

Agricultural Development & Training Society (ADATS), Bagepalli

Project No: 20120329 G

Activity Report for Jan to Sep 2013

1. General Information

Name of the Organisation	Agricultural Development & Training Society (ADATS)
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Project Title	Coolie Sangha Building in Chickballapur District
Project No:	20120329 G
Project Period	From 1 st January 2013 to 31 st December 2015
Reporting Period	From 1 st January 2013 to 30 September 2013
Date of Report	October 2013
Author	Ram Esteves

2. Changes within the Organisation

2.1. Related to management structure

None

2.2. Related to your planning system

None

2.3. Related to the composition of your staff

None

2.4. Related to other issues

None

3. Changes of social, political, economic and ecologic Project context

3.1. Important changes in the Project's immediate environment since its inception

In February-March 2013, each of the 5 Taluk Coolie Sangha meetings took a major sociopolitical decision after elaborate discussions in their village CSUs, Mahila Meetings and Cluster/GP levels.

- In Chickballapur, Chintamani and Siddalaghatta Taluks, every single Member family and adults within their families stayed true to their decision.
- But in Bagepalli and Gudibanda Taluks, 82% of Member families went against their own decision for the very first time in their 35 history.

Taluk	Active Member Families	Adults within Active families	Stayed True	Defied
Bagepalli	3,827	16,724	18%	82%
Gudibanda	1,510	7,258	18%	82%
Chickballapur	2,885	6,809	100%	-
Chintamani	2,127	13,641	98%	2%
Siddalaghatta	1,628	10,149	100%	-
Total	11,977	54,581	65%	35%

This came as a very rude shock to ADATS and the Coolie Sangha, and many extremely painful months were spent on trying to figure out what had happened. In the meanwhile, the Board of Trustees, Bagepalli Coolie Sangha, suspended operations in 167 village CSUs in 16 Cluster/GP's.

Apart from this affecting 35% of the functioning village CSUs and 37% of the active membership, sociopolitical presence in Bagepalli Taluk gives the lead to the entire Coolie Sangha.

3.2. Underlying problem analysis of the still Project valid considering possible changes in the context

Our immediate reaction was to review the Relevance of the Coolie Sangha in the midst of massive changes in the social, political and economic environment.

It must be emphasised that what follows is our reaction to developments at Bagepalli and Gudibanda Taluks only. However, all of us realise that the same may be "waiting to happen" in the other 3 Taluks in the coming years.

Changed Political Economy

We realised that our understanding of the political economy could possibly be out-dated and obsolete. 36 years back, when ADATS first started working in this region, the political economy was definitely semi-feudal semi-capitalistic, with the predominant classes being a handful of feudal landlords, followed by a small percentage of capitalistic farmers (big peasants), a large chunk of middle peasants ("Ryots"), and finally, at the bottom of the ladder, the small and poor peasants (landed and landless agricultural labourers or "Coolies").

The overarching impression of ADATS Staff was that the Coolie Sangha had not kept pace with change and not understood the changing needs of Coolie households.

For example:

- Coolies can no longer be seen as earning their livelihoods purely from agriculture or agricultural labour.

- Children of Coolies are completing their education and competing for employment or livelihoods in urban centres. Agriculture is no longer seen as the only occupation for Coolie children.
- Such children may be supporting their parents and becoming agents of change in thoughts, actions and deeds.
- Modern Information and Communication technology are opening up new worlds for Coolie households and raising the bar for individual and community achievement.
- Politics has begun to compete with the Coolie Sangha for the loyalty of Coolies, using big ticket payoffs in return.

It is possible that Coolie Sangha policies have not kept pace with these far-reaching changes.

We realised that resuming contact with the community was the best way to get a scientific understanding of the needs of the present generation of Coolies, particularly in Bagepalli and Gudibanda Taluks.

