
- Information on the availability of training programmes – cost, accommodation, etc
- Information on the availability of jobs – salary, accommodation, etc
- Access of credit, including CCF, for small/petty businesses
- Participation in Gram Panchayats

Each Youth Group held informal meetings with their parents, for the very first time, to explain why they need their own space. The manner in which they communicated that they

were truly children of the Coolie Sangha, and that their generation did not believe in traditional sex based rote role and division of labour was astonishing!

- Bapujinagar and Mutyalammagudi Youth Groups held a *Rangoli* Competition where both boys and girls competed with each other in this predominantly female art of decorating floors and paths with coloured flour powder. Astonished parents watched their sons do things that they thought were the prerogative of girls. Dumbfounded amazement quickly turned to pride when they had to judge the best *Rangolis* and give prizes.

Coolie youth have a native shrewdness that is admirable.

- Some *Balakendra* Teachers from Ullodu Cluster attended government training sessions on *Swacchha Grama* (Clean village), *Parisara* (Environment) and *Balakarmikara Bagge* (Child Labour). Their purpose was very clear. They wanted to put a foot into the doorway of these government sponsored programmes.

Yet other activities were more conventional.

- A 2 day *Shramadhan* (voluntary labour) Camp was held in Somalapura village. Youth Groups from Yellodu Cluster joined in. Together they planted about 50 tree saplings around the school, village temple, *Balakendra* and road sides.
- Coolie youth of the entire Cluster got together in Kangamakalapalli village for a Volley Ball match on a Sunday afternoon. Later they cleaned the village water cisterns and drains. They too planted about 200 saplings around the villages of Dommirigudisulu and Kanagamakalapalli.

Coolie youth have expressed their wish to undergo training sessions for a select group of volunteers to learn various life skills, which in turn they could transfer to their respective Youth Groups members. Preparations are being made to get subject matter specialists.

4. ANNUAL HEALTH CHECK-UP

Annual Health Check-up for this year started early. By the end of September 2004, all the *Balakendras* were visited and children with small ailments were immediately treated. As and when the health check up for a village was finished, referred children were brought the very next day by the *Balakendra* teacher to be checked up at the local government hospital.

We found 41 new cases of epilepsy. They will join the ranks of other epileptic children who are already under the Mahila Meetings' care, and will get regular medication. 5 children have heart problems. This time too there are a lot of dental complaints. 149 children suffer from some oral problem or the other, mainly because of excessive fluorides in the drinking water. Though our Health Worker and the doctors preach good oral habits, these are seldom practiced.

We can state with some certainty that there are no unattended cases of children's ailments. This in turn has led to a dramatic reduction in school days lost due to sick leave.

5. SANGHA FUNDS

Sangha Fund balances in the SCNZ supported villages increased by Rs 0.73 million to Rs 8.65 million (*up from Rs 7.92 million on 31 March 2004*). Voluntary contributions during DLDP works and bank interest earned by village CSU accounts increased income. Expenditure, on the other hand, was curtailed by self imposed blocks on spending in many CSUs during the months of flux.

Sangha Funds in SCNZ supported villages (30 September 2004)

	31 March 2004			This Report		
Taluk Main Savings Bank Account	1,099	-		3,154	-	
Taluk Fixed Deposits	450,000	6%		450,000	5%	
Village Savings Bank Accounts	1,128,978	14%		1,733,821	20%	
Village Fixed Deposits	6,340,400	80%	7,920,477	6,464,500	75%	8,651,475

6. COOLIE CREDIT FUNDS**6.1. Status of the CCFs**

Since there is literally nothing to report in terms of CCF activity, we will merely record figures for future comparison and study.

This is the very first time in the 19 year history of the village CCFs that there has been no activity, except for some substantial repayments, during the vital crop months of June and July 2004. There were 2 reasons for this.

- Though this year was not a drought and there has been a fair amount of rainfall, no fresh Crop Loans could be given out. Most village CCFs had overdue of more than Rs 10,000 – a condition that immediately prevented everyone from borrowing afresh.
- Secondly the mood of the moment was not congenial, with the CSUs focussing on internal rectification measures like the suspension of errant Member families.

Yet, in spite of it all and against all odds, 739 loan instalments worth Rs 2,284,389 were repaid from 92 villages, pushing up the bank balances to an incredibly high 71%.

