

## 0603. DLDP Completion Report (Jun 1990)

*Written in June 1990, this Report explains the background of the project, goes on to give an overview, a detailed implementation plan of activities undertaken from March 1987 to December 1989, and then discusses achievements and accomplishments made by the DLDP. An annexure to the report describes 4 issues and struggles.*

### 1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

#### 1.1. Introduction

The Dry Land Development Project (DLDP) was conceived when implementing the Drought Relief Works (DRW) project in 1986. At that time, it was felt that having a once-off effort was not the best way to deal with the problem. Instead, a more systematic, sustained and long term programme approach was necessary.

In August 1986, the DLDP was presented to NOVIB in order to develop over 9,000 acres of uncultivable patches of government allotted land in 87 village Coolie Sangha Units (CSUs) within each CSU's allotted budget of CSU Strength x 125 persondays x 3 years.

The Coolies and their CSUs were to be technically assisted in planning and implementing these DLDP works, thereby strengthening and enhancing their traditional knowledge.

#### 1.2. Objectives

An important objective of the DLDP was to positively effect the unjust and low wage structure prevailing in the taluk's peasant economy. Against the then government prescribed minimum wage of Rs 8.25 the prevailing wage in the villages was Rs 3. The DLDP proposed to pay an average daily wage of Rs 9 for five months a year for 3 years plus give Rs 100 worth of tools and implements to each and every Member Coolie family in 87 CSUs.

We also knew that the mere implementation of such a large project would require the development of conceptual, planning and managerial skills in each and every one of the 3,000 member Coolies, the 87 CSUs and the 16 Cluster Meets. That was why we had, in our application to NOVIB, stated that while ADATS would be the legal project holder, the CSUs, Cluster Meets and the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA would be the implementing agency.

And lastly, quite naturally, ADATS was attracted by the possibility to alleviate the hardships caused by a cycle of recurring drought and famine in a region like Bagepalli. To provide gainful employment on an assured basis for five months every year for three years, to prevent Coolies from migrating every summer like herds in search of pasture, to help Coolies stay in their homes with dignity and on par with the Ryots, all had a certain appeal to ADATS' compassion to and identification with the Coolies of Bagepalli.

### 2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

#### 2.1. Implementation Status

The Dry Land Development Project was planned, as per the project application, to develop about 9,000 acres of dry land belonging to 3,000 Coolies in 87 villages through an average investment of 125 persondays of labour on each acre of their land through schemes and activities that the Coolies themselves came up with in grassroots planning exercises.

In actual implementation, a total of 2,904 Coolie families from 81 villages received tools, implements and daily wages from the DLDP in order to develop 8,989 acres of dry land that they owned, thereby investing an average of 80.9 persondays of labour on each acre.

#### IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF THE DLDP

	March to Dec '87:	March to Dec '88:	March to Dec '89:	Total:
Amount directly paid out as DLDP wages:	2,098,526	2,412,223	2,033,410	6,544,159
At a daily wage rate of:	Rs 8	Rs 9	Rs 10	
Number of Coolie families who received wages from the project:	2,099	2,412	2,033	2,904
Number of families who were given tools and implements:	2,099	579	226	2,904
Acres of dry land that they owned and worked on:	7,581	7,976	6,982	8,989
Persondays of labour invested on each acre:	34.6	33.6	29.1	80.9

(Please note that the last column in the above chart represents Total and not averages. The detailed village wise chart from which these figures are extracted is attached as an Annexure to this Report.)

## 2.2. DLDP Wages

The payment of wages was the largest budget component of the project, representing a little over 74 percent of the total DLDP expenditure of Rs 12,758,769. The impact that this artificial interference on the labour market and the positive consequences that the Coolies derived from it is elaborately discussed in section 4 of this Report.

ADATS has directly spent an amount of Rs 6,544,159 in the payment of DLDP wages to the nearly 3,000 Coolies who worked on their own lands for five months every year these last three years. The manner in which these wage payments were made is elaborately described in para 3.8. of this Report.

An additional amount of Rs 2,909,361 was spent on items with moneys that were saved. Many factors contributed to this saving. The Coolies' decision to work free for one day a week and take wages for only six days led to a 14% saving for each CSU. The fluctuations in membership strength, which resulted in only 727,129 persondays wages being paid for in the three year period, against the proposed 1,125,000 persondays, led to an overall saving of 35.6% of the wage budget.

ADATS left the decision on how to use these savings to the Coolies themselves. The BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA chose to use these moneys to create individual and collective assets like the building of huts for destitute Coolies, drilling of bore-wells for groups of Coolies, the construction of a fishery which is owned by one of the Clusters, the purchase of cattle fodder, to undertake schemes for the landless, the purchase and development of a 42 acre farm for the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA, and to pay the premium in order to insure against loss of Coolie life, limb and huts.

## 2.3. Tools and implements

A crowbar, spade and iron basket were given to each and every one of the 2,904 Coolie families so that they could implement this three year project for the development of their dry lands.

Additionally, each batch of 15 to 20 Coolies in the CSUs of the CEP area were supplied with common tools like heavy hammers, etc. which they could collectively use for not just implementing their DLDP works, but also in order to take up other *Ryot* or government works, as collective labour contractors, after the completion of DLDP works every year.

## 2.4. Villages covered

Though 81 villages benefited the DLDP, the project was never implemented in all the villages in any single year, for a number of reasons. In 1987 it was implemented in 70 villages, in 1988 in 68 villages, and in 1989 in only 66 villages.

As a result, it was only in 55 villages that the DLDP was implemented for three years. In 14 villages, it was implemented for only two years, and in 12 villages for just one year.

In 5 villages where they had undertaken dry land development works under the DRW project in 1986, the works got over and the Coolies voluntarily opted for stopping the works rather than unnecessarily waste a whole lot of labour capital in 1989.

In 12 villages, DLDP works were conducted for less than three years because they formed CSUs late and their Cluster Meets did not feel it advisable for them to undertake the DLDP till some sound internal systems and discipline was established.

In 1 village the Cluster Meet was forced to recommend that DLDP works be suspended in 1988 till they resolved a major internal crisis in the CSU.

And finally, in 8 villages the Coolies simply decided that the conditions placed by the BCS were far too strict, and they were unable to squander the project and, in their own words, “get some gruel into their stomachs when an opportunity presented itself”. The BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA decided that there were serious differences in ideology and perception and these villages eventually dropped out of the mass organisation.

### Villages where the DLDP was implemented

<b>1.</b>	<b>Number of villages where the DLDP was implemented:</b>		<b>81</b>
1.1.	in the year 1987:	70	
1.2.	in the year 1988:	68	
1.3.	in the year 1989:	66	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Number of villages where the DLDP was implemented for the full 2 years:</b>		<b>55</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Number of villages where the DLDP was implemented for only 2 years:</b>		<b>14</b>
3.1.	Number of villages where the DLDP was implemented only in 1987 and 1988 because the works got over:	5	
3.2.	Number of villages where the DLDP was implemented only in 1988/1989 because CSUs were formed late:	8	
3.3.	Number of villages where the DLDP was implemented only in 1987 and 1989 because of internal problems among the member Coolies:	1	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Number of villages where the DLDP was implemented for only 1 year:</b>		<b>12</b>
4.1.	Number of villages where the DLDP was implemented only in 1989 because the CSU was formed very late:	4	
4.2.	Number of villages where the DLDP was implemented only in 1987 because the Coolies could not cope with the seriousness and conditions posed by the BCS:	8	
<b>Total number of villages where the DLDP was implemented:</b>			<b>81</b>

## 2.5. Consolidation of area coverage and membership strength

Today, the Old and CEP areas have stabilised at 71 villages which have weathered all the storms of membership changes, etc. It can quite objectively be said that these village level CSUs have profited from the DLDP and consolidated their positions. There are 2,298 normal Coolie memberships in these 71 CSUs, and 46 are temporarily under suspension for various internal reasons. 19% of these normal memberships are in the names of Coolie women. The

normal members have a total of 3,985 votes, and 3,962 are under the age of 18 years. They own a total of 7,092 acres of rainfed dry land and 374 acres of wet land irrigated by tanks and wells. But at the same time, it cannot be forgotten that 506 families and 16 CSUs got cancelled these past three and a half years, during the implementation of the DLDP. These figures represent 17% of the total membership and 18% of the area coverage, respectively.