Demographic Composition

We had a deeper look at the demographic profile of Coolie Sangha membership and this is what we found that 20% of the Member family population were youth and another 25% fairly young people. These percentages do not vary too much Taluk to Taluk.

Pre-school (< 6 years)	642	1%
School Age (6 to 17 years)	15,407	22%
Youth (18 to 25 years)	13,790	20%
26 to 40 years	17,636	25%
41 to 65 years	18,993	27%
Senior Citizens (> 65 years)	4,162	6%
	54,581	100%

The Coolie Sangha has supported a total of 56,959 children to go through school with a success rate of 66% which includes those still in school and those who left after completing school. The number who have completed 10 years of schooling is 29,993, which approximately corresponds to the 18 to 40 year age group.

Commitment to education has ushered in new urban employment opportunities which have reshaped lifestyles and attitudes.

Perhaps these schooled and job skilled persons had totally different aspirations. Maybe they did not find the anti-feudal *raison d'être* of the Coolie Sangha with the chief contradiction being addressed as between Coolies and *Ryot* relevant any longer.

However, two words of extreme caution must accompany such a sweeping statement:

- a. Aspirations are not always matched with capacity and capabilities
- b. Not everyone, even within a demographic category, have the same ambition and opportunity

Coolie Women

Among Coolie women in Bagepalli Taluk, there has been a noticeable return to middle class values which have begun to replace the values of gender equality espoused by the

Coolie Sangha. There has been an inexplicable return to “*Pasupu Kumkum*” culture¹, signifying the old-fashioned subordinate position of women.

Multiple Identities

2 months later, in July 2013, we initiated a deeper demographic survey into the needs of Coolie families based on the recognition that Coolie households are no longer full-time agricultural labourers and subsistence farmers. The new economy has ensured that each person within a Coolie household relies on multiple livelihoods; consumption patterns have also undergone dramatic change.

Multiple livelihoods have meant that Coolies have to live with multiple identities. This is a complete reversal of the days of the monolithic Coolie Identity, when we suggested that the Coolie Sangha was a primary social institution (an ecclesiastical body that goes beyond performing a functional role for its members) and therefore the sole provider of a positive Identity that countervailed the negative one stipulated by caste-class.

This is not necessarily bad, *per se*. It is a progression. In a changed political economy, it is quite possible that the Coolie Sangha acts as a reductionist body, robbing an emerging demography from its pursuit of various forms of freedoms. To paraphrase Amartya Sen:

All oppressed people need a positive Identity in order to understand their oppression and take positive action to liberate themselves. But all of us have to grow beyond our Identities in order to develop an Individuality and gain a Person status.

However, when one belongs to a community, a “Miniaturisation of Human Beings” takes place.

He or she is forced to see everything from a single perspective of that Identity. If she is a Dalit Woman, for example, she are forced to see everything from a Dalit Woman perspective.

But people are much more than their Identities. They are not just Dalits or Women or Muslims. They have different needs and aspirations, tastes, likes and dislikes. But each of these has to be examined from the perspective of that Identity.²

Household Contact Programme

As just mentioned, ADATS Staff put into action a Household Contact Programme, systematically collecting information about livelihoods and life.

This programme is intended to revive the regularity and intensity of CSU and Mahila Meetings in the villages. Decisions taken at these meetings will provide the intimate knowledge of the Coolie Households and legitimacy of Coolie Sangha authority.

As Meetings became less regular, inevitably the intimate interactions decreased and a distance has developed between Coolie families and the Coolie Sangha leadership.

The informal research done so far will be used to develop instruments for quantitative and qualitative data collection.

Core Values

We conducted a 2 days workshop on 4th and 5th September 2013 with our long time management consultant, Ajit Mani, facilitating and went into all the above issues.

We examined whether the original Core Values, and the dynamism that built the organisation during the past 35 years had undergone change. This change was characterised as “Value Change” and “Sentiment Change” by ADATS Staff.