Status of the CCFs in SCNZ supported villages (30 September 2004)

Total CCF Capital		10,921,949	100%
Total of Good Loans		330,625	3%
Total of Overdue		2,857,144	26%
1 to 6 Months Late	52,230	2%	
7 to 12 Months Late	1,380,735	48%	
Over 1 Year Late	1,424,179	50%	
Bad Debts		600	-
Bank Balances		7,733,381	71%

CCF Utilisation Pattern in SCNZ supported villages (30 September 2004)

Purpose	Amount Borrowed			No of Loans		
	31 March 2004	This Report		31 March 2004	This Report	
Crop Loans	6,970,385	7,634,735	46%	4,439	4,745	67%
Agriculture	217,180	266,153	2%	81	85	1%
Cattle	2,535,725	2,657,225	16%	960	982	14%
Trade & Enterprise	5,940,095	5,980,495	36%	1,131	1,136	16%
Consumption & others	70,675	74,675	-	107	108	2%
Total	15,734,060	16,613,283	100%	6,718	7,056	100%

Overall performance has slipped to 29% with the computer not optimistic about any further improvement. So now it is clearly up to us to enter into the realm of the impossible and recover the situation, against all odds and logic of probability!

CCF Performance in SCNZ supported villages (30 September 2004)

Excellent	11 Village CCFs (10 in last report)	7%
Very Good	20 Village CCFs (11 in last report)	8%
Good	42 Village CCFs (37 in last report)	27%
Not Good	68 Village CCFs (80 in last report)	58%

CCF Performance in SCNZ supported villages (30 September 2004)

CCF Capital	Rs 10,921,949
Cumulative loans given	Rs 16,613,283
Rotation of Capital	1.52 times
Number of Loans	7,056
Average Borrowing	Rs 2,354
Repayment Rate $\{100 - (\text{Overdue} + \text{Bad Debts} / \text{Cumulative Loans} \times 100)\}$	82.8%
Capital at Risk $\{\text{Overdue} / \text{Capital}\}$	26%

A heavy repayment of outstanding Good Loans resulted in an improvement of Recovery Rate. But at the same time it shot up the Exposed Portfolio Ratio since no fresh loans were given out during this reporting period. Similarly the Delinquency Rate also shot up since most of the outstanding loans now are Overdue.

Quality of the Loan Portfolio (30 September 2004)

	Functioning Villages	Cancelled Village	Overall
Exposed Portfolio Rate (outstanding balance of contaminated loans / total outstanding; ideal = 15%)	91% (59%)	76% (76%)	90% (60%)
Delinquency Rate (total overdue / total outstanding; ideal = 15%)	91% (58%)	76% (76%)	90% (59%)
Recovery Rate (repayments made to date / repayments that had to be made to date; ideal = 90%)	80% (78%)	43% (43%)	80% (77%)

(previous report figures in parenthesis)

6.2. Overdue Loans

We all know that CCF Overdue is not because of any deliberate design to default. Earlier in this Progress Report we noted that even Suspended Member families had no desire to cheat on repayment. Instead, we find 2 main reasons for CCF Overdue.

- First is the straightforward one. 4 years of continuous drought has pauperised the entire peasantry. There simply isn't any cash floating around in the economy.
- The second is psychological. In order to survive these past 4 years, Member Coolies have incurred a lot of debts from better-off relatives, "friendly" *Ryots*, shop keepers, fixed-income earners and others.

Repaying these rapidly interest accumulating loans to *Ryots* is their top priority. Recouping some of their lost possessions like plough animals, farm implements, etc. grades second. Repaying an interest-free loan to a benign lender which, to boot, is genu-

inely their very own, ranks last on their list of priorities. Being their “own money”, repaying it is akin to saving for a rainy day, an activity rarely contemplated during down-pours...

This is the real disadvantage inherent in an interest-free credit setup. We were not unaware of this drawback when ADATS and the Coolie Sangha together took the political decision, way back in 1985, to build up the CCFs as decentralised, village level empowerment instruments, rather than imitate the banks, pretending that micro-credit was the pivot around which all development rotated.

Knowing the reasons makes us all very clever. But it does not help solve the problem. Overdue still needs to be brought under control, performance figures improved, lender confidence established, and the vital activity restarted in each and every village. Otherwise it will fail as both, an instrument of empowerment as well as a tool for economic development.

Political will and table thumping declarations of intent cannot solve the problem. A serious plan is needed. As a first step, we need to take a cold look at the numbers and squarely face realities.

- 8% of the total Overdue is by Cancelled Member families in 9 dropped out CSUs. There is hardly any chance of this money being repaid in the foreseeable future.
- 61% of the Overdue is with Normal Member families in 121 functioning CSUs. There is a high chance of it being repaid.
- 31% of the Overdue is with Cancelled Member families in functioning CSUs. Normal Members can apply pressure to recover at least half of it. They will have a strong motivation to do so. Because otherwise their villages would not fall under the eligibility category and even those with no Overdue will not be able to further borrow.