#### Area Coverage & Membership Strength

<b>Situation in 1986, before the commencement of the DLDP</b>	
Average daily wage for women:	Rs 2.75
Average daily wage for men:	Rs 3.50
Average land holding of a Coolie family:	3.31 acres
Percentage of landless Coolies:	20%
Number of active CSUs in the CEP and Old Areas:	87 villages
Number of (normal) Coolie members:	2,738 families
<b>Situation in 1990, after the completion of the DLDP</b>	
Average daily wage for women:	Rs 10 to Rs 17
Average daily wage for men:	Rs 10 to Rs 17
Average land holding of a Coolie family:	3.25 acres
Percentage of landless Coolies:	7%
Number of active CSUs in the CEP and Old Areas:	71 villages
Number of (normal) Coolie members:	2,298 families

The Coolies argue that this was the price they had to pay for consolidating their CSUs; that they are better off without this chunk of their fellow peasants who could not meet the demands that seriousness and discipline called for. They also claim that, by and large, it was the better off Coolies who left the Coolie Sangha.

There is hard evidence to support this assertion since it was Coolies who owned larger holdings who got cancelled, and the percapita land holding of the remaining members dropped from 3.31 to 3.25 acres. These are figures to be proud of when read with another accomplishment of theirs. The percentage of landless dropped from 20% to 7% with not even a single landless Coolie getting cancelled in this three year period!

The reason for the Coolies taking such a hard and pitiless stand is not difficult to understand. All the more now that the massive capital intervention called the DLDP is over, no more is the mass organisation merely a means to get benefits from ADATS, propped up at our behest. The Coolie Sangha represents, for them, a very serious effort at their self development. Failure can mean, besides shattered hopes, extreme physical hardships. And if they are to succeed in any meaningful measure and also sustain these accomplishments, internal rectification has to remain as paramount a concern in their agenda as the tackling of external forces. In this light, all that the DLDP did was to surface the opportunism in some among them.

## 2.6. The actual works carried out

### Resume of Works done under the DLDP

(a total of 2,904 Coolie families benefited from the DLDP in order to develop 8,989 acres of dry land)

Extent of land where bunding was done:	5,982 acres
Length of rock and mud bunds built:	577,039 meters
Length of existing bunds that were strengthened:	35,480 meters
Extent of land where rocks and boulders have been cleared:	3,810 acres
Extent of new lands brought under cultivation for the very 1st time:	1,481 acres
Length of ravines and gullies checked and plugged:	11,832 meters

### 3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

#### 3.1. The DLDP Survey Forms which led to an OnLine and dynamic computerised social database at ADATS

Immediately after the project proposal was presented to NOVIB, the DLDP started in October 1986 with a detailed demographic survey carried out in all the 87 villages. Of these, 29 were in the old area where ADATS had already worked for nine years, and 58 were new villages in the Chelur Expansion Programme (CEP) area where our involvement was just for the past one year.

The entire DLDP staff, then consisting of one Extension Worker and three Field Workers (DLDP), made prior appointments and visited all the villages in October and November 1986. In each CSU, in front of all the member Coolies, the surveys were conducted with one Coolie correcting, complementing and supplementing another. ADATS believed, at that time, that this collective exercise would help elucidate authentic information. But, as we shall shortly see, this was not necessarily so. Only when a people decide to completely trust the development worker will they reveal their everything to her or him.

But these Survey Meetings also helped to share the overall objectives of the DLDP with each and every Member Coolie family in the 87 CSUs. Though the original conception of the DLDP was from the Coolies themselves when they reviewed the one year Drought Relief Works project, it was still necessary to ensure that each and every Member Coolie family was aware.

In a representative system like the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA structure, it was often possible that the elected Representatives and Secretaries carry the people on personal faith and equations of trust. It was then possible that, without meaning to be undemocratic, participation was restricted and each and every Coolie did not have a chance to share her or his ideas.

During this survey, each Coolie was asked to describe in detail the exact nature of work they desired to be done on their land if there was no budgetary or other constraint. While most wished that levelling and clearing works be done, some wanted open wells and farm ponds to be dug on their fields.

In the 29 older villages where we had already worked for nine years, this demographic survey went without a hitch. But in the 58 newer villages of the CEP area, where our involvement was only a little over a year, this was not so. In quite a few villages, Coolies began to get suspicious when we queried about their land holding. And when we demanded to be shown documentary proof of ownership and control, many refused to give details.

Since we were determined that the DLDP should not be misused to develop *Ryot* lands disguised under Coolie ownership, we adamantly struck to our ground. If they did not have faith in ADATS, we maintained, there could be no partnership between us. Finally, all but 6 new villages gave the survey numbers of their lands, and showed their title deeds *Pahanis*, and other proofs of ownership and control.

ADATS was to discover, a few years later when the Coolies sheepishly admitted, that in quite a few villages of the CEP area they had actually only compromised. They had given us details on the bad lands they wished to develop, but deliberately withheld information on the small patches of wet and other good lands that they owned, fearing that these would be saved when and if we decided to force them to pay back the investments made through the DLDP!

The manner in which the truth finally came out was very touching as well as telling, and deserves a special mention in this Report. In mid 1989, when ADATS was facing a very severe cash flow problem, we decided that our efforts, specially in the fields of referral health and the giving of interest-free CCF loans should be directed only towards the poorest of the poor.

And in order to determine who they were, we used these demographic survey sheets that we had made in the last months of 1986.

At that time, hundreds of Member Coolie families came forward to declare their real assets and voluntarily exclude themselves from the list of the really deserving! This incident led to a new practice in the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA. They decided that every year, in the months of January soon after the crops are harvested, each and every Member Coolie family would voluntarily fill up an Assets and Liabilities statement which has been specially designed and approved by the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA, thereby updating the OnLine database which is maintained at Bagepalli.

We are very proud to state that what started as an ADATS initiative in order to gather authentic socio-economic data has today become a priority of the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA itself. We are now in a position to state that each and every Member Coolie family and her or his family members realise the need to have accurate and up to date data on record in order to themselves measure accomplishments, decide on priority areas, etc.

ADATS and the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA today have, at their finger tips, a wealth of intimate and accurate data on the very personal, political, social and economic status of each and every member Coolie. All this is computerised and used on a day to day basis in order to take good and responsible decisions on a wide array of topics including the advisability of contesting a particular local body elections, special measures to attract a particular disprivileged community to join the Coolie Sangha, focus attention on the special problems of the landless, keep a track on women memberships, quickly appraise staffing positions, etc. etc. All this had its genesis in the DLDP Survey Forms which were developed in late 1986.

### 3.2. Agri Survey

A qualified Agriculturist, experienced in watershed development, was recruited to work full time in ADATS. He visited each and every acre of Coolie land in the 74 villages where the DLDP was to be undertaken. In all these visits, just as during the demographic survey, he was accompanied by all the Member Coolie families of each CSU. He studied each Coolie holding and reacted to the choice of work that the Member Coolie family had opted for during the demographic survey. He endorsed some of these choices as being sensible, some others he reinforced by giving a few more useful suggestions, and yet others he discouraged for being nonviable.

All the Coolies accompanying him during these treks profited from the many advises he gave in each village, along with detailed explanations and reasons. In this manner, the Agri Survey conducted from December 1986 was the first training input in the DLDP.

### 3.3. Allocation Scale

At the end of the Agri Survey, the Agriculturist could classify the land problems that needed to be tackled under four broad categories of slope correction, rock clearance, land virginity, and raven and gully check. Of these, slope correction was identified as the most serious problem that needed to be taken up on a priority basis in the first year itself in order to immediately bring as much land as possible under cultivation during the 1987 monsoons.

All the lands were accordingly graded on scales of 0-10 for each of the second, third and fourth factors. But slope correction got a scale of 0-20 with 0 indicating level land and 20 indicating a steep gradient. When the total scores were multiplied by the actual holding of each Coolie, a rational and sensible scale for distribution of the available labour capital (person-days) was arrived at.

As a result, Coolies with less holdings, but perhaps needing a greater intervention to develop their lands, were not punished for their poverty. Similarly, Coolies with larger holdings were not rewarded simply for being richer, when their lands were level and did not need much work to be done.

The development of this just allocation scale and making the Coolies understand it turned out to be greatest contribution that the Agriculturist made to the DLDP.

### 3.4. Planning the DLDP Works in each CSU

In early 1987 the 81 CSUs had facts and figures that emerged from the demographic survey in front of them. Each individual Coolie had the expert advice given to her or him by our Agriculturist in mind. They also had a rational allocation scale that they understood and appreciated as being fair.

The budget allocation for each CSU was calculated at membership strength x 125 days x Rs 8 for the first year. Thus, a CSU with 45 Member Coolie families got Rs 45,000 and another with a strength of 72 got Rs 72,000. Many regular and special CSU Meeting, Cluster Meets and two BCS Meetings passed before the final DLDP Plans for 1987 was decided upon. They were immediately copied and circulated to all the Clusters.