¹ powerful sentiment symbolising the sanctity of marriage and worship of the husband

² Sen, Amartya *Identity & Violence : the Illusion of Destiny*

The Core Values of the Coolie Sangha appear not to have been articulated in any of the various Strategic Plans. The workshop participants were concerned to know if the Core Values of the Coolie Sangha had undergone change.

Core Values have been defined as an organisation’s sense of character or integrity.

Usually, core values are a handful of guiding principles, which determine organisational identity, and direct organisational thinking and action.

Core values usually remain constant while changes take place outside an organization. An organization may develop a new Mission or set of strategies or adopt new structures or technology. Core values remain intact, because they represent organisational ideology and identity.³

It has been observed that "... core ideology provides the glue that holds an organization together through time."⁴

It is useful to capture Core Values of an organisation as briefly as possible, just like a motto or a slogan.

In this draft, the Core Value is expressed as an idea in just a few words and explanations and discussions are shown in the column on the right.

<p>Unity Across Caste & Gender Divide</p>	<p>The Coolie Sangha has been built on the idea of inclusion, where nobody is excluded. It is also built on the idea of <i>Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno</i> (One for all, all for one).</p> <p>The Coolie Sangha has been powered by the unity of a group that has been known to act in unison.</p> <p>The DLDP was a classic illustration of the “All for One” part of the above idea. Individual assets were created through the labour capital of the entire group</p>
<p>Managing Change</p>	<p>Heraclitus is credited with the famous saying, “<i>Nothing endures but change</i>” and the related quote, “<i>No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.</i>”</p> <p>Instead of resisting change (which is inevitable), the Coolie Sangha believes that change must be anticipated and managed with the benefit of critical thinking.</p>
<p>Retaining Locus of Control</p>	<p>“Locus of Control” is an influential theory that was proposed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954 as an essential aspect of personality studies.</p> <p>The Coolie Sangha believes that its collective personality has a high internal locus of control and the events in the life of its members derive primarily from their own actions.</p>

³ Mani, Ajit, *Strategic Planning for Organizations Working in the Field of HIV/AIDS - A Manual* commissioned by PROJECT CONCERN INTERNATIONAL/INDIA – Sep 2005

⁴ Collins, James and Porras, Jerry, *Building your Company’s Vision*, Harvard Business Review, Sep/Oct 1996

Answerability and Accountability	This value is intimately linked to all the three values mentioned above. "Answerability" takes responsibility for decisions and actions which the Coolie Sangha believes they must be able to explain to any stakeholder.
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3.3. Implications for the work, Project objective and achievement

As already suggested, a serious rethink is underway.

4. Outcome and Impact

Complex and composed of different Project components; please see Annexure

4.1. Changes beyond ones described above

None

4.2. Direct negative outcome

The immediate negative outcome is, of course, that 145 village CSUs in Bagepalli Taluk and 59 in Gudibanda Taluk ceased to function since May 2013.

By July 2013, 50 villages in Bagepalli returned to the fold through the household contact programme.

4.3. Incidents/events observed which could contribute to or interfere with accomplishment of development goal

Significantly, 2 UNFCCC Verifications of our Biogas CDM Projects were carried out after May 2013. Most of the villages and sites chosen at random by the DOE were in Bagepalli and Gudibanda Taluks. There was not a single glitch or negative incident during these site visits. The entire (currently suspended) CSU Membership joined the selected End Users in showing utmost respect and hospitality.

Yet another Verification of our A/R CDM Project was conducted in September 2013. Once again, there was no mention of any discord.

However, it is too early to say if these indicate a return to discipline and normal functioning.

4.4. Methods applied to assess Project's outcome and impact

5. Conclusion for the future work

5.1. Need to change planned activities

Tentative Position

While these are still early days and we need much more time to make a critical analysis based on scientific data, we suspect that rural society has fully entered into the mainstream market economy where *Business* is the order of the day.