	Overdue by Normal Members	Overdue by Cancelled
9 Dropped CSUs	-	8%
121 Functioning CSUs	61%	31%

- A realistic implication is that 23% of the CCF Overdue (*5% of the total CCF Capital*) will, at least for the time being, be “lost”.

6.3. Restarting the CCFs in more than half the villages

6.3.1. LENDER PERSPECTIVE

Rs 7.7 million (*71% of the total CCF Capital*) remains unused as bank balances with the respective village CCFs. As a result, the Exposed Portfolio Rate and Delinquency Rate have both shot up to 90% each (*against an ideal of 15%*).

This is terribly demoralising for the credit programme as a whole. No argument of conservative caution can justify such a situation.

6.3.2. BORROWER PERSPECTIVE

Though no one can predict with any degree of certainty, the drought seems to be over for this 7 year cycle. The 2004 harvests are expected to be around 60%. There is abundant fodder. The only worrisome factor is that irrigation tanks (small man-made lakes) do not have any water since the parched earth has soaked up all the rain that fell this year.

- The prospect of rearing small livestock like 10-15 sheep, a few pigs, etc. seems to be hopeful. For this, Member Coolie families need credit.
- An increase in biomass immediately opens up the possibility of a wide variety of petty trade and small businesses. Micro entrepreneurs need short-term working capital.

- It is likely that the rains will not fail in 2005. Thousands of land owning Member Coolies will need substantial crop loans.

6.3.3. A PLAN TO RESTART THE CCFs

The fact that the poorest of the poor are our client base is a given. We also have to recognise that this is a biomass-poor region with a definite ceiling on innovative enterprise. With these 2 givens, there may never be a guarantee of smooth sailing or hassle-free credit programme. We cannot alter our loyalties and start working with well off people who have a greater risk-absorbing capacity and ability to undertake non-agrarian ventures, just in order to run a good credit programme.

Ups and downs have to be faced. Relentless efforts need to be made to include the Coolie caste-class in a trickle down development paradigm that does not recognise any role for them as direct producers. With a stubborn determination, we prescribe for ourselves the following step-by-step recovery plan.

- 59 village CCFs (46%) have either no Overdue or are within the eligibility limit. The CCFs will forthwith be restarted in these villages.
- This will encourage another 26 village CCFs (20%) to quickly repay small amounts that they are Overdue, and join the ranks of the eligible.
- Concerted efforts will be made in 27 villages CCFs (21%) where there are larger amounts Overdue. These will include mild arm-twisting like the holding back of other benefits in order to coax repayment.
- It is not realistic to expect to immediately solve the problems of 18 village CCFs (14%) who have 41% of the total Overdue. The only option is to refuse membership to these villages till they come to their senses.

	Village CSUs	Overdue Amount
Zero CCF OD	12%	0%
Less than Rs 10,000 OD	34%	10%
Between Rs 10,001 and Rs 20,000 OD	20%	17%
Between Rs 20,001 and Rs 40,000 OD	21%	33%
More than Rs 40,000 OD	14%	41%
Total	100%	100%

- Each village CCF will seriously evolve its own village specific/pluralistic lending policy. They will choose between individual lending (betting only on “safe” borrowers identified through past performance) and mass lending (e.g. crop loans). They may want to consider betting on the poorest of the poor, as we once did in 1990 with really fantastic results.⁷ In many cases, of course, it will be a balanced combination of all these options.
- Writing off CCF loans as Bad Debts along with the rescheduling of repayment dates is not a good idea. This will give a totally false picture on performance. While poor performance is definitely a problem, the solution lies in squarely facing it and eliciting valuable organisational learning.

⁷ Please see writings on the *Nirupeda* Lists at <http://www.adats.com/documents/book6/books/0604> and www.adats.com/documents/book1/books/0121/0121

7. DRY LAND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

7.1. DLDP Plan Utilisation

Rs 3.9 million worth of DLDP Plans were given out to 123 SCNZ supported villages (51 in Gudibanda and 72 in Mittermari) to undertake 5 months of DLDP works from February to June 2004. 85% of the works were completed and 94% of the allotted budget realised by the end of May, one month ahead of target.