The second DLDP Plan which was brought out in early 1988 was more a matter of routine. But the third Plan of 1989 expressed a deep honesty, maturity and wisdom with many Coolies declaring that there wasn't any need to work further on their already developed lands (five entire CSUs decided not to work at all), and instead using the allotted number of persondays to clear barren no-man's lands for the landless. The overall percentage of landless Member Coolie families dropped to 7.7% by the end of 1989, from an alarming 20% at the start of the project!

But what is very important to note is that none of this was done by ADATS. We only facilitated a process with systems, procedures and formats, and later with expert technical advice which would normally not have been available to them. And it is equally important to note that during the demographic survey, the Extension Worker (DLDP) and the Field Workers (DLDP) acted more as teachers and guides to help the Coolies themselves understand a socio-economic situation that they were aware of only in a superficial manner through everyday living. So too, the Agriculturist acted as a trainer rather than the conventional expert.

This turned out to be the first truly grass root planned income and employment generating project that ADATS was to take up. It was an exercise and experience that forcefully told us that it was not any false charity or goodwill which should compel development workers like ourselves to encourage grass root planning and Coolie participation. On the other hand, this could even be an ideology free decision made with sound managerial considerations in mind, since there is absolutely no other way by which we can ensure sound results when attempting to execute projects for other people's betterment.

### 3.5. Giriraja chicken for Coolie women

Scientists in Bangalore developed the Giriraja breed of synthetic chicken which had some of the positive qualities of both, native as well as hybrid chicken. While they were disease resistant, could scavenge for their food in village streets and did not need any special housing, they gained a good weight of 3.6 kgs in 280 days. They laid 180 eggs in 500 days against the native fowl's 68 eggs in the same period. Or else, they could be culled at 8 weeks when they gained a body weight of 1.3 kgs against the native fowl's 0.4 kg. The Indian Council of Veterinary Research and the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) needed to field test the new breed.

This region had a culture that the earnings from raising fowl belonged to the woman. Even the village loser who would get drunk and beat up his family would not touch his wife's chicken earnings which she was free to use for her personal needs (though these savings will invariably end up being used to buy medicines for her children).

ADATS decided to propagate the Giriraja chicken among Coolie women in order to augment their income. Every woman who was prepared to hatch these eggs, which we procured from the UAS, Bangalore, was given a grant of Rs 60 in order to buy two brooder hens (mature birds whose faces had turned red and were ready to sit on eggs), 16 hatching eggs, and two rearing baskets to protect the mother and young chicks. A total of 36,000 eggs were supplied to about 2,300 Coolie women in the taluk.

But very soon, the UAS was not able to supply the required number of eggs. ADATS was faced with a very clear choice of either to continue the Giriraja project in a half serious way, distributing whatever eggs we could get from the University, or to take the entire burden of producing the hatching eggs ourselves. Committed scientists from Bangalore were willing to help us. We procured an acre of land with two dilapidated poultry sheds ten kilometres away from Bagepalli town, constructed additional buildings, installed a hatchery and incubator, and continued to supply the eggs ourselves.

We planned to finance this venture with the exchange rate gains that we hoped to get in the remittances for the DLDP (though NOVIB had planned our budget at a rate of 1 Dfl = Rs 6.25, we actually realised an exchange rate gain of Rs 1,127,777. But even this was not enough. We therefore approached EZE and explained our predicament to them. They immediately contributed an additional Rs 706,250 to complete the poultry shed.

### 3.6. Sangha Funds

The starting of the DLDP in 1987 coincided with the Coolie's decision to build up Sangha Funds at the CSU, Cluster and BCS levels. Our call to the Coolies to contribute 10% of their earnings to their respective CSU Funds evoked a positive response.

All the Coolies decided that since the wages they were getting in the DLDP was very fair, they would voluntarily contribute a uniform Re 1 per day from their daily wage to their respective Sangha Funds though this worked out to more than 11%. In many CSUs the Coolies voluntarily contributed Rs 10 each, being 10% of the value of the tools and implements we gave them under the DLDP.

ADATS made it a strict policy to pay the Coolies their full wage of Rs 8 per day, refusing to cut anything at source. We are clear that all contributions to their Sangha Funds should be voluntary, with no trace of compulsion whatsoever. Not even in a single village have the Coolies failed to collect the Sangha Fund contribution and credit it into their respective bank accounts.

At the time of writing this Report in June 1990, there is a total of Rs 844,515 in 87 fixed deposits and Rs 81,305 in as many savings bank accounts of the Old and CEP Areas (the total cash savings of the BCS and all the CSUs in Bagepalli taluk stands at Rs 1,237,127). Each one of these accounts is being operated by the Member Coolie families of that respective village level CSU in order to meet the organisational expenses of their Coolie Sangha.

### 3.7. Adult Literacy Programme (ALP) classes

ADATS was vainly proud of the phenomenal success we had accomplished in the field of adult literacy in the CEP area, with our singular effort contributing to making more than 1,200 adults functionally literate. The DLDP provided yet another opportunity to push these figures, and our own boast, still higher.



In a unilateral manner which turned out to be altogether unwise, we took a decision to link attendance at the daily ALP classes to the payment of DLDP wages. It was not enough, we declared, if a Coolie worked from 9 am to 6 p.m. In addition, she or he had to attend the ALP Classes for one hour in order to get wages under the DLDP. The Field Workers (DLDP) were instructed to peruse both the Attendance Registers - at the work spots and in the night classes - before making payments. We believed that this compulsion would surely result in making at least 90% of the adult Coolies literate.

But the task became tiring for everyone concerned, relations between ADATS and the Coolies bordered on the acrimonious in most of the CEP area, and to boot it all off, we were not getting positive results in terms of enhanced literacy. In a mid term review of the CEP area conducted by the Coolies themselves in July 1987, they recommended that we immediately abandon the compulsion and de-link the ALP classes from the DLDP.

ADATS realised that our earlier success with the Adult Literacy Programme had been because of its voluntary nature. When, at the start of the DLDP, we had got carried away by the possibility of achieving a neat 100% literacy in adult Coolies, problems started arising. Very clearly, 100% literacy was our concern, not yet shared by the Coolies. As a result, Coolie participation had been thrown to the winds by the new element of compulsion.

Ironically, it was immediately after the last paisa of DLDP money was spent, in 1990, when the Coolies were in a conscious mood to consolidate the gains obtained through the three year project, that interest in adult literacy renewed. Today, at the time of writing this Report, the Coolies have themselves restarted the ALP classes in right earnestness, in their own attempt to achieve cent percent literacy.

### 3.8. The payment of DLDP Wages

Each Field Worker was entrusted with about 25 villages where he had to ensure that wage payments were made promptly for works done according to the mutually agreed DLDP Plan. Copies of this Plan were available in each CSU, with the Cluster Secretaries and with the DLDP Staff. In order to avoid confusion, the procedure for making payments was also worked out in careful detail and copies of this were also available with everyone.

In each village level CSU, there was a separate DLDP Minutes Book in which the daily attendance was marked by an elected Representative. At the end of each Work, a special DLDP Meeting was conducted in the CSU, chaired by the Member Coolie family whose Work had just been completed. Details on the work done, her or his satisfaction or otherwise with it, etc. was fully recorded in these special DLDP Minutes Book.

These Minutes were carefully perused the next day by the Field Worker (DLDP) who made the DLDP wage payment, in cash, directly to the Coolies. This fact was also recorded in the same DLDP Minutes Book. These DLDP Minutes Books were perused every week in each Cluster Meet, in the presence of the BCS Secretary, the Cluster Secretary, and all the elected CSU Representatives.

At the ADATS central office, the Accounts Admn Assistant gave out advances to the Field Workers (DLDP) every morning, and took in their accounts and the unspent balances every evening. The money in transit was covered against theft, loss and infidelity by New India Assurance Co. Ltd., a government undertaking.

In this way, there were three points of check and control on every paisa spent in the DLDP. The ADATS Accounts Department ensured that all necessary norms and procedures were strictly adhered to, and the Insurance Company kept a strict tab on the moneys in their own interest. But what really led to the incredible accomplishment whereby not a single paisa went astray in the implementation of such a large project spread over so many villages was

the Coolie check and control. This was accomplished due to our uncompromising adherence to a policy of transparency at all stages. The Coolies planned, monitored, implemented and reviewed the entire project by themselves.

### 3.9. The role of the DLDP staff

The DLDP had a trim staffing with one Extension Worker, three Field Workers (DLDP) and two Agriculturists who all reported to the Executive Assistant.

They did an excellent job in giving useful support to the Coolies in terms of making timely payments after pursuing their DLDP Minutes Books (which also served as attendance registers), keeping pilferage and leakage at an absolute zero in spite of the very large amounts involved. We are proud that in addition to our policy of total transparency, the basic honesty and sincerity of purpose in the DLDP staff has contributed to this remarkable achievement.

