

0626. Icco's 2nd Letter on the DLDP (26 Apr 1993)

Icco adopts a harsher tone and takes a tougher stance.

They say that financial inputs are too high, and that technical/environmental aspects are neglected. They also go into a blind defence of the Watershed Approach and question the validity of working ONLY on Coolie lands, and question the long-term results of the DLDP.

They conclude that an external assessment is necessary before they can decide on the DLDP application.

Dear Mr. Esteves,

Thank you very much for your letters of 10 March 1993 (along with the progress report on the Extension Programmes for the period February 1992 to March 1993), 22, 23 and 30 March in reply to our letter dated 10 March 1993, and the copy of your letter to NOVIB dated 13 April 1993. Especially your extensive reaction on our letter was very useful and gave us more insight in a.o. your perception of the context of your work and the response to non-member and drop-out families and CSUs. We have discussed all this information at length within ICCO (as well as with NOVIB), and in this letter we want to inform you about the outcome of these discussions.

1. DLDP IN 4 EXTENSION AREAS

Although we agree with part of your contextual analysis and strategies to improve the situation of coolies, some answers on our questions were not really convincing. The following issues are in our opinion still not addressed satisfactorily.

a. Financial inputs

Although we realise that the coolies themselves contribute a lot to building the CSUs and also mobilise substantial government funds, we don't agree that the only major inflow from foreign sources is the DLDP from ICCO, whereas the other inputs are taken for granted. Seen from a longer term perspective we have the feeling that the total foreign inputs per CSU and/or family are quite substantial compared to the amounts we give to programmes of other agencies in India (you may indeed question if – in view of the differences in approach – such a comparison is legitimate and if the level of funding of the other NGOs is adequate, but for us it is one of the yard sticks to assess a programme). Foreign contributions are meant to act as a leaver to make communities more self-reliant, and can in the long run only be a minor source compared to local inputs. In this regard, we don't understand why for example the tapping of funds from say the National Wasteland Development Board will compromise on the very objectives of the DLDP, or coolies would have insufficient financial discipline to borrow from banks. We also still ponder how to assess for example the increase in minimum income needed for decent living from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 per family per month during the preparatory phase of DLDP II in Bagepalli, and whether the facilities provided to entrepreneurs who give skill training are not too generous. Apart from that, we fully agree with you that sustainability can not merely be defined sectorally, but is a comprehensive and powerful concept (which, however, also has a financial dimension).

b. Neglect of technical/environmental aspects

In your letter of 23 March 1993 you admit that ADATS has not fully thought through the environmental implications of its interventions. In spite of your general aversion to sectoral intervention you think to have found a balance between prevailing agricultural practices and enhancement of the skill base through the support of agriculturists and outside experts. You reject the integrated watershed approach as “a placed and dated technology (...) which is far

too physical and sectoral a solution to sound true as an environmental panacea (...) and wherein funds meant for the poor are almost wholly hogged by the rich". On the other hand, the DLDP has acted as an example to be followed by richer peasants for improving their lands. You agree that "specific" problems are real and must be recognised and tackled, but you do not indicate in what way. Experience from several evaluation studies on sustainable land use shows that due to this kind of "technical" problems short term benefits can be nullified by long term implications. We really question the effectiveness of land improvement measures only carried out on coolie lands. We also ask ourselves whether the wasteland to be developed will be suitable for agriculture, and whether there is sufficient rainfall to cultivate this land too. Although the short term benefits may seem impressive, it is not clear whether these can be sustained (vide also the observations in your own completion report of DLDP I in Bagepalli and in the Evaluation report of Peter van der Werff and Vanaja Ramprasad). Moreover, involving richer peasants in a watershed programme does not per se mean funding the activities on their lands; it can also be another way to pressurise them to pay adequate wages.

We agree that land development can not really be done in a single stretch and that a continuation after some years seems to be necessary. However, the way this is done in DLDP Phase II in Bagepalli, i.e. especially through promoting irrigation (and off-farm employment), does seem to make a watershed approach even more necessary, as ground water and surface water sources in total watershed have to be taken into account.

So, we really doubt whether the substantial inputs in the proposed DLDP will be compensated by adequate returns in the long run.

c. Other pending questions

In our opinion there are still some other issues which are not dealt with satisfactorily, e.g. the complementary instead of competitive relationship between Extension programmes and DLDP, the possibilities for land consolidation, and the rather vague set-up of demonstrations.

d. Conclusion

In view of the substantial inputs involved and the need for longer term investments, we are not able to approve the proposed DLDP in the 4 Extension areas without an external advice. In such an assessment attention should be paid to:

the technical logic and feasibility of the proposed measures, including the effectiveness of only working on coolie lands and the possibilities to develop wastelands;

the impact of the measures in the short and long run, compared to the proposed investments.

Such a, predominantly technical, study could be carried out for example by either the Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development (SPWD) or AFPRO and/or can be included in the overall evaluation of ADATS/DDS' work, which is scheduled – according to NOVIB's letter of 30 March 1993 – preferably around July. In any case, ICCO is prepared to meet the costs of technical pre-financing assessment and we hope you will agree with it. In continuation to NOVIB's letter of 30 March 1993, we kindly ask you to inform us on your ideas about the proposed evaluation (elements/ questions to be included; methodology to be used, possible team members, etc.).

e. Possible follow up

Although you say you refuse to use the old "pressure from the people" argument, you still have managed to touch that string, and we have extensively searched for options not to lose a full year by waiting for an external advice. Otherwise, in view of the substantial hesitations, we don't want to tie ourselves already to a longer term support to the proposed DLDP. As a

kind of compromise we are prepared to accept the use of a limited amount from the ongoing Extension programmes (92333) for some DLDP measures in 1993, provided that:

an external study on the proposed DLDP will be carried out, and

ADATS/DDS is prepared to change its approach in case this is recommended on the basis of the results of this study, even if this would mean following a watershed approach (which maybe can be implemented in a phased manner: first on coolie lands, and only in a later stage on the other land in the watershed).

In case you agree with these preconditions, we ask you to send us a brief proposal on the measures which will be taken up in the coming months and the amounts required for them. After the approval from our side we will release an extra instalment from the budget for project no. 923333, which can be covered in future through either refunding from a possible DLDP, gains in exchange rate, a supplementary grant and/or shortening of the project period.

3. PHASE II EXTENSION PROGRAMMES (92333)

The progress report for the period February 1992 to March 1993 affirms our hesitation regarding the present strength of the CSUs to take up another programme. Moreover, we were left with questions about:

- The content of the initial resistance from the women themselves against weekly Mahila Meetings, and the way you were able to overcome this opposition;
- The way ADATS/DDS deals with children not selected for the education programme, and with the difference in participation between girls (39%) and boys (61%);
- Can you tell us something more about the PERT chart study showing that it would be better for women staff to take on more field responsibilities, and how do you think to counter additional problems of travelling, resistance from men (esp. non-target group), etc.?

4. INFRASTRUCTURE/COMMUNITY CENTRES (913354)

Although you may finalise the facilities at the Chintamani campus with EZE-funds (we still find the procedure you followed very strange), we would like to receive a final report for project no. 913354 as soon as all the work which was proposed in the project application is over. Hoping to have informed you enough for the moment and looking forward to your reply and suggestions for the evaluation study, we remain

With kind regards,

yours sincerely,

INTERCHURCH ORGANIZATION FOR
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