DLDP Plans & Utilisation (February to June 2004)

Taluk	Villages	2004 DLDP Plans		Completed / Utilised			
		Works	Allotment	Works		Paid	
Gudibanda	51	1,319	1,334,715	1,086	82%	1,156,005	87%
Mittermari	72	2,616	2,566,110	2,258	86%	2,525,445	98%
	123	3,935	3,900,825	3,344	85%	3,681,450	94%

The reason for such an exceptionally high utilisation was, quite naturally, near-famine conditions that prevailed after 4 years of continuous drought. People just didn't have any other income, and the DLDP was the only source of employment in the villages.

Moreover, the DLDP protected them from forced migration – a demeaning abandonment that would have severely eroded their self-respect and citizenry in village society. Whereas, even though they worked for a paltry Rs 15 per day, they could now claim the pride and prestige that comes from community labour.

7.2. DLDP Works Done

Yet the village CSUs, and more particularly individual land owners, refused to treat the activity as either a relief operation or socio-political statement of sorts. They paid attention to quality, and excellent works were implemented.

The DLDP is a pluralistic programme comprising a whole range of indigenously conceived Soil & Water Conservation measures. Each individual land owner decides on the type of labour input needed on each separate field. One cannot visit just a couple of villages and claim to have seen it all. The variance and variety never fail to invite awe and surprise. They are invariably huger than what we usually visualise human labour as capable of. The collective output of the labour of 20-25 determined persons in a work gang is never a simple arithmetic sum of their individual muscle power. They literally move mountains, magically converting marginal lands into productive fields.

Under such circumstances it is difficult to describe DLDP works even under the 12 broad categories that we give below.

S&WC Works Carried out (February to June 2004)

Numbers	Description of Works	Quantity
35	Built Cattle Wall	1,772 metres
363	Built Field Bunds	20,183 metres
1,326	Built New Contour Bunds	82,339 metres
219	Built Retention Wall (Kanji)	12,111 metres
94	Checked Ravine & Gully	211
612	Cleared Shrubs & Boulders	1,545 Acres
5	Deepened Open Well	5
77	Dug Diversion Channel	4,314 metres
9	Dug Farm Pond	9
451	Strengthened Existing Bunds	23,775 metres
3	Built Paths/Roads	33 metres
3	Wasted Works	2 acres

7.3. Tractor Ploughing

As already reported in this Progress Report, the rains were fairly promising at the start of the cropping season in May/June 2004. Raising a good crop after leaving their lands barren for 4 long years was the only way that Member Coolie families could get out their pauperisation. Yet most village CSUs could not give out Crop Loans due to heavy CCF Overdue. They were literally caught in a spiral, a dilemma that created a deadly impasse.

In mid May 2004, soon after pre-monsoon showers, ADATS offered to undertake tractor ploughing in 41 SCNZ villages covering 2,782 acres. This would help them meet at least a small part of their cropping expenses. Deep ploughing was in any case a therapeutic measure, an integral part of the DLDP. Each CSU negotiated with friendly *Ryots* who owned tractors, and ploughed the entire 2,782 acres in a record 3 weeks. Immediately on completion, ADATS Staff went to each and every village and made payments worth Rs 971,250.

Even so, not a single Member Coolie family had the capital needed to plant groundnuts, a high-risk commercial crop. Instead all of them sowed maize, millets and a whole lot of as-sorted cereals. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The rains were neither sufficient nor timely to support a good groundnut crop. Some *Ryots* who sowed groundnuts have badly burnt their fingers this year also. Moreover, the raising of millets and cereals contributes far more to food security and warding off hunger, than the harvesting of even a bumper commercial crop.

Tractor ploughing was taken up exactly 1 month after the unexpected defeat of their pro-secular democracy campaign. Some CSUs preferred to hire tractors from as far as 60 kms away, paying slightly higher rents, than approach arch adversaries in their own village. No CSU was willing to plough the fields of turncoats who had betrayed them.

As already stated, ADATS refused to interfere. We gave out DLDP Plans that included all current tax paid Members who owned lands. But the CSUs crossed out the names of those who had betrayed them and that was the genesis, in the latter half of June 2004, of the Suspension operation they so thoroughly carried out to clean up their membership.

8. STAFF CHANGES

Field Assistant P. Anil, who was in charge of building the Coolie Sangha in Gudibanda Taluk, received a much coveted government scholarship to do his Ph.D. After working with us for the past 6 years Anil left his job in September 2004. But he continues to be a part of ADATS and the Coolie Sangha in every which way.

Another long time ADATS employee, Area Field Worker C. Babu, left for personal reasons. He had family problems that he just couldn't solve and chose to try his luck in the commercial sector at Bangalore. C. Babu's area has been taken over by a 27 year old Staff member, M. Laxminarasimhappa who has lately been very closely associated with the Gudibanda Coolie Sangha.