But in a purely technical sense, our Agriculturists were not been able to offer any totally new or innovative advice. There are two possible reasons for this. The first was that the Coolie lands were so backward and underdeveloped that what had to be done on them in terms of boulder, rock, pebble and shrub clearance, levelling, bunding, ravine and gully check, etc. was quite apparent and obvious.

But we are convinced that the more important reason is that the Coolies had, in their own timid and primitive manner, tried to eke a cultivation out of these lands for so long that they had, by then, very strong dreams as to what had to be done on them if and when an opportunity presented itself. These dreams and aspirations of the Coolies were too strong to be countered with any contradicting advice.

Perhaps the Agriculturist will have a greater role in a second three year follow up phase of this project when she can impart special skills on drought prone farming. But on the whole, ADATS has a great admiration for the remarkable wisdom that the Coolies possess even in technical matters like the development of dry lands. We recognise that this wisdom is the cumulative total of all their hitherto unrecognised dreams and visions, and that a lot can be learnt from an articulation of these.

### 3.10. The DLDP and the rest of ADATS staff

As for the remaining staff of ADATS, however senior or well versed they were with so called field realities, they could not interfere in areas like grass root planning, monitoring and review which were sacredly held as prerogatives of the Coolies and their functionaries. Their role was very strictly restricted to supporting action plans that the Coolies themselves had deliberated upon and decided.

The mere exercising of these rights contributed to a tremendous enhancement of managerial and conceptual skills in the Coolies. This did lead to a certain degree of frustration and consternation in the senior staff of ADATS and those who could not reconcile to accepting a humbler role of accompaniment threatened to leave the organisation.

ADATS' acceptance of these resignations without any trace of regret sent out clear signals to the Coolies that we were very earnest about our commitment to effect a separation between the voluntary agency and the mass organisation, development worker and Coolie. In the process, Coolies and staff alike realised that what everyone should expect from the development worker was far more than a mediocre middle level managerial role, filled with a pretentious arrogance and condescendence that they often did not deserve.

### 3.11. Demonstration plots and study tours

In 1987, nineteen villages in the Old area were chosen for demonstrating improved dry land cultivation techniques with one acre of Ragi and one acre of groundnut inter-cropped with Redgram in each village. The entire cultivation operation, starting with land preparation and sowing to harvesting and inter-cropping was carried out by ADATS under the Agriculturist's supervision. During important operations on these nineteen demonstration plots, all the Coolies from the surrounding villages were invited to attend and learn. Farmers' Days were also organised during the harvests.

The average profit from groundnut was more than Rs 3,000 and Ragi Rs 750. This was one of the first times that fertilisers, manure and plant protection practices were taken up on dry land lands anywhere in the taluk.

But what we really demonstrated through the 1987 dry land farming demonstration plots, was that the productivity of rainfed groundnut crops could be in the profit range of Rs 2,800 to Rs 3,500 per acre. This was almost five times the prevailing profit rate of even middle and rich peasant cultivation. We showed that provided there was reinvestment on land - as opposed to the year after year plunder of it without applying even manures or replenishing top soil - the productivity of rainfed cultivation in Bagepalli taluk could be improved five fold!

The Coolies, in our opinion, drew this same conclusion, even if they failed to fully grasp the finer techniques like how much fertiliser, what seed, and other operational details of scientific dry land cultivation. The significance of this is more fully discussed in para 4.5. of this Report

### 3.12. Grass cover for the bunds

Soil and water conservation bunds done under the DLDP tended to get eroded in a few years. Our Agriculturist, after discussing this problem with the soil conservation specialists of the government, found *stylosanthus Hamata* grass to be an ideal bud cover since it was a drought resistant, self seeding, shrubby type of grass with deep roots. The grass also had a very high protein content and was therefore good for sheep rearing on the bunds. *Hamata* grass also opened the possibility for rabbit rearing for meat and wool by landless Coolies.

A few of us were, however, sceptical of *Hamata* grass' ability to tide over drought. We therefore decided to experiment on one- third the lands bunded to see for ourselves. So we procured 2,500 kgs of seed at Rs 25 per kg for planting in September 1987.

The immediate results which could be seen the very next year was very disappointing and therefore the activity was discontinued in 1988. Less than a quarter the planted area germinated and stabilised. The reason for this was partly because of the long dry spell between one rain and the next, and also because the bunds were rocky since the Coolies had refused to waste their precious persondays capital on beautification like mud cover for the bunds.

But of late we can observe a visible increase in *Hamata* grass cover. This could, perhaps, be because of late germination combined with the fact that the land on the upper slopes of the bunds have, over the years, got naturally filled with run-off silt and the grass has now found a good foundation for rooting.

### 3.13. The planting of trees

ADATS offered to undertake the supply of useful fodder, manure and fruit trees for planting on Coolie lands, specially along the newly made bunds. The Coolies rejected all shade trees as this would hinder cropping. They also requested for two coconut trees to be planted outside each Coolie home, to be irrigated with their kitchen run-off water.

We made detailed lists after ascertaining what they wanted and procured all these saplings in September 1987 for planting with the monsoons. We extracted a condition from the CSUs that if there was a plant mortality rate of more than 33% we would interpret this as lack of interest on their part, and they would return the entire project cost to ADATS. In this way it was made clear that protecting, watering and raising these trees was the Coolie Sangha's responsibility.

But what actually happened was that, except for the coconut trees which were planted in the villages, all the trees died in spite of the Coolies' utmost efforts. We engaged the services of experts who were brought in to advice, just before the monsoons in 1988.

It became clear that this was not because of neglect, but simply because Coolie lands were the upper tracts in the villages with very little or no surface run water. Though once established, their roots would find the deeper water table, there was no feasible manner to ensure that all these hundreds of thousands of saplings were regularly watered for seven continuous months. The only illustration of such an effort being successful was the government's controversial roadside avenue planting and we knew that this was not a feasible option for the Coolie Sanghas.

The lower lying lands which were often criss-crossed with surface streams and creeks, however little water they carried, provided vital sustenance for the saplings and they survived. But these were, in the main, *Ryot* owned. The afforestation effort therefore continued with only coconut trees being planted in front of Coolie homes, and this has turned out to be a visible success.

### 3.14. Issues and struggles

ADATS was aware that the DLDP, during its implementation, would open up a Pandora's box of land issues by focusing the Coolies' attention on the question of lands that they had unjustly lost to the richer peasantry for a pittance. As long as their lands were not productive, the Coolies did not identify land and cultivation as an earning venture. But now that there was a scope to develop it and bring it under cultivation, struggling to get back these lands would suddenly become, in the Coolies' perception, a very attractive proposition.

We recognised the inherent value in any just and legal struggle in order to strengthen the Coolies' unity and self dignity. But even so we were not prepared for the violence with which these erupted during this three year project phase.

When trying to picture the situation through these issues it must, at all times, be borne in mind that the DLDP was not implemented in isolation of a larger socio-economic and alternate political process which was simultaneously being fostered. Therefore *Ryot* reactions should not be simplistically dismissed as mere negative or undesired reactions to the implementation of an ordinary income and employment generating programme by a bunch of well meaning social workers.

Such issues and struggles are, instead, the painful but inevitable path that processes that work in favour of the poor tend to take if such processes are truly effective. And, contrary to the most often asked question posed to us, it is not the development worker and voluntary agency that has to work hard in order to "keep the people and their spirits intact", but the Coolies who simultaneously engage themselves in a desperate struggle to keep the development workers and the voluntary agency from giving up too easily and too soon...

Annexed to this Completion Report, please find an elaborate documentation of one such series of struggles that spanned a period of nearly two and a half years and covered more than twenty villages in the CEP Area. In not documenting all the other hundreds of small and large struggles of the Coolies, we are not trying to disparage or make little of them. We chose this

particular struggle because of the number of forces and Coolies involved, and the geographic area and time span that it covered. The almost mind boggling vastness of this issue serves to illustrate the larger implications of land issues better than any localised narration of equal pain, bravery and valour.

## 4. ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### 4.1. Introduction

In the three years (four, if we take into account the preceding DRW project) of its implementation, the manner of and process behind the payment of DLDP Wages has had some impressive achievements. It must be borne in mind that an identical project was simultaneously implemented in 60 more adjoining villages that ADATS is working in, with support from EZE, West Germany. As a result, more than two-third the taluk was covered under this special intervention. But it is impossible to list these achievements without wondering if they will get converted into lasting accomplishments. This section of the Report will attempt to discuss this vital issue which haunts all those who undertake to implement income and employment generating projects for the strengthening of the poor, the question of sustainability.

