

1

## Organisation, Leadership, Planning

A cardinal- principle of Swanirvar's philosophy is that development primarily concerns people, but if it is for them it must be by them, too. To make sure that the fruits of development are not soured by being imposed from above, people's knowledge, competence, and self-confidence have to be steadily increased so that after a while they themselves can plan the ways and organize the means to strive towards a just, equitable and sustainable society. Swanirvar means self-reliant and our ultimate goal is to make the people so; in that our role is that of educators.

We had four youth groups when we began the year and now have seven more, the total of 11 groups being distributed the following way.

Block	No.of groups	Villages
Baduria	2	Andhatmanik, Fatullyapur
Deganga	5	Uttar Kolsur, Chandalati, Parpatna, East Kurulgachha, West Kurulgachha
Swarupnagar	4	Bargharia, Durgapur, Khardasin, Patua.

All these groups were involved with at least one development activity this survey e.g. smokeless Chulla (in four villages), and, the group at Bargharia undertook as many as eight types of work.

The pace, quality, and permanence of socio-economic development in rural India depend principally on the status of women and we have to form as many women's organisations as we can. So far we have only one such group, at Bargharia. This organization began its work by spreading the idea of kitchen/ home gardens in the village and from January 1991 it has been running the highly successful Palli Sanchay Samabay (Rural Savings Cooperative; described later), taking over from the youth group there. The Mahila Samity has formed a committee for the purpose which sits every Friday to decide on the targets for the next week, and also to process and decide on loan applications. This model will be replicated and as this and the future women's groups become more cohesive and spread their influence, they will start more social and income-generating activities.

Surveys, not detailed but not too cursory also, are essential before any realistic planning can begin and even later, to monitor the effects of any development activity. This is also the best

2

way to let rural development catalysts gain first hand experience. We have carried out the following:

A. Overall survey of all 34 villages covering demography, schools, electricity, roads, post offices, markets, banks, transport.

B. Health survey of 6 villages, listing births, deaths and their causes, all kinds of medical practitioners; medicine shops, and detailing the government infrastructure, consisting of primary health centres, sub-centres, health guides, etc.

C. Block-level-survey in which we have prepared a list of all government offices and officials at the block level and their respective responsibilities

D. A survey of the disabled-mental and physical — in all 30 villages

E. An economic survey in which we have made a comprehensive list of all agricultural and industrial activity in the area, in the case of latter including cottage, mini, and small-scale sectors.

All talk of grassroots planning is meaningless without a detailed household survey. We could do this in only one village, Andharmanik, to cover demography, age distribution, literacy, housing, sanitation, land ownership distribution, animal husbandry, fruit trees, chief modes of occupation, artisans and craftsmen, service holders, small producers, middlemen, etc.

In four villages- Fatullyapur, Sarfarajpur, Dakshin Media and Bhojpara -we have made this survey but covering only demography, age distribution, and literacy.

Participatory democracy and micro-level planning, both of which we take to be essential, have no chance to develop without a large number of motivated, well-informed, capable, and critical grassroots leaders. For the development of such rural planners and leaders Swanirvar activists took part in a series of classes and discussions. From these is emerging the outline of a regular course which should be operational in another year and then rapidly multiply the number of rural innovators and planners.

The following subjects have been covered so far:

- \* Historical developments leading to the NGO/ Voluntary movement for development;
- \* Surveys, tabulation of data, and analysis;
- \* Evolving criteria of development;

- \* Office; management and accounts;
- \* Small and cottage industries;
- \* Chairing concepts of the role and work of banks, and how to write loan applications;
- \* Case studies of NGOs.

### Appropriate Rural Technology

Simple to use but of sophisticated design, smokeless Chullas are made of mud, with two ovens that can be, simultaneously used, in place of the single oven in the traditional Chulla. They are not, naturally, smokeless, but the smoke, a major health hazard in a cramped rural kitchen, goes out via a cement pipe through the roof. The main advantages of this Chulla are: (i) less cooking time because two dishes can be cooked in the same time (ii) more fuel efficiency because, first, almost no heat is allowed to escape from the side of the cooking vessel and, second because the excess heat from the first oven is transferred to the second through a channel without any fresh wood being put in; (iii) the kitchen stays clean; and (iv) easy on the user because there is no smoke.

The cost of the cement pipes, each about three metres long, is subsidised by the State Government and we obtained 1000 pipes in November, 1990. We had sent a few youths to receive expert training on how to make the Chullas, and they in turn trained a bunch of youths in each village where the Chullas were to be installed. An awareness campaign was then begun to encourage people to demand one for their household. The cost for a customer varied between Rs 5 and 20. The whole process, from training to construction of the Chulla, also leads to the formation of youth groups where none existed.

Implementation of the programme, however, was not very smooth. We did not have enough people to enforce the construction schedule and supervision was also affected by the chosen villages being far apart from one another. The consequent failure in coordination led to an inability to keep to the target date of 31 March, and to submit all the required reports to the Ramakrishna Mission Lokasiksha Parishad, Narendrapur, which had entrusted us with the work, in time.

The Table gives the names of the villages where the Chullas were built and the number of Chullas built in each of them

Village	No. of Chullas	Village	No. of Chullas
1. Fatullyapur	240	8. Parpatna	22
2. Punra	90	9. East Kurulgachha	21

4

3. Bajitpur	90	10. West Kurulgachha	8
4. Sarfarajpur	30	11. Utter Kolsur	4
5. Bhojpara	25	12. Bargharia	50
6. Dakahin Media	25	13. Durgapur	150
7. Chandalati	28	14. Khardasin	50
		Total 879	

Altogether 121 Chullas could not be constructed by the projected date.