In this market economy, even cultivating the fields is no longer an activity where a small portion of last year's leftover yield can be used as seed for this year's planting; fields can no longer be fertilized with just the organic waste that is dumped in an open pit the whole year around; there are no more cattle to use for ploughing, inter-cultivation and de-weeding... Instead, the certified seed has to be purchased with hard cash, chemical fertilizers need to be bought, tractors have to be hired, all with hard cash.

Cash is not a capital that the Coolie caste-class possess in any abundance. It needs to be borrowed at exorbitant rates of interest. A crop loss due to drought or any other reason,

in earlier years meant, was surely a blow to the farmers. But in today's world, it means indebtedness and destitution.

No one from the caste-class has the wherewithal to enter into this world of cash driven Business, *individually*. They can only do so as a cohesive group. The unity that is fostered by the structures and discipline of the Coolie Sangha is the only viable option for them to collectively enter into the world of *Business*.

We do not see any need to change a single planned activity. Instead, we need to redouble our efforts and reintroduce the lost discipline of regular meetings, *et al*. This is how we can cater to a new need that has arisen due to change in the political economy.

End User Producer Company

From July 2013 we shared this tentative understanding of the changed political economy in the other 3 Taluks and also the 40-50 village CSUs that had returned to the fold in Bagepalli Taluk.

We explained that a Producer Company should not be just to sell CERs. If Coolies were to compete with traditional businessmen and business practices, they would fail. We emphasised that the Coolie caste-class did not have a natural propensity to undertake Business.

It should, instead, be the instrument through which Member Coolie families could undertake all their activities with a sense of Business. It should be built on the foundation of strong village CSUs and Mahila Meetings.

As of today, 3,561 families from 274 villages have understood and paid up their share capital.

Gender Analysis

Taluk	Villages	Share-holders	Men	Women	SC	ST	BCM-A	BCM-B	General
Bagepalli	86	1,004	59%	41%	19%	17%	19%	45%	1%
Chickballapur	28	408	59%	41%	20%	9%	20%	51%	-
Chintamani	90	1,014	30%	70%	32%	17%	14%	35%	2%
Siddalaghatta	47	891	51%	49%	30%	10%	17%	42%	-
Gudibanda	23	244	1%	99%	29%	6%	14%	50%	-
Total	274	3,561	45%	55%	26%	13%	17%	42%	1%

A technology-wise breakup of this number shows that 41% of End Users from our earlier Biogas CDM Project have paid up, 61% of those who have planted trees under A/R, 62% of those who are undertaking Low Carbon Farming on their fields, and 52% of the Woodstoves End Users. But only 3% of those who are participating in the more recent BCS Biogas CDM have paid up.

Technologies

Taluk	Villages	Share-holders	ADATS Biogas	BCS Biogas	A/R CDM	Wood-stoves	LCF
			5,508	11,690	622	414	2,503
Bagepalli	86	1,004	834	111	113	-	198
Chickballapur	28	408	213	48	14	51	231
Chintamani	90	1,014	595	135	182	40	437
Siddalaghatta	47	891	344	99	71	123	680
Gudibanda	23	244	244	-	2	-	-
Total	274	3,561	2,230	393	382	214	1,546
			41%	3%	61%	52%	62%

5.2. Consultancy services required

As earlier mentioned, we are using the services of our longstanding organisational Consultant, Ajit Mani, to reflect and articulate our learning. Our next session with him will be to analyse the data that comes out of the household contact programme on multiple occupations of persons within Member Coolie families.

Governing Body Members of ADATS have also been very helpful in assisting us to make sense of all that has happened.

5.3. Important lessons learnt

These are early days and we have shared our tentative understanding of developments. The most important lesson is that we realise that we have to (a) constantly maintain our proximity with the community, and (b) constantly be aware of the need to be Relevant to fast changing external milieu. As we said in the very beginning, what happened in Bagepalli and Gudibanda Taluks may be “waiting to happen” in the other 3 Taluks in the coming years.