### 4.2. A listing of the broader gains obtained from the DLDP and the questions these raise

#### 4.2.1. INCREASE IN DAILY WAGES

The first notable achievement of the DLDP was the dramatic rise in daily wages from Rs 3 to an average of Rs 13, and the introduction of the concept of equal wage for women and men. The release of bonded labour and reduction in the number of children going to work contributed as much to making this possible as did the direct payment of DLDP wages for five summer months every year.

But the immediate question that comes to mind is whether all this will last; was it not an artificial intervention into the labour market, impossible to be sustained for any extended period of time.

#### 4.2.2. INCREASE IN COOLIE PRODUCTION

The second major accomplishment of the project was the substantial increase in agricultural production by the poor themselves. This study was conducted in ten randomly selected villages where the DLDP had been implemented. The Coolies themselves were appraised as to the reason for this survey and asked to volunteer authentic information. We believe that the findings reflect a fair view of the overall situation in the taluk.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF TEN SELECTED VILLAGES TO STUDY THE IMPACT OF THE DLDP

Village	Acreage		Crops grown before DLDP			Value in Rupees	Crops grown after DLDP			Value in Rupees:
	< DLDP	> DLDP	Gnats	Millets	Paddy		Gnats	Millets	Paddy	
002 Kothakota	95.60	111.60	184.5	85.7	7.0	67,157.50	267.0	100.0	17.0	110,200.00
014 Seegalapalli	135.00	157.75	85.0	73.0	3.0	38,425.00	275.0	39.0	8.0	94,650.00
036 Mandyampalli	120.70	137.80	128.0	89.3	72.0	70,092.50	326.0	12.8	267.0	181,100.00
050 Venkatapura	62.75	77.00	79.0	23.0	1.0	25,175.00	189.0	7.5	5.5	60,225.00
067 Gadivanlapalli	100.00	121.25	294.0	61.8	50.0	99,905.00	450.5	44.0	50.0	161,150.00
072 Ramanpadi	204.00	223.75	325.5	36.8	0.0	89,655.00	513.0	37.2	0.0	163,187.50
107 Nanjireddipalli	120.00	127.75	173.0	43.5	14.0	56,537.50	224.0	11.0	29.0	78,650.00
120 Bomma'ipalli	196.50	216.75	239.0	204.0	5.0	106,900.00	474.0	160.5	9.0	185,025.00
123 G. Maddepalli	73.50	86.90	86.5	39.9	9.5	32,977.50	159.0	27.9	14.0	58,875.00
140 Donnakonda	56.50	74.00	13.5	75.8	8.0	22,430.00	106.0	45.0	20.5	49,200.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,164.55</b>	<b>1,334.55</b>	<b>1,608.00</b>	<b>732.80</b>	<b>169.50</b>	<b>609,255.00</b>	<b>2,983.50</b>	<b>484.85</b>	<b>420.00</b>	<b>1,142,262.50</b>

As a result of the DLDP, the total land holding of the Coolies increased by 14.6 percent. There was a net increase of 87.5 percent in the value of crops produced by the Coolies. But a closer look at these figures reveals some questionable achievements.

Coolie production of groundnut, a commercial cash crop, increased by 85.5 percent. While there was an increase of 147.8% in the production of coarse paddy which the Coolies themselves consumed, there was at the same time a decrease of 33.8% in the value of other millets that the Coolies produced.

However, while the long term sustainability of such a production pattern can well be questioned, it is an undisputed fact that their harvests can now sustain them for at least three months longer than they used to. The need to seasonally migrate in search of work now does not arise till at least the month of April. And in years like this one, when the monsoons are on time, there is no need for the Coolies to go out at all. Earlier, hunger and near starvation conditions would have invited this dread on just about every Coolie family by the middle of January every year.

Here again, however, three questions immediately come to mind. The first pertains to the type of crops that they raise, the second as to what will happen once these magic quantum leaps in production get stabilised and refuse to grow at the same continued rate, and finally whether the long term problems of the Coolies can be solved by themselves attempting to become primary producers.

#### 4.2.3. PATTERN OF LAND HOLDING

The third major achievement was the rational reorganisation of their assets. In many CSUs, the scattered and fragmented holdings of the Coolies have been consolidated into single and contiguous plots. This has been done through very mature decisions arrived at in thousands of special CSU level DLDP Meetings where land disputes were settled among brothers and cousins. To this has to also be added the fact that most of the landless have been given patches of land cleared from the hillsides and shrubbery.

#### 4.2.4. COOLIES AND DEVELOPMENT WORKERS

The fourth major achievement that the DLDP had was in the clarification of roles, responsibilities and working relationship between the staff and functionaries of ADATS and the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA. The DLDP contributed to strengthening this relationship into a more mature one of mutuality. The manner in which the project was implemented, with so many areas like planning, monitoring and review obstinately held as prerogatives of the Coolies, contributed to removing inter-personal dependencies more effectively than would have any mere declaration of intent or principle.

The vital questions that spring to mind are whether the Coolies will have the maturity to realise that there still is a role, even if altered, for the liberal elements in the bourgeoisie and that this can be played only if those from that class opt to accompany them. Will the Coolies retain this new sense of purpose and identify they have got for themselves or will it be usurped by some self appointed leaders from their ranks who do not even have the capabilities and scruples that ADATS staff did?

Democracy is meaningless unless the population decide to participate on a continuous and every day basis, and this can indeed turn out to be a very tiring way of living. And it is when entrustments are made that situations turns ripe for pretenders to the throne. In summary, does ADATS have the will, the wherewithal, and the gumption to ensure that the concepts of power and leadership are replaced in the Coolie Sangha with those of strength and representation?

### 4.3. Coolies and ADATS

As described in the preceding para, the DLDP contributed to a coming of age in both the organisations. It transformed the effort at Bagepalli beyond that of conventional social work, even if the latter was earlier garbed in revolutionary words and slogans. But no attempt at a redefinition of roles between ADATS staff and Coolie Sangha functionaries could possibly have left the relationship between ADATS and the Coolie Sangha unaltered. And this vital change is perhaps the most difficult one to paraphrase.

We have deep enough an intuitive relationship with the Coolies to know that they were never really dependent on us. Yet there was this compulsion in them, perhaps in an extended act of good manners in order to express gratitude, to please us by showing a respectful subservience. There was nothing childlike or innocent in it. Just plain and simple dishonesty which was an irritating thorn in our relationship, constantly reminding us that our relationship was less than sincere, and making us wonder if there were others that the Coolies trusted more, or whether they were just plain and simple laughing behind our backs. As an organisation, ADATS was plagued by those unsubstantiated feelings that do not contribute to healthy living.

The implementation of the DLDP saw a major change taking place from this pretended dependency to the beginnings of a sincere trust and respect. It paved the way for an equation which is more comfortable and thereby blessed with the assurance of a longer life. It has paved the way for democracy and decentralisation through the fostering of village autonomy, pluralism, and the development of a work ethos in the Coolies.

Even at the risk of being repetitious, it is still necessary to recapitulate some of the things we have already said. Even so, it will require a reading between the lines to grasp what we are trying to convey due to inadequacies in our articulation.

For three continuous years, for five months each year, the Member Coolie families worked on their holdings in batches of 15 to 25 Coolies, in a very systematic manner. Though each batch were led by a CSU Representative, it was the land owner's writ that ruled when a batch worked on her or his land. They did whatever she or he felt needed to be done on the holding. On the evening of the last day of each individual's work, a special CSU Meeting was held and its minutes recorded in the DLDP Minutes Book.

Here, it was not only the actual work done and its details that were recorded, but also various other matters pertaining to what actually happened during those three or four days of collective labour. Decisions were taken to pay the wages for sick Coolies even though they were not present, strictures were passed on Coolies who acted with a caste bias or with disinterest, or someone who tried to send her or his small children to work on behalf of the family, etc.

Thereby, Monitoring was not done on pre-set guidelines whereby the Coolies would have been reduced to a position of agents appointed by ADATS for the latter's practical convenience. Instead it became a long drawn out and continuing exercise in expressing their prioritisation and values. And Review became the forum for the assertion of these values vis-à-vis ADATS.

This is how a very healthy pattern of work ethics, peculiar and particular to each and every one of the 71 villages emerged, taking the caste composition and other special features of their specific village situations into consideration.

This promoted in them a feeling of knowing that they too had valid and worthy opinions and answers. This self confidence and assertion of self worth flowed into the broad and overall decisions that the Coolies took for the project area as a whole. These included the setting aside of Re 1 each from their DLDP wages as a compulsory saving towards their Sangha Funds, the stopping of the ADATS enforced linking of Adult literacy Programme objectives

to the payment of DLDP wages, the ensuring of equal wages being paid for both, women and men, the decision to spend the saved DLDP wage moneys on various items that they considered important, etc.

#### 4.4. ADATS' Quest for Answers

First a quick recapitulation of the questions:

- Was the DLDP not just a temporary and artificial intervention in the labour market?
- Was it good to support an effort whereby the Coolies got tempted into going in for a cash crop?
- What would happen once the initial magic quantum leaps in dry land production got stabilised and it refused to grow any more?
- Can the long term and larger problems of Coolies be solved by themselves attempting to become direct producers?
- Would self seeking Coolies from their ranks usurp leadership? Or would they allow the liberal elements inherent in the bourgeois intellectual to steer them away from concepts of power and leadership?

We at ADATS are not an arrogant lot, nor are we unthinking activists floating from action to action. When we say that we do not know the last and final answers, it is not because the questions do not haunt us. There were many disturbing questions that formed the backdrop for our work at all times. They effected our inter- personal relations and had an all prevailing presence at every moment and during every action we made, throughout the life of the DLDP project.

Though it is very difficult to cite such restless uncertainties, they could broadly be listed as under:

- ADATS' developmental approach, insofar as the DLDP was concerned, was a bet against the local political economy, competing for a better place for the poor in it. Was this a viable proposition?
- Macro factors stemming from a global economy have definite consequences in localised situations. The approach of voluntary agencies do not seem to take these into full account.

Or, both questions could be summed up into one:

- Does the peasant economy of a region like Bagepalli taluk have sufficient productivity to justify an approach that seems to emphasise solely on distributive justice?

#### 4.5. The 2 tracks that capitalisation of agriculture has followed in India

We shared the common concerns expressed regarding the many negative impacts that flowed from the fatalistic accepting the mainstream economy as an inevitable fallout of present trends of today. We were appalled, just as everyone else, and frightened that these mainstream developments would lead to an inhuman and continually dehumanising set of consequences. But we did not think it correct to therefore reject the predominant trends of capitalisation, close our eyes, and wish it away.

If capitalism was inevitable, then we had a role in preparing the Coolies to enter into it with dignity. Otherwise, in spite of all our curses and empty condemnations, they would be forced by circumstances to crawl into the new social order on their knees and land in the slums and on the pavements.



A very cursory and unscholarly/unsubstantiated look at capitalisation patterns in Indian agriculture showed us that there are, broadly speaking, two types or patterns that have taken place:

- The first was the Punjab variety where capitalisation was induced, with bourgeois state support, by an impetus from and decision of the rich to produce more.  
This had a particular consequence for the poor which all of us agreed was unsavoury.
- The second was the Tanjore (rice belt) or the Nizamabad (cane sugar) variety where capitalisation of agriculture ensued from a totally different kind of pressure - i.e. when it became impossible for the *Ryots* to continue their earlier prevailing low productive feudal type of agriculture due to ever increasing demands from the poor for better wages and working conditions.  
This had another, totally different consequence for the poor that even while we did not see as unsavoury, we are sceptical if it would be sustained.

We derived a conclusion which we tried to elucidate from this cursory understanding of the two patterns of capitalisation of agriculture in India. We did not state this as a definite thesis we purported, but rather as an explanation that we suggested to ourselves as correct. It was an attempt to conceptually rationalise a course that, when given an opportunity, the poor themselves seemed to foster in their attempt to face the inevitability of capitalist development.

Any production implied the application of live human labour on the lifeless means of production. Translated in a feudal agricultural economy characterised by a stagnating low production, this meant that the Coolies worked for very low wages under inhuman conditions on *Ryot* owned lands that did not see much improvement investments.

A change from the feudal agricultural economy to a capitalised farming implied the changing of all these factors of production - i.e. the live productive force as well as the inert means of production.

In the first pattern of capitalisation of agriculture that, for example, Punjab witnessed, it was changes in the means of production that primarily accounted for an increase in output. Irrigation facilities were vastly improved, seed varieties bettered, et al. The improvement in the quality of the concrete labour of the Coolies ensued as a consequence that dragged behind on the one hand, and was forced to keep up by the land owners on the other.

Capitalisation of agriculture, in this pattern, followed the text book fashion and led to all those nightmarish questions that are attached to an acceptance of the modernisation ideology. The process was slow and drawn out in spite of the “green revolution”, specially for poor soils that it came to last, since an increase in the profit for the rich was the process’ prime motivator.

In the second pattern of capitalisation of agriculture that, for example, Tanjore and Nizamabad witnessed, it was changes in the live productive force that primarily accounted for an increase in output. Unionisation under the auspices of left forces led to a demand for higher wages and fixed working hours, resistance to caste and other forms of oppression, et al. The improvement in the means of production ensued as a consequence that dragged behind on the one hand, and was forced to keep up by the Coolies on the other.

The feudal landlords had a behavioural pattern of giving up instead of struggling. This initially resulted in *Ryot* migration in these areas and the reinvesting of capital on real estate speculation in the neighbouring metropolises. It had the very temporary result of reducing the bargaining power of the Coolies. The Unionisers had to give leadership and spiritual strength for the Coolies to sustain and wait the temporary phenomenon out. And, as they had rightly

gauged, migration was not an answer on a large scale. All the landlords could not leave and give up their agriculture. They were forced to cultivate on more productive lines, ushering in capitalistic practices and production relations.

#### 4.6. The effect of the DLDP on peasant cultivation in Bagepalli

We believe that the DLDP has had a similar impetus on our low productive agricultural economy. This was perhaps the intuitive reason that made us undertake it on such a large scale, covering nearly 150 villages. Unlike wage strikes and other such localised issues that have only a limited impact, demanding only distributive justice without going into the question of whether there is enough to distribute, we were certain that the DLDP would act as a spur on the economy to produce more.

Coolies as a class are not inclined to rush impetuously. Unless in their intuitive conviction they see a very sound chance of success, they will not participate fully, burning earlier bridges they had with the Ryots. However complicated a theory like the capitalisation of agriculture may appear, the Coolies have the capacity to absorb it as a factor in their wisdom and use it for decision taking at an intuitive level. The response to the DLDP shows that the Coolies saw it as a possible watershed in their lives.

#### 4.7. ADATS and the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA today

Before closing, it is necessary to briefly describe the present strength and capabilities of the Coolie Sangha at the time of writing this Report, in June 1990.

In the Old and CEP areas where the DLDP was implemented, the BCS has stabilised at a membership strength of 2,298 Coolie families in 71 CSUs. 19% of these memberships stand in the names of women. These Member Coolie family families comprise of individuals who have weathered many storms and temptations and made very personal and therefore authentic, mature choices that the Coolie Sangha is the only way of life for them. Just about every facet of their lives is determined in the village level weekly CSU Meetings, the weekly Cluster Meets, and the monthly taluk level BCS Meetings.

One Coolie woman from each member household attends the weekly Mahila Meetings in each CSU. Planning and monitoring the children's programme, including the appointment and supervision of their Teacher, deciding on whether the budget should be spent on books, clothes, tuition fees, games material, tours, picnics or whatever, is entirely in their hands.

So too is the entire decentralised health budgets. It is the Mahila Meetings in each CSU that have the powers and the cash to decide on sending a patient to hospital, spend a part of their money on cleaning up the drinking water wells, how much their Village Health Workers should get paid and what sort of training they should undertake, etc. The only man present in these weekly Mahila Meetings in each CSU is the Village Level Worker. And in many villages of the CEP area, the women have dispensed even with this concession, instead asking a literate woman from among themselves to record the Minutes of their meetings.

At their respective CSU level, the Coolies use the Coolie Credit Funds in order to obtain interest-free credit for themselves and thereby escape from the economic clutches of the *Ryot* class. They contribute 10% of the moneys they borrow, as also from their total earnings, from whatever other source, to their respective Sangha Funds and with this money they pay for their own Teachers and Village Health Workers, maintain their community halls and other assets, meet the monthly running costs like electricity and stationery, etc.

Sending their children to the government schools and the conducting of their children's Bala-kendras every evening without fail is a paramount concern of all the 71 CSUs. At present,

there are special ALP classes going on for those who failed to benefit from this activity some years back. Women's literacy is another area of crucial interest to these organised Coolies.

They settle disputes among themselves in their own Coolie forums and do not go to either the police stations or middle peasant arbitrators. They are as concerned about tackling external issues like petty government corruption, contractors cheating and *Ryot* oppression as they are about internal rectification like the protection of Coolie women from their own menfolk, drunken behaviour, thievery, and anything else that will invite disrepute onto themselves. They realise that one of the chief sources of strength is in keeping the neutral populations in their respective villages truly non-interfering and even sympathetic towards them.

Every year, in the months of March and April, all these 71 CSUs finalise their membership lists by either revoking suspensions or cancelling their fellow members, and conduct organisational elections for three Representatives from each CSU, and one Cluster Secretary under the aegis of the BCS President and returning officers that he appoints. One of these three CSU Representatives is compulsorily a woman, but they will soon abandon this reservation policy since it is becoming common practice for the Member Coolie families to elect two and sometimes even three women, based on authentic gender-bias free considerations.

All these various meetings are conducted in a very disciplined manner with a compulsory quorum of two-third the strength of the forum and with minutes meticulously recorded in separate Minutes Books. And if for some reason a particular meeting is not conducted, for whatever justifiable or other reason, the next higher forum acts as a watchdog and blocks activity for a week. This discipline is followed with absolutely no exception.

No CCF loan is given out, under any circumstance, unless two-third the CSU membership strength has recommended it and the Cluster Meet approved. Nobody, however sick or serious they may be, is referred to a hospital unless the Mahila Meeting has met and recommended that the patient be attended to. No child can be added onto the children's programme or removed from it until the CSU has so decided. No CSU Representative or Cluster Secretary can be appointed or removed unless the electorate (different colleges in each case) have elected or recalled. No village can be added on or removed unless the BCS Meeting approves. And no programme can be taken on, altered or stopped without very serious deliberations in the BCS Meeting.

In a conventional political sense, the Coolie Sangha is not powerful. Its coverage always fluctuates between a third of the total electorate and 44%. These numbers are sufficient to give a negative vote and prevent a candidate who they consider as anti-Coolie from ever coming to power, but it is insufficient for the Coolies to themselves gather the reigns.

But in the alternate political climate that the Coolies are attempting to create, they are very strong. Theirs is perhaps the only effective voice of sanity and justice in a polity is fast slithering into disrepute and decadence.

It can quite honestly be said that ADATS has only one beneficiary, the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA. And that ADATS plays only a very superficial, although crucial, facilitation and accompaniment role in all this. Perhaps what we are etching for ourselves is a truly alternate role in a paradigm where power is being replaced with strength and leadership with representation, and hierarchy with partnership. We, who as a class and breed of professional development workers have prerogated onto ourselves so many arrogant presuppositions, are finally finding for ourselves a role and identity in an emerging democracy and decentralism which could very well project totally alternate interpretations and world views.

## 5. BUDGET REALISATION STATEMENT as at 31 December 1989

SI No:	Head of Account	Three year Budget	Expenses incurred Jan '87 to Dec '89
SPENT ON BUDGETED ITEMS			
1.	Wages - DLDP:	10,125,000.00	
1.a.	Paid directly as wages		6,544,149.40
1.b.	Housing		172,450.00
1.c.	Insurance		208,003.10
1.d.	Coolie Pandaga		128,102.57
1.e.	Schemes for landless		14,320.00
1.f.	Borewells		193,891.00
1.g.	Fisheries		1,625.00
1.h.	Organic Farm (Assets)		1,786,767.50
1.i.	Organic Farm (Expenditure)		250,517.00
1.j.	Fodder Purchase		20,865.60
1.k.	Drought Relief Works		132,819.78
2.	Tools & Implements	200,000	103,671.00
3.	Training	45,000	34,139.10
4.	Salaries	201,600	206,800.00
5.	Vehicles	68,000	74,837.12
6.	Vehicle Maintenance	108,000	153,107.24
7.	Chicken Rearing	155,000	240,309.20
8.	Afforestation	485,000	147,650.35
9.	Demonstration Plots	102,600	114,702.20
10.	Studies & Tours	67,400	70,153.00
SPENT WITH EXCHANGE RATE GAINS			
11.	Spent to effect a positive discrimination in favour of women		1,127,277.00
11.a.	Land for chicken farm		177,416.00
11.b.	Construction of sheds		858,477.65
11.c.	Cycles and Petromax repairs		5,216.00
12.	Others:		
12.a.	Audit Fees		50,500.00
12.b.	Bank Charges		4,739.50
12.c.	Miscellaneous		34,221.00
OUT OF BUDGET EXPENDITURES			
13.	Spent of administration and support:		
13.a.	Printing & Stationery		54,809.23
13.b.	Audio visual aids		71,066.58
13.c.	Equipment maintenance		237,875.00
13.d.	Furniture & Fittings		14,465.00
13.e.	Equipment		399,861.50
INTEREST EARNED FROM BANK			
		78,722.00	
14.	Spent on the Extension Programmes:		
14.a.	Chickballapur		63,554.00
14.b.	Chintamani		86,744.00
14.c.	Mittemari		20,934.00
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>12,758,769.62</b>	<b>12,758,769.62</b>

## ANNEXURE TO PARA 3.14 "ISSUES AND STRUGGLES"

### The carnage at Chakwel

In this huge village with over 400 families and a Harijana Colony of nearly 120 houses, a majority of the untouchables formed a Coolie Sangha in September 1985. Though there were simmering of discontent from the very start, the *Ryots* did not really obstruct them from conducting their daily ALP classes, singing songs, and holding weekly meetings. On the adamant insistence of ADATS, the Harijans even managed to motivate a quarter of the main (caste) village poor to form another CSU of their own. The DLDP Survey in early 1987 was conducted very smoothly in Chakwel. The Harijans were more than willing to disclose details on their land holdings and planned to do wonders for three years in order to attain their total independence from the exploiting *Ryots*.

DLDP Works started on the first day of March 1987 with nearly 80 Harijans going out, in batches of 25, to work of their fields. This went on for more than a hundred days, till about mid June. The *Ryots* were desperate. The monsoon would soon arrive and there was no sign of the Harijans changing their new ways of unity and discipline and get ready to work on middle peasant fields. Clearly this project was not just a succour to give relief and charity to the poor during the summer months. Its deeper structural implications were grasped by the *Ryots* with a deep desperation.

Having finished working on most of their distant holdings that hugged the hills, the Coolies of Chakwel decided to work closer to the village. They were tired of walking long distances over boulders and thorns for work everyday, and there was a need to be closer to the village where a few from each household was already getting the various implements and paraphernalia ready for this year's sowing. They had their CCFs (the interest-free credit giving structure that ADATS had set up in the CSUs) to look forward to, and knew that this year would be the first in a totally new type of existence where they would not have to go with begging bowls to the *Ryots* and at the same time would be cultivating nearly four times the amount of land they were previously tilling.

Many years ago, their fathers had sold off a tract of very good land, contiguous to the village, for a pittance to a *Ryot*. About seven years back the government had come to know of this illegal sale and ordered that this land be restored back to the Harijans. But at that time there had been no Coolie Sangha in their village, and they too had pretended to joint with the *Ryots* in making fun of government policies that "did not take into account village realities". In June 1987, a fresh government order was issued in favour of the Harijans and they, at that time, viewed it as godsend and providential. They went with the order to the "opposite party", the other *Ryot* faction which was traditionally opposed to the fellow who had bought their ancestral lands. These supposedly "good people" told them that the order was perfectly legal and that they had every right to reclaim what was rightfully theirs.

ADATS immediately smelled a rat and our Community Worker (a Harijana youth who had earlier worked in his native village as a Village Level Worker for about five years) advised them not to rush impetuously. But the Harijans of Chakwel were in an ecstatic mood and had thrown caution to the winds.

All the three DLDP batches that the Harijans of Chakwel had formed themselves into in order to implement the project, went to work on this land on the 16th of June 1987. There was a hot exchange of words between them and the *Ryot* who had illegally bought their land and now not relinquishing possession, and the Coolies went back without working any further. They conducted a special meeting and decided to go work on the land once again the next morning.

It is still not clear, even today, if some of them really did reach those lands on the 17th of June, when the entire non-Harijana population of more than seven surrounding villages descended on the Harijana Colony and wrecked vengeance on a people who had dared exhibit independence. The entire colony was looted and practically razed to the ground. People were beaten indiscriminately. Yet the Harijans did not give up. A Harijana woman who had not even joined the Sangha watched in shock as her petty shop was destroyed and all her wares robbed. When she recovered from her daze, she kept throwing cow dung and other objects of insult at her attackers till she mercifully fainted from injuries. The Police Sub Inspector who just happened to be present was not spared when he tried to prevent the mob from killing the ADATS Community Worker. And later in the day, when the senior ADATS staff attempted to reach the village, they too were beaten up very badly, and their motorcycle burnt. Finally, by the evening of that day, the Harijans fled into nearby Andhra Pradesh.

It took ADATS more than one week to just get the Harijans safely back into Chakwel and a very strict police camp had to be posted there for months after this incident. The Coolie Sangha gradually petered out but the Harijans never really went back to the Ryots. There is, even today, a simmering discontent, waiting for a more mature and planned opportunity to assert their rights as human beings.

This is not the place to record what happened and how we managed to regain control over that senseless situation in any greater detail, or even to speculate on what will happen to the brave Harijans of Chakwel. But it is pertinent to say that the entire agenda of the BAGEPALLI COOLIE SANGHA changed after that incident. The DLDP, which was in any case never perceived by the Coolies to be a mere succour, was no more seen as just a mere attempt to economically consolidate their unity and discipline.

Chakwel lived for ever in everyone's memory. Though there were hundreds of Ryot-Coolie incidents after this, the Coolies were always better prepared and able to turn the struggle to their advantage. And ADATS equipped itself with new contacts, skills, and techniques to counter violent situations created by the *Ryots* with effective non-violence. But even so, we were still not prepared for the chain of events which started at Nallagutlapalli cross and followed at Shivapura Cluster on 2nd October 1989, Gandhiji birthday.

### The incidents at Peddur

When, in September 1988, all the ADATS paid Community Workers who were not native Coolie youth of those villages were withdrawn at the end of their three year contract from the CEP Area, we made a fatal politico-strategic mistake. We felt that Peddur Cluster was very weak and that the Community Worker's term there should be increased for one more year. We did not realise, at that time, that we would be isolating him and his family in a remote and cut off village, and that if the new CSUs of Peddur Cluster were in fact as weak as we felt it was, this was all the more reason why a lone ADATS staff should **not** be left alone there without fellow Community Workers to support him in the surrounding Clusters.

In any case, Narasimha Murthy's one year extension term was about to come to a peaceful end, and we were about to transfer him to a newly being formed Cluster in the Gulur Area. But organisational lethargy made us delay the decision by a few days. On Gandhi Jayanti 1989, after the usual festivities in the village school, Murthy and his wife were making final preparations to shift out. Old debts with the local shop had to be cleared, various domestic objects like pots, pans and a grinding stone that his wife had borrowed from the Coolies had to be returned, and goodbyes had to be said by his two children who had to find new friends all over again. It was a very peaceful and ordinarily balmy morning when, without any warning, violence struck.

A large group of *Ryots* suddenly arrived at Peddur village and, fully knowing that he was anyway about to leave, demanded that the Community Worker leave the village. Murthy responded that he would, but not because of their threat or coercion. This remark provoked a violence which no development worker ought to bear.

For 12 hours, Murthy and his wife were paraded from village to village in the Peddur Cluster, wearing garlands of footwear that the *Ryots* had specially prepared for them, shepherded with brooms and other objects of insult by their own Coolies, who had been brutally beaten into submission. All the CSU Representatives, Village Level Workers, Teachers and Village Health Workers suffered a terrible humiliation and torture with tears streaming down their helpless eyes, along with their Community Worker and his family, for one full day. Then, finally, they were brought back to Peddur village where Murthy's belongings were crudely packed on their shoulders and they were once again driven to the cross-road where the Community Workers, his wife, children and belongings were thrown onto a bus bound for Bagepalli.

Till he arrived that night, we did not even know what had happened. So isolated was Peddur Cluster. All we could do was attend to Murthy and his family, and lodge a strong police complaint and hope for public indignation to intervene.

### The incidents at Nallagutlapalli cross-road

Early the next day, the elected BCS Secretary (the same Harijana youth who had himself undergone the traumatic experience at Chakwel when he was then the Community Worker there) and the CEP Field Worker (a Muslim youth who had worked in ADATS for many years as our driver) were on their way to Peddur to enquire into the incident. They were stopped at the same cross-road where the previous night Narasimha Murthy had been thrown onto a bus by a mob that had been hiding out of sight. They were pulled off their motorcycle and the BCS Secretary was beaten and abused in the most vulgar and casteist manner. At first, they did not want to harm the Field Worker because of his community. But when they realised that he was fully with the Harijana youth and would not turn chicken when his comrade was being beaten, he too was not spared.

Many other ADATS staff had followed the first motorcycle. The Field Worker (DLDP) was the next to reach the spot, just as the mob was setting the first motorcycle ablaze. Through sheer skill and dexterity in the handling of his own motorcycle, he managed to clear a path and rescue his two other colleagues. Throughout the 35 km ride back to Bagepalli, they were stopped by Coolies who wanted to know what had happened.

Once again a police complaint which the authorities were reluctant to immediately act upon because of the involvement of political heavy weights.

The landlord who had personally engineered and implemented the atrocity at Chakwel was, till just a few days back, the State Home Minister in direct charge of the police force. Fortunately for the Coolies, he lost his post when the Janata Dal government in Karnataka was dismissed by the centre as part of their preparation for the forthcoming general elections. The CPI(M) leader (the communist party in Bagepalli is a fanatically anti-Coolie *Ryot* based party) who took the credit for Nallagutlapalli was slated to have the best chances to become the next MLA in the soon approaching state elections.

But this time the Coolies would not keep quiet. They spontaneously came out of their villages and set up road blocks at each and every cross-road in the taluk, effectively stopping traffic. And, though this is still not verified, one band of Coolies stopped the CPI(M) landlord leader's car and thrashed him far worse than Murthy or the BCS Secretary had been beaten. There is every reason to believe that this allegation was totally unfounded, but with a very cruel purpose as we shall soon see.

## Kurubarapalli, Shivapura and Gadivanlapalli

The epicentre of the violence shifted 20 kms to Shivapura Cluster, a stronghold of the CPI(M), retained through sheer terror, cheating, and other all too familiar communist tactics. It was here that the *Ryots* took their revenge for the alleged beating of their leader that very same night and in the dark and early hours of 4th October 1989.

Another ADATS Field Worker visited Kurubarapalli village soon after sunset in connection with his work in the Children's Programme. He never thought that he would be a target of attack and believed that, in any case, his own belonging to the upper most Reddy caste would insulate him from any anti-Coolie sentiments. He was tricked into stopping in the wrong part of the village, brutally attacked, and his motorcycle burnt (the second in a single day). This Field Worker owes his life to a few very brave Coolie women who rescued him from what would have been a deliberate and premeditated fiery death, at great risk to their own lives.

The Coolies of Kurubarapalli never came down from the shrub and thorn covered hillock that bordered the village that night. They watched in horror as truck loads of *Ryots* silently arrived in the early hours after midnight on the 4th of October and started looting and destroying Coolie quarters. Even the concrete roofed community hall which ADATS had built for them was brought down. It took them some time to realise what was happening before they rushed down the other slope of the hillock to inform the remaining villages of their Cluster.

But before any meaningful preparations could be made, a mob of over 3,000 *Ryots* charged into Shivapura village. Most of the Coolies of Shivapura had already fled into neighbouring Gadivanlapalli. But the unlucky few who did not manage to escape had a very terrible tale to narrate.

By the time the mob reached Gadivanlapalli, the Coolies thought they were better prepared to defend themselves, but this turned out to be an illusion. When hardly a single Harijana was left standing, a pregnant woman killed and another young infant's life was smashed out by a stone, those who could, ran. A decent *Ryot* from a nearby village loaded them on his tractor, and they reached the Pathapalya Police Station at about 8 a.m. on 4th October 1989.

## Aftermath

We converted Pathapalya village (where there is no CSU) into a refugee camp. The neutral population's tolerance had crossed all limits of tolerance. School teachers, shop keepers, clerks, bankers, petty government officials, ordinary police constables, and even hundreds of well meaning *Ryots* and a few Landlords, all came out to openly condemn the *Ryots* and their leaders. The national press descended and began their sensational front page coverage in all the local editions. All ADATS programmes, projects and activities, specially the DLDP, became the topic for a wide taluk, or even state, level debate.

Another type of bureaucrat and policeman, the fair and liberal officers from Bangalore who were above local political equations, took over. The CPI(M) leaders were handcuffed, paraded in front of all the shattered Coolies who were to be found on every pavement and veranda of Pathapalya, and sent to jail. The books were thrown at them with just about every conceivable section of law from incitement to looting and arson charged against them. And ADATS was told in unequivocal terms, that not just the law but even morality was on our side.

The most passionately fought general elections followed six weeks later where all those associated with the orgies that started at Chakwel in June 1987 and continued for two and a half years till November 1989 were routed by the electorate...

Peddur Cluster is strong once more, but this time with a Coolie elected Cluster Secretary looking after it. The heavily outnumbered Member Coolie families of Kurubarapalli have re-



built their houses with government support and they have salvaged enough of their community hall in order to conduct the every evening children's Balakendra and conduct their weekly CSU and Mahila Meetings there. Shivapura and Gadivanlapalli are limping back to normalcy, but there is absolutely no contact at all between the *Ryots* and the Coolies. This was not the state of affairs that they had bargained for when they set about building their Coolie Sanghas, but they are left with no choice. But an increasing number of the middle peasantry are now beginning to condemn what happened and attempting to develop a brand new relationship based on mutuality and respect. And the Coolies of Chakwel are waiting for the right moment to restart their CSU...